



Politics by other screens: Contesting movie censorship in the late French Empire

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January, 2009. At the end of the Second World War, a new battle broke out in Morocco. Not a foreign invasion or tribal revolt, but a war of cinemas. Most Moroccans, it seemed, started going to the movies. Muslims made up half of the moviegoing population in cities, and nearly 95 percent in small towns.¹ A *New York Times* reporter captured fans' enthusiasm in a 1949 article:

Almost entirely illiterate, severely bitten by the movie bug, the Arab audiences consider the time which they spend in a picture theatre as a period out of this world. They go to get away from their sordid lot and the hopelessness of their economic condition. They come into the theatre like lambs and leave like lions, exhilarated by the sensuous strumming of music and the momentary transfer into another existence.²

Small shopkeepers and veiled housemaids filled the cheaper seats while wealthier merchants and notables would sit in the more costly seats in the rear of the theater. They nibbled on melon seeds and Spanish peas while commenting on the action on the screen.

There was more afoot than the desire for an evening's entertainment. With no parliament, no elections, and no civil liberties, Moroccans transferred political life to the public, cultural sphere. Cinema became a principal arena for political contestation. Every powerful interest in Morocco sought to control what these new moviegoers saw: the French, the nationalist opposition, religious leaders, and even the Sultan himself. Who should go to the movies? Who should be prohibited, and from which theaters? Which movies should they see, and in what languages? In 1947-48, boycotts, demonstrations, riots and police actions spread to movie theaters in every major city.

The cinema war peaked with the affair of the Boujeloud Cinema in Fez. In June 1948, bourgeois nationalists mounted a boycott against the Boujeloud during the Arab-Israeli war, and then bought the theater after running it out of business. The Boujeloud affair became a veritable crisis of state in the eyes of French authorities in Rabat. It pitted the French against nationalists and enflamed political tensions among Moroccans

themselves. In retrospect, the cinema war of 1947-48 was the opening campaign in the decade-long process of decolonization.

Cinema, as an art form and social practice, shaped the political contest. It tilted the politics of decolonization toward battles for the control of the public sphere and for hegemony of political discourse. It also put back into play previous conflicts over cinema, under Vichy. In 1948 as in 1941, Jews played an important, and tragic, role in the battle over the public sphere. The consequences of the cinema war for the future of the public sphere, democracy, and tolerance in Morocco were therefore ambiguous.

The Boujeloud affair was just one field of battle in cinema wars across the late French empire. The French had set the stage for conflict in the 1920s, when they politicized cinemas by using them as venues of propaganda. In response, opposition groups competed for use of the space for their own propaganda, and for control of movie censorship. Their rival claims to responsibility for public morality were part of the larger contest over legitimacy of the colonial state. The French guarded the privilege of the state over movie censorship against such challenges.

The precise nature of the cinema conflict varied across the Franco-Arab colonial world, reflecting the particular political circumstances of a colony and city. In Fez, the nationalists' boycott brought forth ethnic tensions surrounding censorship: who should be included in the nation, who excluded? In Damascus, Syria, by contrast, it was religious authorities who fought for control of censorship, and it was women's presence in cinema that was the focus of the battle. This difference reflected the different social and political context of the battle for independence in each country. In both cases, however, the cinema itself became a surrogate for an electoral system in deciding who had a right to representation in the seats and on stage. The battles were indeed politics by other screens.

The boycott of the Boujeloud Cinema in Fez, 1948

The history of colonial Fez

In the 1940s, Fez was a city of about 175,000 inhabitants, mostly Muslim. Ten percent of Fassis were Jewish Moroccans; five percent were Europeans. Jews lived in the Mellah, a quarter separated from the old city (medina) by the Boujeloud garden. The French lived in Fez's "new city," built since the occupation in 1912 to the south of the medina. In 1912, Fez had been the seat of Moroccan government. By 1948, however, the medina had become a virtual museum, preserved by French urbanists but emptied of power. The heads of the city's top families had departed to work in the booming cities of the Atlantic coast: Rabat, the capital, and Casablanca, Morocco's metropolis. Their families stayed behind in Fez, but social and economic life was utterly transformed. Fez's artisanal guilds had collapsed due to the depression and competition from imports. The middle

classes suffered unemployment because of the government's transfer to Rabat. And peasants uprooted from the countryside filled the old quarters of the medina.

The economic crisis in Fez set conditions for the rise of a nationalist movement. The Fassi bourgeoisie built the movement upon the city's reputation as the most authentic and Islamic city in Morocco, especially in comparison to the new coastal towns and the Berber tribal regions allied with the French. During the 1920s and 1930s, a new generation graduated from the elite schools (madrasas) of Fez, demanding reform and rights equal to those of the French. Hope for equal rights, economic reform, and cultural assimilation was raised briefly by the rule of the Popular Front in Paris, 1936-37. But in Fez, as elsewhere in the French empire, those hopes were dashed. With the threat of war, the power of the French political right prevailed, culminating in the Vichy government of 1940-44. Fez nationalists cast aside calls for equality in assimilation, and in 1944 issued a manifesto demanding complete independence from France. At the same time, they founded a nationalist political party called Istiqlal (independence).³

The Istiqlal movement grew quickly in 1945, when a deadly famine pushed the population toward revolt against the French Protectorate. American propaganda, which promised democracy and freedom for all peoples, also fueled nationalist opposition. The Istiqlal party looked for inspiration to the Arab League, founded that same year in Cairo. It promoted a revival of Arabic culture and Arab political solidarity, especially as Palestine moved toward civil war in 1947.

Cinema in 1940s Morocco

Cinema gained popularity alongside nationalism. In 1948, Morocco's 85 moviehouses sold 600,000 tickets, quadruple the number sold in 1943. New moviegoers were mostly young men. While most of Morocco's moviehouses were in cities, a quarter of them were located in small towns. Rural theaters and those in the medinas were considered "third class," meaning they catered exclusively to indigenous Moroccans. There were just a dozen "first-class" theaters, located in the new cities of Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, Meknès and Marrakech. Their audiences were primarily the wealthiest French settlers.

The surge in moviegoing since 1943 overflowed the capacity of the "third-class" theaters. Ordinary Moroccan movie fans began attending the mixed "second-class" theaters that catered to the middle class. In the eyes of the older, Europeanized clientele, their arrival was an unwelcome cultural invasion. Audiences in second-class cinemas liked to watch historical dramas or romantic pictures in polite silence. French civil servants, for example, simply adored the films of Marcel Pagnol like *The Baker's Wife*, a 1938 portrait of a Provençal village. But when Hollywood action flicks showed at a second-class cinema, young Moroccans flocked to them. And they enjoyed them loudly. According to a 1943 American marketing report, there was

...very little booing and shouting except in third class-theaters where the majority of admissions is from the laboring classes and the Moors. These people will talk about a film for days after having seen it and have extraordinary memories for even the slightest

details....Native theaters are fairly noisy when the film is one of action, but there is nothing but silence for other kinds of films. The preference of all is quite clearly for the action film, war, jungle, western, historical, etc.⁴

Ordinary Moroccan moviegoers, in other words, liked to go to the movies much as popular audiences in France did, or immigrant communities in Boston and New York did. It was a social event, where loud comment and conversation were permitted especially when the language of the film itself was foreign and not well understood.

