

International Review of Humanities Studies  
[www.irhs.ui.ac.id](http://www.irhs.ui.ac.id), e-ISSN: 2477-6866, p-ISSN: 2527-9416  
Vol.4, No.1, January 2019, pp. 201-211

---

**THE PRACTICE OF SECULARISM  
IN RELIGIOUS CENSORSHIP IN TURKISH FILM (1939-1990)**

**Aditama**

Department of Communication Sciences,  
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Indonesia  
aditama51@ui.ac.id

**Nadira Bella Rachmanti**

Department of Communication Sciences,  
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Indonesia  
nadira.bella@ui.ac.id

**Siti Rohmah Soekarba**

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia  
[emma.soekarba1946@gmail.com](mailto:emma.soekarba1946@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

This paper analyzes a film as one of the media with the ability to convey certain messages to the public. Films can reflect the social and cultural conditions of society, thereby they can be used to spread the current ideas, views, and ideologies of a country. Films in Turkey are part of a culture that has developed rapidly and has become an entertainment for the people. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk reformed and turned Turkey into a new country with the ideology of secularism, controlling religious institutions and expressions. This journal article aims to describe the implementation of Turkish secular ideology in the country's cultural settings, namely censorship of religious elements in Turkish films from 1939 to 1990. The method used in this article is critical descriptive through literature study. This article concludes that censorship is not only practiced to maintain secularism in Turkey, but also to protect the religion itself.

**Keywords:** film, censorship, secularism, religion, Turkey

**Introduction**

A film is one form of media used for various things such as means of disseminating information, propaganda, and entertainment. Initially, Thomas Edison created most of the main components of the camera, then the Lumière brothers from France discovered the principle of projecting light through a transparent film. The development of the cinema industry continues with the increased numbers of frames or pictures per second, making images wider, and the addition of colors (Straubhaar, LaRose, & Davenport 2012). These advancements not only developed in Western countries, but also in Turkey. Until 2008, the number of local films released reached 50 with 60% of the fourth largest market share after the United States, India and South Korea (Bell 2010).

In 1897, in the heart of the Ottoman Empire that would later become the Turkish republic, the earliest known public screening of "*photographie vivante*" (living photography)

took place in Salle Sponeck Istanbul. Before that, in 1896, there had been several private screenings of Lumiere films took place at the Ottoman Palace and probably at some other aristocratic residences, making it possible for some female viewers to may have seen them as well. While some claimed watching films was a sin, others were happy that another element of "civilization" had arrived in Istanbul. Such reactions are typical of the ongoing cultural debate between Islamic conservatism and westernization and modernization processes (Arslan 2011).

The development of film in Turkey cannot be separated from the practice of secularism in the form of censorship of the religions elements, including censorship of Arabic-speaking films. In 1942, the secretary of the RPP warned the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the number of Arabic language films noting that Arab films were a threat to the Turkish language. This ban, then, was not just a reflection of the wartime conditions, but also the importance of Turkish nationalism, which had become increasingly fervent during the war as evidenced by ethnic and religious discrimination accompanying the creation of a "secular Turkish" country (Arslan 2011). Sensors were then carried out for years at the Turkish film festival. In 1980-1981, the Antalya International Film Festival was canceled by the committee due to the difference in principle when the military government did not allow Turkish films with political content to be screened at the event.

This paper aims to analyze the practice of secularism in religious censorship in the Turkish cinema. The time span discussed began in 1939, when film censorship began to be implemented by the Central Film Control Commission in Ankara based on The Regulations on the Control of Films and Film Screenplays, until 1990 when censorship, economic, and political practices changed film. Turkish cinema triumphed back to the 1990s when it contained Islamic topics, but new versions of Islam adapted to modernity.

### **Literature Review**

There is some literature relevant to this study. The book edited by Sabine Hake and Barbara Mennel entitled *Turkish German Cinema in the New Millenium* describes the cultural exchange between the Turkish and Germany cinema, related with the migration of Turks to Germany in the 1960s (Hake and Menne 2012). In addition, there is a book written by Seçil Büker, *The Film Does Not End with Ecstatic Kiss*, which explains the competition between Turkish film companies in modern Turkey such as Soray and Sultana (Büker 2002). This article also analyze Dilek Kaya Mutlu's chapter entitled "Film Censorship during the Golden Era of Turkish Cinema" which focuses on Turkish film censorship during the 1960s and the early 1970s, a period not only marked by two military interventions (in 1960 and 1971), but also considered the golden era of Turkish film production. Thousands of film censorship reports were also studied, which reveal the Turkish government views film as a powerful discursive domain, even the rival of the government, where various social identities and meanings were produced and circulated (Biltreyt 2013).

