

Postcolonial Production and Transnational Circulation- A Critical Analysis of Kuwait's Contribution to Middle Eastern Cinema

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Abstract : Despite its major contribution to the production and distribution of film and cinema in the Middle East, the Kuwaiti film industry remains underresearched. Shortly after the discovery of oil in 1938, foreign filmmakers arrived to document the life and culture of Kuwaitis. The region's second cinema company, Cinescape, was established in the country in 1954, playing a significant role in the circulation of films in the Middle East. The industry has grown considerably, producing 37 films between 2010 and 2020, compared to 9 films in the first decade of the century and only three from 1970-2000. This research is one of the few attempts to provide a history of films in Kuwait as social practice, from its inception to the present day. A historical analysis of the Kuwaiti film industry presents significant challenges. Almost all of the early footage has been lost, and the filmmaking pioneers are no longer alive. This research uses interviews with contemporary directors, actors, and critics to reconstruct historical perspectives of film in Kuwait. In addition, this research uses a critical discourse analysis of industry texts, newspaper interviews, and government reports relating to film censorship and regulation. This materialist approach examines film as social practice, identifying the key social actors in the industry and examining its development in relation to the country's social, economic, and political situation. This research shows that the oil industry has both enabled and restricted the production and circulation of Kuwaiti film. Despite the colonial occupation, decades of regional conflict, and strict government censorship, the country's film industry has continued to contribute to the transnational circulation of stories representing the life and culture of Middle Eastern people. Moreover, the growing domestic film industry has replaced foreign filmmakers with new representations of Kuwaiti lived experience. A lack of government grants, film studies programs, and production infrastructure has contributed to the marginalization of the industry. However, this research provides original scholarly translations of Kuwaiti industry experts and an analysis of its history. This greater recognition by Middle Eastern film studies of Kuwait's contribution to social film history will help it continue growing.

Keywords : cinescape, kuwait, oil, postcolonial, transnational circulation, world cinema

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