Moroccan spectators loved Egyptian musicals most of all. "They sit through a picture again and again for the singing," remarked a Moroccan theater owner in 1949.⁵ Popular Egyptian movies played continuously, for years, at second-run theaters. Egypt's "Hollywood on the Nile" boomed in this era. Before 1943, only 20 Egyptian movies had made their way to Morocco. In 1947 alone, 54 were imported. Egyptian movies had more commercial appeal than Hollywood not only because actors spoke Arabic and sang songs. The plots, too, had political resonance for Moroccans, who like Egyptians lived in a socially polarized, largely rural, colonial society ruled by a monarchy.⁶

Cinema became the site of social conflict in 1940s Morocco for the same reasons it had 30 years before in the United States. As a new public space, cinema brought different classes, genders, and ethnic groups into cultural contact. In the United States, the presence of poor immigrants and women in movie theaters caused acute public anxiety in the 1910s.⁷ In Morocco, the conflict occurred in reverse, because the foreign minority were not poor immigrants, they were the class with power.

Conflict flared during the Second World War when Europeans and American soldiers complained about the poor hygiene of Moroccans. In response, municipal authorities launched a public health campaign, sanitizing theaters with insecticide and blocking entrance to customers considered poorly dressed. In Meknès-Jadid (the "new city" of Meknès) shopowners near the Riff Cinema went one step farther. In a 1945 petition to the mayor, they demanded a complete ban on Egyptian movies:

During the week an Arabic film is shown, the neighborhood is transformed into a veritable garbage dump. Beginning at eight in the morning, shopfronts are invaded by talkative natives who are disgustingly dirty. They routinely throw orange peels on the sidewalks... while leaning against shop windows that simply cannot be kept clean. In the evening, and when the movies let out, the sidewalks and doorways become toilets. This is not even to mention the moviehouse itself, which will soon become unacceptable to Europeans. We hope that you recognize that there are enough moviehouses in the Old City for the projection of Arab films. In advance, we thank you sincerely.

The mayor forwarded their demand to Rabat, but the head of the Cinema Service responded that banning Arabic films was illegal. He proposed instead that the government encourage the construction of new theaters for Arabs in the old cities.⁸

There was, no doubt, a question of public health. But the motive was clearly political. The shopowners and the French authorities agreed that it was preferable not to mix

Europeans and local Moroccans in the same public spaces. Although the French-built zones were officially called “new cities,” they were routinely referred to in official correspondence as “European cities.” It was this unspoken line of demarcation that nationalists sought to violate, in a direct challenge to colonial segregation. Movie theaters were a perfect venue for such a challenge, because their mixed crowds subverted the implicit hierarchy of colonial society.⁹

Islamic religious authorities and the Sultan took a different approach from the nationalists: they challenged French control of censorship with rival claims to authority over public morality. Like the founder of the French Protectorate, General Hubert Lyautey, Muslim authorities sought to preserve cultural differences between the French and Moroccan Muslims. They were opposed to the new habits of young nationalists who explored modern life in the cafes and cinemas of the new cities. In Fez, religious elites were horrified by evolution of the Place du Commerce, outside of the Jewish Mellah. French soldiers had taken it over, and cafes and cinemas had multiplied there, along with brothels. In the eyes of Fez elites, cinemas and brothels alike made the Place du Commerce a scene of moral decadence. Meanwhile, in Casablanca, cinemas caused anxiety as the city became a magnet for poor rural migrants who built its first bidonvilles in the 1940s. Thousands of single men settled in the city, causing alarm to fathers of daughters. Economic stress during the war drove many women into prostitution, and it was noted that Muslim prostitutes watched Rita Hayworth movies to expand their repertoires of seduction. Respectable women dared not go to cinemas unescorted by men, for fear of being mistaken for a prostitute.¹⁰

Women’s exclusion from cinema became the essential link in the uneasy alliance between secular nationalists and religious leaders. Although they disagreed with religious leaders on the issue of cultural contact, nationalists joined them in the 1930s in blaming foreign influence for the rise of corruption and immorality. Their combined campaign targeted mainly women, in an effort to uphold gender segregation in public as an authentic cultural tradition. Conservative elites in Fez condemned the presence of women in movie theaters as a violation of public morality. The Pasha of Fez banned Muslim women from entering the Boujeloud Gardens, because too many women were circulating the city without proper male escort. The Pasha of Tétouan built a new moviehouse reserved for women only, in order to maintain moral propriety.

Foreign corruption came not only from the West: Egyptian movies were also deemed immoral. In 1946, for example, when the Sultan complained that immoral scenes in *Cairo Nights* (1939) would encourage Moroccan Muslims to drink alcohol, French censors banned the film.¹¹ Numerous other Egyptian movies appeared on the censor boards’ lists of movies to be cut or banned during the 1940s.

The tension between the Sultan and the Istiqlal on the question of cultural identity may help to explain the tremendous popularity of the Egyptian singer-composer Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab. He became a top star in Morocco after the release of his 1933 movie, *The White Rose*, which continued to play through the 1940s, alongside his later films like

Forbidden Love. Audiences laughed when Abd al-Wahhab was forced to hide inside a big radio set when his beloved's father heard him serenading her and stormed into the room. The father thought the voice came from the radio.¹² Abd al-Wahhab's fans found in his screen persona a modernity that was wholesome and homegrown, not foreign and corrupt. His music blended Arab and European traditions, and he combined European suits with a fez. According to historian Daniel Rivet, Egyptian stars were popular because they embodied "a hesitant modernism that was made familiar through the reassuring presence of a tarboosh (fez)." Egyptian movies, like Hollywood movies, revealed the private lives of the modern couples that young Moroccans saw from only a distance on the streets of the new (European) cities: "A man would give his arm to his wife-- unveiled of course—as they proudly pushed a carriage with a baby guzzling its bottle."¹³

Clip from *The White Rose* online at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99yppuiCZrk>

Conservative Muslims were not the only ones to regard young people's love of Egyptian movies with suspicion. French officials in Rabat also regarded them as dangerous. In 1947, French censors banned the Egyptian film *Leila the Bedouin* for its war songs that called on Arabs to rebel. In 1948, censors cut a song in the Egyptian movie *Nights of Joy* that called for Arab unity, because it had incited nationalist demonstrations in a Casablanca theater.¹⁴ Later that year, Resident-General Alphonse Juin recommended reducing imports of Egyptian movies, in order to give market share to officially sanctioned Franco-Moroccan movies. The plan did not succeed: Egyptian movies continued to grow in popularity. In 1950 they took 13.5 percent of ticket receipts in Morocco.

French censors also used the suppression of nationalist sentiment to cultivate the good will of the Moroccan Sultan. Along with his moral apprehensions, the Sultan expressed regular concern about republicanism in Egyptian movies. Back in 1940 the Egyptian movie *General Lasheen* (1938) had drawn loud applause at Casablanca's Regent Cinema when a peasant in the film said, "It is not so much for the Sultan that we act, but for the Nation." Soon afterward, the French reserved a place on the censorship board for a representative of the palace. He was the sole Moroccan on the otherwise all-French board. In its 1947 decree to ban *Leila the Bedouin*, the censorship board singled out objections to the portrayal of the monarch as a playboy. In 1948, even in the absence of the Sultan's representative, the board hastily banned an Egyptian movie for showing a sultan's daughter in a bad light.¹⁵ This eagerness to please the Sultan must be understood in the context of the monarch's growing sympathy for the Istiqlal party's nationalist movement during the 1940s.