Based on literature and research articles obtained by the authors, this paper hypothesize that film cannot be separated from the secularism and modernization project developed in the early 20th century in Turkey. Film is a medium used as an instrument to project secular values and represent Turkey as a country that progress toward modernity.

## **Research Methods**

The method used in this paper is critical descriptive. The steps taken are collecting, reviewing, and processing literature materials. In the process, this paper also interpreted data from several primary and secondary sources. According to Sugiyono (2012), literature review relates to theoretical studies and other references relating to values, culture and norms develop in the social situation under study. The steps taken are collecting, analyzing, and processing data related to the research topics. The data collected from books, journals, articles, and websites is sorted, researched and criticized by re-examining the correctness of the data obtained. The interpretation of the data, which has been obtained and linked from one event to another event, becomes a systematic sequence of developments and censorship progress of Turkish films from 1939 to 1990.

The primary sources used in this research are the works of Saves Arslan, Mutlu and Koçer, and Brujin, and the secondary sources used are the writings of Zürcher, Behlil, Hikmet, Hakke and Mennel, and Buker.

## **Secularism and Film in Turkey**

The role of Islam in the public and political spheres has been a matter of contestation throughout the history of the Turkish Republic. After its founding in 1923 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, the state institutionalised the acquisition of Western cultural habits and the banishment of Islam from public and political arenas. The Turkish state's position on religion translated as '*laicism*', the subordination of religion to the state, then secularism, a separation of church and state. In the early Republic period, the state established control of religious affairs and institutions (White in Kasaba 2008).

According to Ahmet T. Kuru, secularism is divided into two: active secularism and passive secularism (Kuru 2009). Active secularism is a state effort in prohibiting the use of religious symbols in public places, while passive secularism is a state effort in allowing all religions to show religious symbols, and impartiality or not only supports the majority religion. Based on the description from Kuru, we conclude that in Atatürk's era, Turkey embraced active secularism because religious symbols were forbidden to appear in public. Whereas at the beginning of the 21st century, Turkey increasingly shifted to passive secularism.

On 23 October 1923 the Republic of Turkey was declared by Mustafa Kemal as the president. Mustafa Kemal and the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) launched an extensive reform program by seeing Islam as a sign of 'backward' identity and as 'reactionary' social forces, and believed to modernize and standardize Turkey, they must eliminate the influence of Islam from society (Zürcher 2003). The efforts made to modernize and westernize Turkey, as a matter of fact, took place long before the emergence of Mustafa Kemal. In the mid-19th century, there were Young Ottomans who wanted to integrate Islam and modernization. After Young Ottomans, there was Young Turks, which was more political because they wanted to carry out a coup against Sultan Abdulhamid II. Mustafa Kemal is a member of the CUP (Committee of Union Progress), a wing organization of Young Turks.

Mustafa Kemal then implemented a series of reforms to create a homogeneous country by subordinating ethnic and religious identities to Turkish nationalism which was

determined and controlled by the state. This reform is known as Kemalism and aims to control religion and create a secular society. Thus, secularism becomes a "political solution" to control and reconstitute Islam according to the needs of the state and the political elite who historically control the Turkish state (Yavuz 2009).

The practice of secularism was found in Atatürk's reform, namely the abolition of the Caliphate, religious courts and traditional religious schools, and the establishment of a secular education system in 1924. In 1925, religious-based parties or social groups were dissolved, prohibited from using *fez* and other Islamic headgear and replaced with Western hats. In 1926, the European calendar was enacted, replacing the Shari'a law with the civil law of the Swiss Civil Law and the Italian Criminal Law, the banking sector restructuring law was issued, all honorary title such as Bey, Efendi or Pasha were abolished. In 1928, the equality of law between women and men was uphold, the articles in the constitution on the recognition of Islam as a Turkish state religion was abolished, the use of the Latin alphabet was adopted, and in 1932 the Arabic call to prayer was prohibited and replaced in Turkish translation. (Zürcher 2003)