The boycott of the Boujeloud Cinema

Two postwar trends—the ascendancy of a popular nationalist movement and the emergence of cinema as a political arena – converged in June 1948 at the Cinema Boujeloud in Fez. The Boujeloud was a third-class cinema whose clientele was 90 percent Muslim and 10 percent Jewish. It was located in the Boujeloud Gardens, a frontier between the old city and the new. Since 1942, it had been owned by a group of modest Frenchmen led by Robert Lente. Their relations with Boujeloud audiences were apparently good. At the theater’s grand reopening in 1943, after a restoration, they presented films with Arab subjects, not French: two documentaries – on madrasas in Fez and on French aid to Africans on pilgrimage to Mecca – and a 1939 Egyptian feature, *The Doctor*.¹⁶

There is little evidence of social or political conflict in the mid-1940s. French municipal authorities were invited to the grand reopening. And nationalists ran advertisements for the Boujeloud in their official newspaper, *al-`Alam* (The World).¹⁷ The Boujeloud had apparently become, by 1947, a meeting point for Arab culture and politics. Elites of Fez even attended shows at the Boujeloud with their wives and daughters, according to the famous sociologist Fatima Mernissi. She remembers attending Egyptian nationalist films like *Dananir*, where the diva Umm Kalthoum played the role of a slave girl in the court of Harun al-Rashid, the great Arab caliph of the ninth century. She sang songs of the Arabs’ glorious past, and the need to restore that glory. Mernissi figures that the nationalist value of such movies outweighed chances of moral censure at women’s attendance.¹⁸ *Dananir* was a big hit in that era, a favorite of Arabs from Iraq to Morocco during Ramadan and other holidays.

But in 1948 all seemed to change at the Boujeloud. Boycotts against cinemas had broken out in late 1947 in Rabat and nearby Salé. The following spring, the boycotts spread to most major cities in Morocco, suggesting that the general Muslim population supported them. But the motive for the boycotts was not immediately clear. Because they first broke out during the civil war in Palestine, they appeared linked to that war. The nationalist newspaper, *al-`Alam*, had published articles in August 1947 that were anti-Zionist, but not anti-Semitic. In “Charlie Chaplin, the Jew,” for example, the paper quoted the star as insisting that all Jews should not be sent to Palestine, just as all Christians should not be sent to Rome. Discrimination in all forms must be ended, and the rights of Jews must be secured in Europe and elsewhere, Chaplin reportedly said. The paper also published several articles against Zionism and the Israeli army’s victory in early June 1948.¹⁹ Not one word, however, was published in the paper about any of the cinema boycotts, including the boycott of the Boujeloud, a crisis that lasted until October. This omission is remarkable in light of French claims that the boycott was motivated by anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

The boycott of the Boujeloud Cinema began in late May 1948. For weeks, nearly all of its 1,100 seats remained empty. The cinema went bankrupt, and on June 3, 1948, Robert Lente closed its doors. Two weeks later, the group that mounted the boycott bought the

Boujeloud for 12.4 million francs. It was said that Robert Lente planned to retire in France. The leader of the new owners was Mohamed Laghzaoui, one of the first Moroccan movie producers and a member of a leading family in Fez. He had more than 20 partners, mostly businessmen and lawyers, all with Arab names. The vendors were all European.²⁰

French authorities reacted with alarm and suspicion. The boycott and sale of the Boujeloud became known as the “Boujeloud Affair,” subject of a thick file now stored at the foreign ministry archives in Nantes, France.²¹ Some French officials believed that Laghzaoui was using a political issue for purely commercial ends, and that he sought to profit by exploiting public opinion on the Palestine war. Other officials believed that the Boujeloud was at base a political issue. Laghzaoui and his partners, they believed, were preparing a nationalist plot against the French regime, and they sought in the Boujeloud Cinema a dangerous venue for propaganda.

The file in Nantes shows that the French were divided not only by their viewpoints, but also by their methods. Some respected the rule of law; others were ready to violate the law in the name of state security. The essential issue concerned the status of Moroccans: under the Protectorate, were they citizens equal under the law to Europeans? Generally, civilian officials in Fez respected the legal rights of the Laghzaoui group. Military officials and higher civilians in Rabat, however, were more aggressive. Resident-General Juin, in particular, pressured civil servants in Fez to impose separate rules on Arabs. For six months, negotiations passed from office to office, to police stations to courts, and into the streets. The Boujeloud Affair became, in effect, a negotiation over the boundaries between colonial privilege and citizens’ rights in postwar Morocco.

At the start, in June 1948, Rabat ordered Fez officials to delay the opening of the Boujeloud. They advised making verbal demands for proof that the building met construction codes and public health requirements. The civil servants in Fez soon tired of the game, and by late July the secret police renewed pressure on them to keep the theater closed. The police were convinced that the nationalists were blackmailing Jewish theater owners. They were also afraid that nationalists would take control of all the moviehouses in the country that catered to Muslims. Juin himself intervened. He directly ordered Fez officials to “block the opening of the Boujeloud by all means possible.” On August 3, they obeyed by issuing a decree ordering the theater closed for unspecified violations.²²

Later in August, Laghzaoui responded with a request to open the Boujeloud for the Eid Saghir holiday at the end of Ramadan. Fez police considered his request, but military authorities intervened. They claimed that opening the Boujeloud for the holiday would be a political victory for the nationalists. They counseled the Fez police to invent more building code violations as a pretext to keep the theater closed.²³

Nationalist pressure on Fez officials continued to mount. Finally, in October, civil authorities sent a message to Rabat: there were no legal grounds left to keep the Boujeloud closed; it must be allowed to open. Moderates in Rabat argued in favor of

opening the Boujeloud, in order to put an end to the nationalists' high-profile campaign. They prevailed, and approved opening the Boujeloud for the Eid Kabir, the biggest Islamic holiday of the year. Laghzaoui sought the maximum profit from his political victory. He scheduled a grand reopening with two Egyptian films, which played to full houses on October 14. *Sallamah* (1945) played twice in the afternoon. It starred Umm Kalthum in the role of a simple shepherdess with a beautiful voice sold as a slave to the caliph in Baghdad. *Long Live Women* (1943), a contemporary comedy about three engaged couples, played in the evening. Both movies were made by a top Egyptian director, Togo Mizrahi, who was Jewish.²⁴

The victory for law and civil rights was not, however, definitive. French officials did not stop debating the Boujeloud Affair. They exchanged increasingly alarmist memos about the nationalist menace. At the head of the campaign against the moderates in Rabat was General LaParra, military chief for the Fez region. Under his authority, officers continued to search for legal means of closing the Boujeloud again. They claimed to discern anti-Semitic and racist motives in the Arabs. In December, one official proposed to revive a 1941 Vichy law as a means of asserting state control over the public sphere. The law required an identity card for all employees in the movie industry.²⁵

It was a serious matter, in 1948, to propose reviving a Vichy law. Vichy had condemned the domination of the movie industry by Jews, and had used the 1941 law to expel Jewish theater owners and distributors from it. In 1945, the Fourth Republic had claimed victory over Vichy and Nazism in the name of democracy and rule of law, especially regarding Jews. It was also tragic (or deeply cynical) to propose a law once used against Jews to be used against Arabs in the name of protecting Jews. In reality, Vichy influence survived long into the Fourth and even Fifth republics, especially among the military and police. Repressive methods invented by Vichy were used, for example, in Paris against Algerians and communists in the early 1960s.²⁶ In Morocco, as in Algeria, Indochina, and elsewhere, the prospect of losing the empire strained fundamental principles of the Republic.

A battle for the public sphere, not against Jews

It appears, however, that at root the Boujeloud Affair was not a battle for or against the rights of Jews in the movie industry. It is true that secret police reports accused boycott leaders in Salé and Rabat of targeting Jews whom they claimed earned huge profits. And it is true that the boycotts coincided with the Palestine war. Zionist propaganda spread throughout Morocco after the war, and nationalists did condemn Jews who embraced Zionism. But the definitive rupture between Jews and the Arab opposition came with the arrival of General Juin in June 1947, according to Moroccan historian Mohammed Kenbib. Under Juin's predecessor, the liberal Eirik Labonne, there had been a rapprochement between Jews and Arabs in the Istiqlal and communist parties. But with Juin's repressive measures in 1947-48, nationalists were distracted. They lost sight of the Zionists' quiet campaign to recruit emigrants to Palestine and they let their alliances with Jews languish.²⁷ Meanwhile, tensions rose between Jews, crowded and

impoverished in their Mellahs, and Arab and Berber peasants who migrated to cities, especially in Oujda, a major gathering point for Jews intending to emigrate to Israel.

That tension exploded into violence just a few days after Robert Lente closed the Boujeloud. Beginning on June 8, 1948, riots broke out in Oujda and Djerada, where 42 people were killed. It started with a fight between an Arab and a Jew. In his June 27 report, Juin blamed the violence on Arab anti-Semitism. But Jews and communists in Oujda that it was in fact French officials who provoked the riots. They were right, according to recent research by Kenbib.²⁸ That French officials fabricated anti-Semitism might explain why the first mention of the word “pogrom” in French records on Oujda and Djerada appeared only months later, during the trial of rioters in February 1949.²⁹

French officials also stigmatized Laghzaoui as an anti-Semite. They claimed, for example, that Jews were among the previous owners forced to sell the Boujeloud cinema. They also suggested that Laghzaoui was plotting to purchase all movie theaters that Jews profited from, either as owners or distributors. One secret police memo asserted that the Laghzaoui group had voted in December 1948 to prohibit sales of shares to Jews.³⁰

These suspicions contradicted other details about the Affair. Laghzaoui’s lawyer, Joseph Jacob, was himself Jewish. And Laghzaoui had chosen two movies made by a Jewish director for his premiere in October 1948. Not one police report in the thick file mentioned a conflict between Muslims and Jews at the Boujeloud Cinema. There were also no complaints from Jews about being refused tickets there. No document in the file directly links anti-Semitic sentiments or statements to the Laghzaoui group.

To the contrary, there is historical reason to believe that relations between Muslims and Jews in Fez in 1948 were better than in other parts of the country. Mernissi recalls, in the memoir of her youth in Fez, that Jews appeared much like Muslims, wearing robes similar to the Muslim jellaba, and that stories told in her home emphasized the common past of Muslims and Jews in Andalusia. The medina of Fez did not suffer the same degree of crowding from urban migration as Casablanca and Oujda did. That said, however, Mernissi and Istiqlal leaders like Laghzaoui came into contact mainly with the 6,000 better-off Jews in the medina or new city. They did not likely ever meet many of the poorer Jews who lived in the Mellah. Most of these 10,000 Jews would choose to migrate to Israel in the next decade.³¹

The mismatch between accusation and evidence suggests that the French secret police and military authorities might not have acted primarily out of a desire to defend Jews. Their motive appears to have more to do with discrediting Arab nationalists by calling them anti-Semites and fascists, as they and the British did often in the 1940s. Recent research suggests that Moroccans generally ignored German, Spanish, and Italian fascist radio propaganda.³²

This is not to say that nationalists of the Istiqlal were not anti-Zionist. The war in Palestine likely did provide a political motive in mounting the boycotts. But available evidence suggests that Moroccan nationalists were inspired more by pan-Arabism than

local anti-Semitism. Their newspaper, *al-`Alam*, regularly reported on the affairs of the entire Arab world. It featured articles on modern Arab culture in Egypt, Tunisia, and Lebanon. A series published in August 1947 (when the first boycotts broke out) traced the historical roots of Arab constitutionalism. The articles spoke in terms of universal human rights. As noted above, only a few articles were devoted to anti-Zionism. This is the necessary context in which to understand the boycotts.³³

The motive behind the Boujeloud Affair was more likely the nationalists' intent to establish a public sphere in Arabic, autonomous from the French sphere. After suffering near-complete censorship in the late 1930s, Arab nationalists had re-established their Arabic papers in 1946, just a year before the boycotts and campaign to purchase theaters. Istiqlal's leaders must have noticed that the illiterate majority of Muslims loved movies. Someone like Mohamed Laghzaoui, especially, would have understood the propaganda power of cinema. (In 1948, his film *Desert Wedding* [*Les Noces de Sable*] was shown at the Venice film festival.) Laghzaoui no doubt seized the chance, at the Boujeloud, to extend nationalist influence among the popular audiences of third-class cinemas.

It is also likely that, for bourgeois nationalists like Laghzaoui, the boycotts presented a commercial advantage. In Rabat, for example, the group that led the boycott explained to the secret police that they had wanted to build a new cinema, but the French had denied them a permit. Consequently they had decided to force a sale of the existing Alhambra Cinema by boycotting it. This is perhaps why the secret police reported that Laghzaoui intended to buy two more cinemas in Meknès at the same time that he planned to import 50 Egyptian movies. Under Moroccan owners, the theaters would become an inter-urban circuit of Istiqlal influence.³⁴

The French expressed real fear of an Arabic public sphere. They understood well the power of the press and cinema. That is likely why all mention of the Boujeloud Affair was censored, even in the French press. That was also why, in a report of June 22, 1948, an agent enumerated the four potential gains by Arabs if they became movie theater owners: 1) They would find it easier to convene large political meetings; 2) They could spread stronger propaganda through speeches and recordings; 3) They could project banned films by circumventing the censor; 4) They could earn the money needed to support nationalist actions.³⁵

At the same time that the French tried to block the emergence of an Arabic public sphere, they mobilized to expand the French sphere. In 1948 they adopted quotas on American films. Three years before, they had founded a French company for producing movies in Arabic. Several feature films were made as co-productions between French filmmakers and Moroccan (Arab) producers: *Yasmina*, *al-Majnun* (1946), *Ibn al-Qadar* (1946), and *Kenzi* (1948). In addition, short documentaries produced by the official Centre Cinématographique Marocain were shown on the movie caravans that the Cinema Service in Rabat sent to the rural reaches of Morocco. The apparent goal was to preempt nationalist influence among peasants and tribes.³⁶ On the pretext of preserving a market for these "indigenous" films, as seen above, Juin and others sought to limit

Egyptian imports. Their motive was clear: If there was to be an Arabic public sphere, the French should control it.

The debate about Laghzaoui's proposal for a film bureau reinforces this interpretation. Laghzaoui made the proposal in October 1948, at the time of the grand premiere at the Boujeloud. He proposed to bring together French technical expertise with Arab financing and cultural taste in order to make more popular movies. The ministry of foreign affairs in Paris dismissed Rabat's fear that Laghzaoui would produce films that "did not correspond exactly to our views." More important, Paris reasoned, was the opportunity to build a Maghrebi-Islamic movie industry dominated by French culture, to compete with Egyptian cinema. After all, Moroccan films made so far by the French alone had flopped at the box office.³⁷ Paris prevailed over Rabat's impulse toward militant repression with a plan to win the hearts and minds of Moroccans in the cultural sphere.

What Paris apparently did not understand, and what had led to the Boujeloud crisis, was that Juin had put an iron fist into their velvet glove of persuasion. Juin's aim was to reverse the liberal policies of his predecessor, Labonne, who had permitted the Sultan to make an Arab nationalist speech in Tangier. Juin staunchly guarded the privileges of the French colons, silenced the Sultan with threats to depose him, and repressed the Istiqlal. But he served under the Fourth Republic, not Vichy, and so he kept a pretense of support for rule of law.