Secularism for Turkey means bringing religion out of politics or freeing politics from religious influence, but the state remains involved in religious affairs. Mustafa Kemal's main goal is not to abolish religion, but rather to create a set of institutional and legal system to "control," "use" and "redefine" Islam (Yavuz 2009). Secularism is used as a tool to control the restriction of religion. It can be seen from the reforms in the form of new rules that attempt to create a neutral state or separate religion from the state. Because the Republic did not approve Islam as a political ideology and as a source of collective identity and solidarity, they try to move Islam to the private sphere and minimize its role in the public arena by defining religion only as a matter of individual consciousness, belief and worship. This is done to create a new identity of Turkey that is independent of Islam, according to Atatürk's description of the Turkish revolution, "*The nation has united as individuals instead of being united by religion and as adherents of sects [religious orders]; now they are held together only by the bond of Turkish nationality*" (Killi, 2003: 249).

Although the state rejects religion as a national identity, they are also aware that Islam, which has provided the principle of government and daily life in the Ottoman era for centuries, cannot be eliminated from social life (Killi 2003). Turkish Islam, which always centered on the state, is being used as a national ideology and form of identity in the nation building process, and discursively create official versions of Islam (personal Islam, new, apolitical and national modifications) that are in accordance with the modern secular view and instill modern ideas and ideals of the republic.

After Atatürk's death in 1938 and a new era with a multiparty system under President İnönü began in 1945, many things have changed (Daver 1988). The first Republic of Turkey was controlled by one party from 1923 to 1946. The change from a one-party system to a multiparty system began with the first competitive election in Turkey held in 1946 between the Republican People's Party (RPP) and the new Democrat Party (DP) party. However, the first change of government was four years later, after the 1950 general election, when the Democrats came to power with an overwhelming majority of votes (Toprak 2005). The main issue that became controversial in these two elections was secularism and the role of religion in the lives of Turks. The Democratic Party opposed secularism which was supported by the Republican party and promised to change the role of religion in Turkey. After the Democratic Party came to power, they began to implement some of these changes. Muslims who wish to

make a pilgrimage to Mecca were permitted to transfer Turkish currency to foreign exchange; call to prayer (*azan*) in the original Arabic version was allowed; the grave of the saint was reopened for a visit; state radio could broadcast prayers during religious holidays; government budget for religious affairs was increased; and a number of religious schools and a university-level program were opened to train preachers (Toprak 2005).

Secularization policy of The Republic of Turkey prioritizes laws that reorganize the relationship between religion and the state, but ignore the reforms needed in the relationship between religion and society. Cultural and art studies are one of the most important instruments needed to achieve this goal, as happened in developed Western countries. The Turkish film industry first appeared in the Ottoman Empire in 1896, shortly after the Lumiere brothers produced their film, *The Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat Station*, in 1895 (Yorulmaz and Blizek 2018). The film first screened in Turkey was shown in the Palace of Abdülhamid II. Then, the film began to be watched by the public in 1897, aired at the Sponeck Bar or beer shop in Istanbul. Most of the films shown in Turkey are not different from other countries, such as silent films, short films, and newsreels. Because the location of the screening was at the beer shops, not in theaters, religious Muslims are reluctant to see them, thereby limited the number of moviegoers in Turkey (Yorulmaz and Blizek 2018). According to Bucker, for years, films in Turkey were "stepbrothers" of pre-existing performing arts in the Ottoman era. The first cinema in Istanbul, the Cinema Theater-Pathe Feres, opened in 1908. Soon other cinemas also opened in Turkey, e.g. Cine Eclair (1908), Cine Oriental (1910), Cine Central (1911), and Cine Magic (1914). The names of the cinemas turn into Turkish when the Republic of Turkey was formed. (Bucker 2002).

Atatürk considered cinema as one of the way to educate the citizens about westernization and modernity. Atatürk encouraged the people to actively participate in the film and theater performance, and to develop theater education. This is in stark contrast to what was done by the Soviet Union, which made film into a propaganda medium (Brujin 2012). The secular view of films relating to religious elements is not very different from the views in Hollywood of classical Orientalists toward the Eastern, who were portrayed as barbaric, uneducated, and a threat to Western civilization. In the same way, in Turkish films priests and most conservative traditions associated with Islam were described as a serious obstacle to modernize Turkey into a modern republic.