And so it was that the Boujeloud Cinema came to act as a surrogate political arena, and that Jews came to be used as a surrogate issue. Both sides exploited the issue of Jews' role in the nation for other political ends. For Juin, the Jewish question enabled him to appear as though the French regime acted in defense of liberal values. For the nationalists, the Palestine War enabled them to advance their local aims as part of an international cause for justice. The consequences were grave. Istiqlal's strategy stoked rising hostility toward Jews and ended with the exclusion of Jews from the movie public and so from the nation. France's response not only tainted Moroccan nationalism as more intolerant than it really was, but also set a precedent for the violation of the rule of law. This was an ambiguous precedent in the political process that would lead to Moroccan independence.

Censorship and women's public morality in Damascus, 1928-1944

Ten years before the Boujeloud boycott, the battle for control of movie censorship peaked in Damascus, Syria. The French had ruled Syria since 1920, when they deposed King Faysal and split the Syrian Arab Kingdom into the mandates of Lebanon and Syria. In contrast to Fez and other Moroccan cities, Syrian cities saw little European settlement. There was no stark opposition between a French new city and an Arab old one. Instead, cities like Damascus saw the growth of new extramural neighborhoods for wealthy Arabs. The primary social cleavage was between old elites and new, rich and

poor. These tensions complicated the politics of opposition to French rule. Old notables sympathized with conservative religious leaders who blamed the French for the moral corruptions of secular modernism. But new elites embraced modernism and waged their campaign against the French less on moral grounds than political: they tried to prove that the League of Nations mandate was unwarranted precisely because they were already modern and civilized enough for self-rule.³⁸

Cinema's emergence in Marjeh Square

While cinema had arrived in Morocco with the social sanction of French colons and the Sultan himself, in Ottoman Syria it arrived in cafes and nightclubs run by Armenians and other minorities. In Damascus, these were located in Marjeh Square, the center of Ottoman Turkish government. Barracks and government offices juxtaposed warehouses, merchants' hotels outside of the sanctified walls of the Old City. The first regular movie showings in Damascus were held at the Zahra (Flower) Café, in 1912. During World War I, the Turks built the first dedicated theater, where they screened German movies. After the Allied victory in late 1918, French movies returned to the Flower Café. The new Victory Theater featured low-brow action serials.

By 1930, American movies dominated the screens of several more cinemas in Marjeh. The theater names were decidedly un-French: the Farouk, the Ghazi, the Islahiyya. They continued to show silent films into the early 1930s. Favorite stars included Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, and Mary Pickford. Hollywood's cowboy and action pictures were more popular than European romances, because they were not morally objectionable, recalled Yusuf Wehbeh, a teacher at the Greek Orthodox high school in those years. The son of a policeman who grew up in the Marjeh neighborhood remembers Gary Cooper as his favorite star.³⁹

The earliest movie audiences, however, remained suspect to polite society. They were composed of the mostly male denizens of Marjeh square: soldiers and government officials, merchants and their transient customers, and nightclub patrons. In the years before the Talkies, even illiterate villagers watched movies. A 1927 report estimated that 2,000 peasants came weekly from the villages surrounding Damascus to Marjeh's cinemas. On the other end of the spectrum, aristocratic elites suspected to lead lives of debauchery were also associated with the district. The Flower Café, and later the Empire cinema, catered to their tastes by serving alcohol. Upstanding citizens of the old city looked on the Marjeh district with moral contempt.

They had more cause for contempt because the French so obviously appropriated the cinemas for political purposes. Immediately after their occupation in 1920, the French identified cinemas as venues for their charity events and film propaganda. They showed *Danton* about the French Revolution, and required French documentaries to be shown before features. Yusuf Wehbeh, the teacher, remembers that the first movie he ever saw was a documentary of French soldiers, projected in a public park by the French army. Soon secret police haunted Marjeh's cinemas, as they did in Morocco, to gauge audiences' political sentiments. The French mandatory regime imported to Syria

copyright regulations from the metropole that classified cinema as a morally and political suspect space, to be registered with police and subject to curfews. In 1928, the foreign ministry in Paris began reviewing all French films sent out to the empire to ensure they respected French national interest, traditions, and customs. Three years later, Paris required all films distributed in the empire to be dubbed into French.

In 1929, the high commissioner for Syria and Lebanon established a local censorship board. All members were French, under the direction of the head of the security police. The board was to judge each film imported through Beirut for potential damage to French prestige or disruption of political order. No appeals were permitted once the board banned a film.⁴⁰ One of the first movies censored by the board was Howard Hawks' 1928 *Fazil* (French title, *L'Insoumise*), because it depicted an "Arab prince marrying a European girl, whom he wants to treat as a slave." The high commissioner supported the ban because "it showed the love of a white woman for a Mohammedan and a conflict between Arabs and European troops." The French routinely censored films that featured such dangerous liaisons. Syrian spectators, for their part, loved to heap insults upon the stereotyped character of the European dancer who stole innocent Arab boys from their fiancées in Egyptian movies.⁴¹

Unnoticed at the time, the first salvo of the cinema war was fired, literally, at the Victory theater on June 20, 1928. Fire engulfed the theater and the nearby Hotel Royal, killing 12 people. While newspapers quoted police reports of an accident in the projection room, the timing and placement of the blaze look suspicious in retrospect. The Victory had only recently introduced women's matinees, and the fire took place one hour before one of them. The matinees permitted Muslim women to watch movies without violating norms of public gender segregation. Just a month before, controversy about women's presence in public had flared in Damascus when the daughter of a Beirut judge published a book, *Unveiling and Veiling*, against women's seclusion. Two months before the fire, women were attacked in Marjeh Square when they campaigned for male candidates in the April elections for a constituent assembly. Men scolded them for speaking in public. Later in 1928, women complained in the press about men who sprayed acid on them if they were not veiled enough on the street.⁴²

That same year, Muslim religious authorities protested to the French against the makers of the first Syrian feature, *The Innocent Accused* (al-Muttaham al-Bari') because it starred a Muslim actress. The French forced the filmmakers to reshoot her scenes with a German actress. The movie, about a band of thieves who terrorized the city in the Faysal era, premiered to a full house in Marjeh, but made little money because of the cost of the reshooting.⁴³ Meanwhile, several Syrian groups petitioned the French to impose stricter censorship on sexual themes in movies. The 1930 Women's Union conference passed a resolution calling on the French to protect children from immoral movies. After more protests against sexually immoral movies, the French responded in 1934 with stricter guidelines and a permanent board directly supervised by the security police. Censorship criteria were expanded to include respect for "public order and good morals" and "the religious sentiment of the population."⁴⁴

Islamic groups in Damascus, however, pressed for more: They sought control of the censorship board itself. After the 1936 elections brought a National Bloc government to power, they convinced Prime Minister Jamil Mardam Bey to support their petition to create a local censor board. The French blocked that proposal as an infringement of their sovereignty. In 1938, Islamic populists issued an ultimatum to the city's cinema owners: ban women from watching movies, or they would break all the seats in their theaters. In January 1939, they appealed to Jamil Mardam Bey, who chose to appease them because his government had been weakened by factional splits among nationalists. He promised to issue a ban on women's attendance at cinemas by the end of the week.