Islamic scholars in the films created at the beginning of the Republic of Turkey were often represented as obstacles to the development of society and as unethical traitors who used religion for their personal interests (Önal 2014). This depiction made people, especially the conservative and religious, upset. One negative response that arises was a reaction during the filming process of a movie, *The Mystery of Boğazici*, which is a film about the use of religion for sexual harassment. An attempt was made to prevent the making of the film before it even appeared in theaters. Hundreds of people came to destroy the film installed in the courtyard of the mosque. In addition, they also attacked the camera, actors, and actresses from the film (Önal 2014).

The cinema was the cheapest form of public entertainment. The founder of the Turkish Republic was not interested in movies as an instrument for spreading Republic ethics. Political leaders were only interested in keeping the movie industry under their control by enacting a severe censorship system in 1939, and, until the end of World War II, they did not support the industry at all. Muhsin Ertuğrul was the only person who produced films in the early period of Turkish independence. He believes in Turkey's progress through



westernization and secularization. The films produced during this period did not show much of the Islamic element (Heper 2009).

The film narratives produced in the early period of the Republic of Turkey are based on clichés and stereotypes that make a strict distinction between those who are "bad" and "good" as representatives of each "conservative religious mentality" and "revolutionary perspective" (Önal 2014). The factor of repressed religion in public space resulted in the representation of religion in films only at a symbolic level, a characteristic lasted until the second half of the 1990s.

There are two main motives on the increasing visibility of Islamic director in the cinema industry and the gradual rise in the number elements of religion shown in films (Önal 2014). One motive is the Democratic Party (DP) policy which brings religion more into the public sphere. The party's approach to religion involves the incorporation of Islam as a cultural tradition into the political mainstream in Turkey. In this view, Religion was compared to "social cement" needed for community cohesion for the unity of community. Because of Democratic Party politics which legitimized Islam and traditional rural values, Islamic groups were gradually drawn to the competitive political arena for the first time.

In addition, another motive that underlies the development of religious elements supported in films is Islamic directors only considered cinema as a mere *tablig*, a religious mission to tell people about the best aspects of Islam as a religion, for long time. This perspective caused them to take a step back in creating the "original cinema language". At this point, it is possible to say when Islamic directors produced films that reflect their own ideology, they were almost obligated to harmonize the 'restraint of representation' of Islam with cinema (Önal 2014). The cinema is also used as an instrument of *jihad*, so *jihad* is not only done by the sword, but can be done in theaters by films.

Religion-genre films also increased in number and became a new commercial genre. The films present elements of religion, conveyed in pure mystical fantasies that are far from the real world and today, even worse, the films do not consider the accuracy of various historical facts. The films tell stories of historical Sufi figures such as Yunus Emre, Haji Bektash Veli, Pir Sultan Abdal and Rumi Anadolu, as well as saints and prophets such as Joseph, Abraham, Jacob, Job and Solomon, who had a great role in Islamization in the Anatolian region. However, the film presented to the majority audience in the Anatolian rural area was presented from a commercial pragmatic point of view, without aesthetical attention.

The creation of religious films began in 1961 with the film *The Justice of Omar* and the number increased. In 1965, there were 6 religious-themed films, and the number increased to 28 films in 1973. The films generally combined melodramatic factors, such as pain, suffering, melancholy love and improbable coincidence, patience, giving wealth as a result from poetic justice, mystical power, and religious factors. Producers use *da'wah* as a tool to accumulate revenues by popularizing religious genres. All these negative developments in Turkish films encouraged leftist, secular and conservative groups to come together and create high-quality national films.

According to directors who see society from a Marxist perspective, religion exists as an institution developed by the upper class to control the lower classes in the society. However, in Turkish society, religion is the value adopted by the oppressed and persecuted class (Önal 2014). Films that reflect priests and other phenomena in Anatolia's social reality are recognized in the world cinemas because of their originality and narratives. For example, one of the important directors of the period, Yılmaz Güney, was a person who grew up

among the poor working class. He developed his own personal style of epic and poetic realism and sought to create a new film language that was unique and suitable for Turks.

The practice of censorship in Turkey only began in 1932 and was centered and supervised by two film control commissions established in Istanbul and Ankara. Supervision does not only apply to the finished film but has been enforced since the filming process. In 1939, *The Regulations on the Control of Films and Film Screenplays* was implemented. According to the regulation, foreign films intended to be screened in Turkey are supervised by the Film Control Commission, while local films are supervised by the Central Film Control Commission (Mutlu and Koçer 2012).