Backlash was violent. Students at Syrian University (now Damascus University) staged a demonstration supporting women's right to go to the movies. They argued that "cinema is a means of instruction and civilization," and that the National Bloc must therefore support women's attendance.⁴⁵ Students had battled Islamic populists previously in the conservative city of Hama, north of Damascus, where an Islamic group called al-Hidaya campaigned against women's matinees. Nationalist students stood guard at the doors of the Hama cinema where a women's matinee played. In 1938, Hama's mufti convinced the local governor to block the showing of one of Egypt's first talkies, *Song of the Heart* (Unshudat al-Fu'ad) to women. Police burst in to the theater just as the first images flickered on the screen, with orders that the movie could not be shown while women were present. The governor banned women from all films unless they obtained his prior approval.⁴⁶

At stake in these cinema wars were both leadership of opposition to French rule, and rival visions of post-independence Syrian society. Nationalists had embraced a program of social modernization through secular schools and economic aid to business and industry. Their political roots lay in the old city of Damascus, but increasingly they lived in the new wealthy suburbs and relied on students at elite high schools and the university for their demonstrations. Their weakened lines of patronage in the old city and southern districts of the capital left room for Islamic populist groups. The Islamic populists organized poor youth around an agenda emphasizing the protection and restoration of an Islamic lifeworld. They viewed the nationalists' modernization as Westernization and corruption. They gained political leverage when the National Bloc failed to convince the French to sign an independence treaty. As in Morocco, the fall of the Popular Front government undercut the position of nationalists who negotiated with France.

This political context helps to explain Jamil Mardam Bey's cooperation with the Islamic populists in January 1939. Shortly after decreeing the ban on women in cinemas (which did not hold), Mardam Bey resigned his post as prime minister and joined Islamic populists in protests against French plans to permit civic marriages and other reforms to personal status law that women had favored. The National Bloc distributed flyers proclaiming "France is an enemy of God!" and "The French want to take from you your wives, your daughters and your children!"⁴⁷

Religious leaders-- both from the establishment and from radicalized populist groups—sought to aggrandize the sphere of their authority beyond the confines of personal status law. The Ottoman Turks had secularized and centralized government control of educational and religious affairs that had once been handled by religious officials autonomous from the state. The French, however, rolled back Ottoman state centralization in order to win support for their rule. They had, for example, let the 1917 Ottoman family law languish, so that authority in family affairs reverted back to religious patriarchs. But the French had gone too far in proposing to reform personal status laws so as to equalize Christian patriarchs' authority with that of Muslims. Religious and nationalist sentiment joined in casting the law reform as an effort to steal women, reflecting the anxieties surrounding movies like the 1929 *Fazil*.

Cinema conflicts also revealed political schisms between rural and urban leaders. In 1942, the French appeased their Druze clients who complained against the 1941 Egyptian blockbuster, *Victory of Youth* (*Intisar al-Shabab*), starring the Syrian Druze princess Asmahan in the role of a poor singer who marries into a rich Cairene family. Asmahan came from the prominent Atrash family of Jabal Druze, in southern Syria. The family complained directly to the high commissioner that the movie would embarrass them if it were released in Syrian theaters. Asmahan had abandoned her husband, the Druze Prince Hassan, when she traveled to Cairo to pursue her singing career. The prince was appointed by the French to the post of minister of the war, and so likely exerted direct influence in the affair. The high commissioner heeded the request, and circumvented the censorship board to ban the movie for “political reasons.”⁴⁸

Clip from *Intisar al-Shabab* online at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAHykUh9SLs>

The banishment of Asmahan from screens in her home country recalled the French order in 1928 to reshoot scenes in the first Syrian movie starring a Muslim actress. It underlined the central role of gender in delineating opposing Islamic and French visions of modernity. Asmahan's brother and co-star, Farid al-Atrash, received no criticism for his film appearance, and would enjoy a long career as a heart throb in Egyptian movies. Asmahan was mysteriously killed in a 1944 car crash, after shooting her second movie. Shortly after *Victory of Youth* was banned, the leading Islamic groups in Damascus, al-Gharra and al-Hidaya, staged another campaign against women's presence in cinemas, at public charity balls, and in tramcars. They called again for a religiously run censorship board. And they made a new demand, for moral police to force women to dress “according to the traditions of the country.” Members of the groups pelted female moviegoers with stones outside of cinemas.⁴⁹

The French ignored Islamic demands to limit women's presence in public, but the National Bloc would not. The 1943 elections cemented their alliance with the religious movement. After the nationalist victory, the Islamic populists renewed their campaign in May 1944. This time they aimed their demands publicly at the new president, Shukri al-Quwwatli, who had cultivated their support during the elections. Al-Gharra

denounced the unveiling of women on the streets and the “detrimental influence of the cinema.” They organized a demonstration of 300 followers from the city’s poorer neighborhoods in Marjeh Square to march against the attendance of Muslim women at a charity ball, to be held that night at the French Officers’ Club in the wealthy suburb of Salihyeh. The crowd marched first to the office of an elite nationalist whose unveiled wife had helped to organize the ball. With numbers swelling to 500, the crowd then marched to the Officers’ Club. Across the street, a women’s matinee played at the swanky Empire cinema. Protesters attacked the cinema; police shot into the crowd and killed two of them. One was a religious student from a nearby village; the other, a 12-year-old boy. The crisis lasted three more days, until the government cut off food shipments to al-Gharra’s stronghold south of the city and then destroyed barricades surrounding it.⁵⁰

Islamic populists were angered by Quwwatli’s neglect of their demands, as nationalists in government escorted their unveiled wives to cinemas, hotels, and restaurants. They were angrier at the government’s refusal to field a moral police force. Prime Minister Sa`dallah Jabiri sought to appease them in a speech to the parliament: “No previous government has before battled vice, bad morals, and licentiousness as much as ours,” he proclaimed. But, he warned, morality must not cancel liberty. “We have taken measures in every city to prevent attacks on liberty, religion, public safety and the security of the army.” After the crisis ended, however, Jabiri and Quwwatli appeased the Islamic populists. No leader of al-Gharra was ever arrested; nor was the group shut down. Jabiri did not embrace women’s petitions to legalize unveiling, nor did he defend their right to go to the movies. Quwwatli, who was ill during the crisis, made an official speech in June from his balcony in Marjeh Square, to reassure the country that he remained fully in power. Absent from the scene, on the balcony with officials or in the crowd below, were women. The public and political sphere of Marjeh Square was marked, as it had always been, as masculine.

Conclusion: Cinema, censorship, and independence in Syria and Morocco

As Syrians moved toward independence in 1946, nationalists and Islamic populists renewed the tacit patriarchal pact that had bound the French to their conservative clients. Gender had become the field upon which a divided elite negotiated the terms of nationhood. And cinemas became a venue for performing the terms of the patriarchal pact precisely because they were a new form of public space without clear legal status. The Ottoman state had not clearly brought cinemas under the authority of civil law, while the League of Nations mandate required the French to respect previous laws. The legal space was left open for religious leaders to assert their authority over cinematic space.

While the French never gave up control over the censorship board, they did allow brief bans on women’s attendance in movie theaters to continue. And they left it to secular students to guard women. Pleas for women’s security went unheeded because they

threatened the tacit political bargain. The Islamic populists gained much more influence with secular nationalist leaders who, like the French, needed their influence in the popular quarters of the capital.

In Morocco, the war of the cinemas continued beyond 1948. In 1950, the nationalist Cinema Atlas opened in Casablanca, with the projection of the first Egyptian color film, *Papa Gets Married* (Baba `Aris, 1950). Prince Moulay Hassan attended the gala premiere. The crowd chanted, “Vive le Sultan, vive le Maroc!” By then, the cinema had truly become a political space for nationalist mobilization. Istiqlal opened three more nationalist cinemas in Casablanca in the next two years. The French ultimately responded harshly: the director of the Cinema Boujeloud was arrested in 1954; the following year, the Atlas was shut down.⁵¹

But it was too late. After the French deposed the Sultan in 1953, the country descended into violence. The cinema war had contributed to mobilizing the population against French rule. But at what price? Nationalists like Laghzaoui had, by allying with the Sultan and religious authorities, marginalized Jews (and women and Berbers) in the cinema and in the nation. By independence day in November 1956, most Jews – 90,000 since 1948 – had left for Israel. The battle of the cinemas had not, certainly, been the primary cause of their exodus. But the use of the Jewish question as a subterfuge in the conflict over civil rights and control of the public sphere had aggravated – perhaps unintentionally—the shattering of Moroccan society at the moment of independence.

The cases of Fez and Damascus can only suggest the variety of ways in which conflicts over movie censorship invoked the larger contest between the French and their Arab subjects in the era of decolonization. They also suggest the need to consider how the politics of exclusion in the late colonial era continued to frame debates over national cinemas after independence. The silver screen continued to reflect and project suppressed political contests long after the French left, under the one-party and monarchical regimes that have dominated the postcolonial Arab world.

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¹ Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Nantes, Fonds Protectorat Maroc (Nantes-Maroc), Direction de l’Intérieur (DI), Carton 187, Oct. 15, 1942.

² Edward Toledano, “Supercolossal, Arab Style: The moviemakers of Cairo know how the customers want their romance,” *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, March 27, 1949.

³ Jacques Berque, *Le Maghreb entre deux guerres*, 3ème éd. (Paris: Seuil, 1979) 176-99; Daniel Rivet, *Le Maroc de Lyautey à Mohammed V* (Casablanca: Porte d’Anfa, 2004) 238-43, 344-46, 378-85.

⁴ United States National Archives and Research Administration, College Park, Maryland (NARA). Record Group 84, 2997. Box 79, “Motion Picture Questionnaire—French Morocco,” May 18, 1943.

⁵ Toledano, “Supercolossal, Arab Style,” p. 51.

⁶ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, “Enquête sur les salles de cinéma,” 23 juin 1948; Carton 821, Dossier: Films Egyptiens au Maroc,” March 31, 1949.

⁷ The literature on middle-class reaction to, and assertion of control over, American movie theaters is vast. For an overview, see Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994). An important, recent contribution is Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004). Seminal works on female and immigrant audiences are, respectively: Miriam Hansen, *Babel & Babylon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) and Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁸ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, Dossier B Films, “Hygiène des salles de cinema,” Aug. 17, 1942; lettre de Rabat sur le Cinéma Colisée, 15 déc. 1943; circular of Feb. 12, 1944; letter from shopowners and residents of the Cinema Riff quarter, Jan. 8, 1945; from Pelletier, April 27, 1945; and from Chef du Service du Cinéma, May 12, 1945.

⁹ See Rivet, *Le Maroc*, pp. 224-29, 347-48.

¹⁰ Rivet, *Le Maroc*, pp. 245-49. Rivet cites a 1951 French report on prostitution in Casablanca. See also Toldeano, “Supercolossal, Arab Style.”

¹¹ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 187, “Censure Films 1939-1948,” report of Feb. 12, 1946.

¹² Toledano, “Supercolossal, Arab Style,” pp. 53, 55. In Arabic entitled *Mamnu` al-Hubb*, it was produced by Muhammad Karim in 1942.

¹³ Rivet, *Le Maroc*, pp. 243-45, 307-09; Berque, *Le Maghreb*, 183, 192-94. Egyptians themselves likely viewed their modernity in different, local terms, as nationally authentic or based on middle-class virtue in opposition to elite corruption. This theme is developed in my forthcoming book, *Cinema and the Politics of Late Colonialism*. On vernacular modernity in cinema in Egypt see Walter Armbrust, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 63-115; see also, Arjun Appadurai on “global cultures of the hypereal” in his *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 27-47; Ana M. Lopez on

movies as “spectacular experiments” in modernity in her “Early Cinema and Modernity in Latin America,” *Cinema Journal* 40:1 (Fall 2000) 48-78; and Miriam Hansen on vernacular modernities in her “Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film and Vernacular Modernism,” *Film Quarterly* 54:1 (Fall 2000) 10-22.

¹⁴ The film’s title was given only in French, *Lrs Nuits de joie*. The Arabic title is not certain, but is likely *Layali al-Uns* (Egypt, 1947).

¹⁵ Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Quai d’Orsay, Paris, Série Maroc 1944-55, Dossier 250 “Cinéma 1950-54,” reports of Dec. 30, 1948 and Nov. 28, 1950. Nantes-Maroc, Cabinet Diplomatique (CD) Carton 821, report on *Leila la Bédouine*, May 7, 1954; MAE-Nantes, Maroc, DI, Carton 187 “Censure Films 1939-1948,” reports of 1940, Feb. 12, 1946, Feb. 10, 1948; on *Maarouf le Savetier*, May 11, 1948.

¹⁶ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, Guillaume au Chef de la Région de Fès, no. 1079, Feb. 25, 1943. *Al-Duktur*, by the famous director Nyazi Mustafa at the nationalist Misr Studio, tells the story of a middle-class doctor who battles aristocratic values and cares for common Egyptians.

¹⁷ “Cinéma wa al-Aflam” *al-`Alam*, 15 août 1947, p. 3

¹⁸ Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1994) pp. 115-17.

¹⁹ “Sharli Shablin al-yahud,” *al-`Alam*, August 1, 1947, p. 3; “Laysa al-yahud min bani Isra’il,” *al-`Alam*, Aug. 20, 1947, p. 2, and the entire edition of June 2, 1948.

²⁰ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, Dossier C/Films “Exploitation Salles de Cinema,” reports dated Aug. 4, 1947; June 6, 18, 23, 1948; July 17, 20, 1948; August 4, 14, 1948; Sept. 17, 1948; and contracted dated May 26, 1948, Note de Renseignement, 11 juin 1948, Note sur l’achat par les Nationalists des Cinémas des Medinas, 22 Juin 1948. According to the “Extrait du Courrier du Maroc du 10 Juillet 1948,” the buyers were: Mohamad Laraki, Bensalem Lahlou, Ste marocaine des transports Laghzaoui, Mohamed Ben Mohamed Lahlou, Mohamed Laghzaoui, Abdelaziz Benani, Driss Loukili, Kacem Tahri, Driss Laghzaoui, Ahmed Ben Hadj Tahar Mekouar, S.A. Studios Maghreb (Casablanca), Mohamed Defili, Hadj Omar Sebti, Hadj Thami Lazrak, Abdallah Tahri.

²¹ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 90, Dossier C.

²² Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, Arrêté municipal temporaire no. 186, 3 aout 1948; Bulletin de Renseignements, “Note pour le Résident Générale,” Aug. 23, 1948; Juin to Chef Région Fès, July 15, 1948.

²³ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, Laghzaoui to Chef du Service du Cinéma, Rabat, August 4, 1948; Verlet/Le Général Laparra, chef region Fès to Directeur de l’Interieur, Rabat, August 4, 1948; Avis de M. le Chef de Bataillon Verlet, August 4, 1948.