In order for a film to be approved by the Central Film Control Commission and can be aired in Turkey, the film must avoid: political propaganda related to a country; demeaning a race or ethnicity and offending fellow nations and states; religious propaganda; spreading political, economic and social ideologies that are contradictory to the state regime; contrary to public decency, morality and national sentiment; demeaning the military; endanger state order and security; provoke crime; also includes scenes that could be used as propaganda tool against Turkey (Eurimages 2012).

Based on these ten criteria, the Central Film Control Commission determines whether a film is eligible to appear in Turkey by a majority vote system. The Central Film Control Commission can also request a revision of a part of the film. Sometimes, a revision asked could be specific, such as how the angle of shooting is; what may or may not be said by a character; even how the film's ending should have happened (Mutlu and Koçer 2012).

### **Film Development and Depiction of Religion in Turkish Film**

According to Behlil (2010) film production companies in Turkey were originally founded in 1920, but the production was rather limited. In 1948, many companies began to enter the market after the issuance of regulations on tax relief for institutionalized local films. Behlil said the film industry in Turkey had established many companies, but out of 17 films, only two were still active: Arzu Film and Erler Film. This occurred likely because the Turkish film industry has never been a strong oligopoly.

During the 1940s, filmmakers were blocked because film was a political artifact rather than as a culture. Pre-sensors that take precautions on films before they are produced, considered as a potential to omit freedom of creativity. Therefore, during the Second World War, the film industry in Turkey was not strong enough artistically, politically or technologically (Berktas 2013)

In 1948, the Turkish Film Producer's Association managed to obtain a discount in the municipality entertainment tax. From 1917 to 1948, the average number of films produced per year was two; that number increased to 43 in the 1949-1956 period, 70 in the 1957-1960 period, 123 in the 1961-1963 period, and 220 in the 1964-1975 period. Filmmakers, however, continued to make inexpensive movies for inexpensive public consumption (Heper and Criss 2009).

According to Heper (2009), from the mid-1950s onward, the film magazine *Sinema*, although published for only two years, created for the first time in Turkey an awareness of the cinema as art. This had some impact on filmmaking. There were several significant factors that had a major influence on the development of Turkish film industry in the 1950s. One of them is technology, which provided electricity and supported the establishment of

Turkish cinemas in urban and rural areas. This situation also makes films available to audiences far wider than before (Yorulmaz and Blizek 2018). The result is that films are becoming more popular and creating opportunities for commercials. Turkish film production is one of the largest in the world. During this time, Turkish cinema concentrated on the production of melodramatic films based on Turkey's highly idealized secular urban society.

When the urban secular Turkish community produced the films, Islam is not the issue. The public moral foundation gets a lot of Islamic influence. In the 1960s, watching movies in cinemas became the main agenda for families in Turkey. One reason is because per year, 200-300 films are shown in Turkish cinemas. The aired films also consist of various genres, ranging from comedy to drama, historical films to detective films. In connection with films that have become a means of entertainment, in the 1960s secular films have begun to present several reports of religious elements in films that are regulated in modern times. For example, the commission did not agree to display *namaz* (ritual prayer), the call to prayer, and show or mention the Koran. Scenes that show or involve elements of the religion will be rejected because they were exploitation on religious belief and feelings (Mutlu and Koçer 2012). This situation is contradictory compared to the Democrat Party (Democratic Party) era, which is more inclined to instill liberal and populist values towards religious expression.

Reports related to censorship in Turkey are not without contradictions. For example, the censorship commission rejects religious references in secular Turkish films, but they also renounce any scenes depicted the insult and disdain to God. Ratification of the censorship commission on this matter, shows although Turkey stands strictly on secularization in social life, they also do not promote religion. Instead, they sought to redefine the place of religion in modern Turkish society (Mutlu and Koçer 2012). The renewed influence of Islam on public life and politics in the 1960s made film production under the theme of Islam profitable. As a protest Western-oriented films, educated and left-leaning Islamic producers intend to make authentic Turkish films (Bruijn 2012). These developments occur on both sides of the political spectrum. Some producers consider Islam to be a characteristic element of Turkish culture and therefore make films about the lives of Islamic saints and heroes. The effort was called the *Milli Cinema* (National Cinema) which was later called the *Beyaz Cinema* (White Cinema) (Bruijn 2012). *Milli Sinema* is a movement that aims to bring religion, especially Islam, and the source of culture into the cinema as a thesis.