²⁴ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, Note de Renseignements, Georges, no. 1404, Oct. 22, 1948; no. 12842, Michel, Oct. 16, 1948; Chef region au Directeur Interieur Rabat, Oct. 12, 1948; Note à

l'attention de M. Vallat, Oct. 7, 1948; "Note sur le cinéma Boujeloud de Fès, Sept. 27, 1948. The Arabic titles of the films are *Sallamah* and *Tahya al-Sittat*.

²⁵ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, LaParra to Général d'Armée, Rabat, July 21, 1948; Matte to Chef Région Fès, Delegation aux Affaires Urbaines no. 589, Dec. 7, 1948. The Vichy precedent was the Arrêté Résidentiel of August 14, 1941.

²⁶ Alain Dewerpe, "State Violence in Twentieth Century France: Charonne, February 8, 1962, A Political Slaughter in Paris during the Algerian War," presented at the University of Virginia, Oct. 13, 2004, later published in Alain Dewerpe, *Charonne, 8 février 1962* (Paris: Galliard, 2005).

²⁷ Mohammed Kenbib, *Juifs et musulmans au Maroc 1859-1948* (Rabat: Université Mohammed V, Thèses et Mémoires no 21, 1994) pp. 641-46, 668-71; Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Quai d'Orsay, Paris, Série Maroc 1944-55, dossier 65 "Nationalistes 1944-45," report of April 18, 1947.

²⁸ MAE-Paris, Série Maroc 1944-55 (Paris-Maroc), dossier 75, Parti communiste marocain à conseil supérieur du Parti de l'Istiqlal, July 5, 1948; see also reports on Oujda and Djerada, from June 8, 1948 to Feb. 25, 1949; Kenbib, *Juifs et musulmans*, pp. 668-86.

²⁹ Paris-Maroc, dossier 75, Juin to Paris, June 18, 1948 and "L'Affaire du 'pogrom' d'Oujda," Feb. 12, 1949.

³⁰ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, dossier l'Affaire Boujeloud, Dec. 3, 1948; Bulletin de Renseignements Spécial, no. 96, Aug. 24, 1949.

³¹ Rivet, *Le Maroc*, pp. 245-49, 398.

³² Kenbib, *Les Juifs et Musulmans*, pp. 630-38, 668-83. On responses to fascism in eastern Arab lands, see Lukasz Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966); Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

³³ Rivet, *Le Maroc*, 373; Kenbib, *Juifs et Musulmans*, 640, 650, 661-672.

³⁴ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, dossier C/9a "Films. Exploitation salles de cinéma," "La vie politique," Sûreté Rabat, June 6, 1948; dossier "l'Affaire Boujeloud," Bulletin de Renseignements Spécial, no. 96, 24 août 1949.

³⁵ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 190, dossier "l'Affaire Boujeloud," Note sur l'achat par les Nationalistes des Cinémas des Médinas, June 22, 1948.

³⁶ In the 1930s, several French famous French movies were made in Morocco, including *Itto* (1934) about a Frenchwoman among the Berbers, by Jean-Benoit-Lévy, and orientalist colonial adventures like *La Bandera* (1935) by Julien Duvivier and *L'Appel du Silence* (1936) by Léon Poirier. On Moroccan co-productions of the 1940s, see Moulay Driss Jaïdi, *Le Cinéma colonial:*

Histoire du cinéma au Maroc (Rabat: Almajal, 2001) 79-160; on earlier French productions, see David Slavin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France, 1919-1939* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2001).

³⁷ Nantes-Maroc, DI Carton 187, "Censure films 1939-1948, dossier "Contrôle des Films/Correspondance Diverse," Alfred Pose à MAE-Paris, 14 oct 1948; Directeur d'Afrique-Levant/Paris au Résident Générale Rabat, Nov. 9, 1948; "Rapport sur le projet en vue de la création d'un cinéma marocain de langue arabe," Nov. 22, 1948; Chef Service du Cinéma au DI, Nov. 23, 1948. Paris-Maroc 1944-55, dossier 250 "Cinéma 1950-54," Oct. 15, 1948; and dossier 868 Renseignements, Sept. 6, 1947, Dec. 13, 1947.

³⁸ Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) and Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

³⁹ Abu Riyad Hamdi, interview, October 8, 1992; Yusuf Wahbeh, interview, Damascus, October 29, 1992; Jan Aliksan, *Tarikh al-sinima al-suriya 1928-88* (Damascus: Manshurat Wizarat al-Thaqafa, 1987) 14-17; Elizabeth Thompson, "Sex and Cinema in Damascus," in *Middle Eastern Cities 1900-1950*, Hans. Chr. Korsholm Nielsen and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, eds. (Damascus: Danish Institute, 2001) 91.

⁴⁰ Hasan, *Tarikh Dimashqi*, 213; MAE-Paris, Série E-Levant 1918-1940, Vol. 109, HC to Pichot, Feb. 6, 1919; MAE-Nantes, Service des Oeuvres françaises à l'étranger, carton 467, "Cinéma au Levant," HC to MAE, May 12, 1933; Fonds Beyrouth, carton 440, Pila/MAE to all embassies, June 23, 1931; HC, Beirut, Arrêté no. 2684, July 17, 1929, on censorship.

⁴¹ Anne Collet, *Collet des Tcherkesses* (Paris: Correa, 1949) 128.

⁴² *Le Reveil*, Beirut, June 22, 23, 26, 1928; Nazira Zayn al-Din, *al-Sufur wa al-Hijab* (Beirut: Matabi` Quzma, 1928).

⁴³ Aliksan, *Tarikh al-sinima al-suriya*, 23-29; Salah Dehni, "History of the Syrian Cinema 1918-1962," *The Cinema in the Arab Countries*, ed. G. Sadoul (Beirut: Interarab Centre of Cinema and Television, 1966) 99.

⁴⁴ MAE-Nantes, Fonds Beyrouth (Nantes-Beyrouth), Sûreté générale, carton 53, "Censure cinématographique, 1941-42."

⁴⁵ Nantes-Beyrouth, Cabinet politique, carton 440, Ostrorog to Syrian prime minister, July 20, 1938; carton 606 "Politiques musulmanes, " Sûreté reports 133 and 163K, Jan. 6, 1939.

⁴⁶ "al-Sayyidat fi al-sinima, : *Bayrut*," Oct. 29, 1936, p. 3; Nantes-Beyrouth, carton 606, Sûreté report 1025, Hama, March 4, 1938.

⁴⁷ Nantes-Beyrouth, carton 592, “Statut personnel—dossier general,” Puaux to MAE, March 22, 1939 and memo, Feb. 15, 1939.

⁴⁸ Nantes-Beyrouth, carton 53, “Censure cinématographique 1941-42,” Couton to secrétaire général, March 14, 1942 and secrétaire générale to Cinema Empire, March 17, 1942. See also Sherifa Zuhur, *Asmahan’s Secrets* (Austin, TX: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 2000) 78-109.

⁴⁹ Nadida Shaykh al-Ard, interview, Damascus, October 9, 1992; Thompson, “Sex and Cinema,” 105.

⁵⁰ Great Britain. Public Record Office, Foreign Office archives, 684-15-1-1, memos dated May 21, 23, 25 and 26, 1944, and Beaumont memorandum, May 26, 1944; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 610-12; Johannes Reissner, *Ideologie und Politik der Muslimbruder Syriens* (Freiburg: K. Schwarz, 1980) 87, 90-91, 429.

⁵¹ Nantes-Maroc, Carton 190, dossier “Enquête sur les salles...,” “La vie marocaine: Inauguration,” *Le Petit Marocain*, Aug. 12, 1950; dossier C/9a, Sûrete no. 7578, May 16, 1955.