Since the 1970s, the number of films representing Islam was not significantly increasing. This was caused by left-leaning intellectual producers who gathered around a journal called *Yeni Cinema* (New Cinema). The filmmaker wanted to create authentic Turkish films by making realistic films about hard life in the Anatolian countryside and on the outskirts of the life of the Istanbul metropolis. Secular Republicans tried to reform Turkish language by replacing loan words and Arabic or Persian grammatical structures, as they are commonly used in Ottoman Turkish, with Turkish words, called *öz Türkçe* (pure Turkish) (Bruijn 2012). Islamic values were shown in many films about rural areas in Anatolia, though not explicitly aimed to spread Islam.

Under *Yeni Sinema*, criticism flowed towards commercial films with religious themes. The films are generally almost identical to each other, which makes conservative and nationalist intellectuals displeased with the quality of the film when religious elements were used for emotional abuse. Intellectuals believed Turkish traditions, culture and values must be transmitted through high-quality film language.

After the 1980 coup, Turkey experienced many changes both socially and



economically. In the film industry, many small companies were closed, gave way to new producers who are targeting the emerging video market. In the 1980s there was also a change in foreign capital regulations allowed foreign distributors to enter the Turkish market without intermediaries. In 1989, Warner Bros (WB) and United International Pictures (UIP) began distributing local and foreign films in Turkey. which hampered the development of the film industry in Turkey (Behlil 2010).

Efforts made by national cinema to make high-quality films to criticize poor-quality commercial films had stalled due to financial constraints affecting Turkish cinema and military coups experienced by Turkey almost every ten years. Every religion, apart from religious beliefs and practices determined by the government especially during the military coup, was evaluated as a 'reactionary movement that threatens national security', and people who live according to conservative Islamic rules were 'other people and foreigners' by the Republican elite. All these perceptions are reflected in films aired in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the 1990s, religious circles in Turkey wanted to spread the voice of Islam through modern mass media, such as newspapers, television, internet, and film (Bruijn 2012). One of the most successful films of this era was *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (You are Not Alone) (1990) by Mesut Uçakan. The film tells the story of a girl from a wealthy secular background, but she is a religious person. The film openly spreads the teachings on Islam. Until the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, the Islamic factions, especially those advocating for a moderate form of Islam adapted to modernity, became very active in the media. At the same time, Turkish cinema rose again towards its heyday. Both developments produce Turkish films on Islamic themes, which have better quality and fewer missionaries (Bruijn 2012).

One theme rejected by the secular film commission and historical film is the depiction of *Folk Islam*, a combination of elements of Islam with animist beliefs and practices. *Folk Islam* practices occurred in Turkey include fortune telling, praying in the tombs of saints, magic, relic worship, talisman use, etc. (Özdemir and Frank 2000). According to the censorship commission, the practice blurred the line between religion and superstition. Therefore, the films shown are neutral and not influenced by a religion. The contradiction of film censorship in Turkey is a rejection to refer of religious reference in Turkish films. However, although the censorship commission tried to push Islam out of the public arena, the commission also sees itself as a 'true' guardian of Islam. The majority of rejected historical religious films were films that depicted historical and religious figures. Some of the films censored due to inappropriate religious elements are the film *Anadolu'yu Türkleştirenler* (Turkifiers of Anatolia) (1967), a film about Hacı Bektaş Veli, a 13th century Turkish Sufi, practitioner of the Hoca Ahmed Yesevi doctrine in Anatolia and eponym of Bektashism, Alevism religious order. The censorship commission identified the 'mistake' in the film as follows: performing *azan* after sunrise, talking when performing the *azan*, reading the Koran without saying '*Bismillah*' (in the name of Allah), performing ablution while standing, and saying the *syahada* wrongly. Another film censored because of the inaccuracy of the religious element was the film *Allahın Arslanı Hz* (Ali, Allah's Lion) (1969), a film about the Prophet's cousin and Ali's son-in-law, one of the most important figures in Alevi. The film was rejected by the Sensor Commission because there were many errors regarding the history and principles of Islam. The Commission argued the film misrepresented 'religion' and the figure of Ali. There was a significant change in the attitude of the religious censorship commission in the 1970s. The film *Umut* or Hope (1970) is one film rejected because of the depiction of religion contained in the film. The Commission considers the film to

discriminate against the rich with the poor, promote superstitious beliefs, mock religion and its functions. One scene that is considered to make fun of Islam is when Hoca performs morning prayer at sunrise. The Commission argued in Islamic belief, humans are not permitted to perform *Subuh* prayer when the sun has risen (Mutlu and Koçer 2012).

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The cinema of Turkey considers as an expression of national identity. Cinema examines various movements, exchanges, and transformations as a staple of cultural production. After emphasizing modernization through the expansion of markets (the elimination of traditional obligations), the spread of protective ideologies and movements (the redefinition of families, the recognition of identities, and the creation of national and international institutions), and the regulation of the relations between people and their rulers (freedoms, human and civil rights, and popular sovereignty), it also notes that the spread of westernization in the form of entertainment media, which is film, is used to uphold the ideology of secularism initiated by Atatürk.

Censorship on films in Turkey is one way to maintain the secular ideology of the Turkish state. There has been a significant change in behavior towards religion in film. As seen in the case of the film *Umut*, film censorship is carried out not only to maintain secular ideology but also to protect the authenticity of religion by trying to redefine the place of religion in the modern Turkish society.

The analysis result shows secularism in Turkey is not just repressing religion, but also a struggle to limit and establish the role of religion in the country. Film is a medium used as a tool to present secular values and shows project Turkey as a country that wants to change to a modern direction.

The weakness of this study was the inability to watch films censored in the period of 1939-1990. For this reason, further research is needed to deepen the analysis, for example study of the comparison of film censorship in Turkey and in Indonesia in the frame of a nation state.

### **References**

#### **Books**

- Arslan, Savaş (2011). *Cinema in Turkey A New Critical History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Caliskan, E., & Waldman, S. A. (2017). *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Daver, B. (1988). *Secularism in Turkey*. Istanbul: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi.
- Heper, Metin, Nur Bilge Criss (2009). *Historical Dictionary of Turkey*. Maryland, Toronto and Plymouth, UK: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Kili, S. (2003). *The Atatürk Revolution: A Paradigm of Modernization*. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası.
- Zücher, Erik J (2003). *History of Modern Turkey*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Straubhaar, J., LaRose, R., & Davenport, L. (2012). *Media Now: Understanding Media, Culture, and Technology*. Boston: Wadsworth.

- Sugiyono (2012). *Qualitative Quantitative Research Methods and R & D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Tapper, R. (1991). *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Tarhanlı, İ. (1993). *Muslim Society, 'Secular' State: The Directorate of Religious Affairs in Turkey*. Istanbul: AFA.
- Yakuz, M. H. (2009). *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Özdemir, A., Frank, K. (2000). *Visible Islam in Modern Turkey*. UK: Macmillan Press.

### **Journals**

- Behlil, M. (2010). "Close Encounters ? : Contemporary Turkish Television And Cinema." *Widescreen Journal*  
<http://widescreenjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/25/29>
- Berktaş, Esin. (2013). "The Cinema in Turkey During 1940s." *International Scholarly and Scientific Research & Innovation* 7 (2), 380-389.
- Bruijn, P. (2012). "Islam Goes Hollywood: An Exploratory Study on Islam in Turkish Cinema." *CINEJ Cinema Journal* 2 (1), 19-41.
- Mutlu, D. K., & Koçer, Z. (2012). "A Different Story of Secularism: The Censorship of Religion in Turkish Films of the 1960s and Early 1970s." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 15 (1), 70-88.
- Toprak, B. (2005). "Secularism and Islam: The Building of Modern Turkey." *Macalester International* 15 (9), 27-43.
- Yorulmaz, B., & Blizek, W. L. (2014). "Islam in Turkish Cinema." *Journal of Religion & Film* 18 (2), 1-18.

### **Articles**

- Kocamaner, H. (2010). "Secular Representations of Religion on Turkish Television." *The Social Science Research Council*. <https://tif.ssrc.org/2010/08/21/religion-on-turkish-television/>
- Önal, H. (2014). "From Clichés to Mysticism: Evolution of Religious Motives in Turkish Cinema." *Semanticscholar*  
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/63b7/e15d7fd3f080b01b1e50dfa9922745bcda4e.pdf>

### **Websites**

<http://www.antalyaff.com/en/page/index/1/25>

