

Translating cinematic narratives: American films in cultural and historical context

  Gamze Ar

The Department of Foreign Languages
Bartın University
Bartın, Turkey

Abstract

Cinema translates historical experience into collective memory through both film narratives and the preservation of cinematic objects. This study examines cultural translation between Hollywood and Yeşilçam through the Istanbul Cinema Museum and three film comparisons: *Dracula* and *Drakula İstanbul'da*; *City Lights* and *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar*; and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan*. Drawing on cultural translation, representation, and cultural memory, the analysis combines structured observations from three museum visits with comparative readings of narrative, characterization, setting, and symbolism. It distinguishes the museum's institutional framing of cinematic heritage from the transformations identified within the films, without assuming a direct remake relationship in every pair. The comparisons identify localization through urban and religious imagery, the verbal expression of generosity in melodramatic comedy, and the historical framing of heroism. Museum displays provide a complementary perspective by situating the material traces of these productions within an account of national cinema. The article argues that cultural translation operates through both narrative reinterpretation and the recontextualization of popular cinema as heritage. It contributes to translation studies and film studies by explaining how transnational exchange can remain visible within national cinematic memory, while recognizing the limits of museum observation as evidence of adaptation pathways, audience reception, or state ideology.

Keywords: Yeşilçam films, Turkish cinema, cultural translation, cultural memory, representation, museum studies

1. Introduction

Raymond Williams (1983) describes culture as a particularly complex term and distinguishes three broad meanings. First, culture refers to a general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development. Second, it refers to a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, or a group, encompassing lived experiences and practices. Third, it encompasses the works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity. In this sense, culture includes texts and practices whose primary function is to signify and produce meaning. This third meaning allows soap opera, pop music, and comics to be examined as cultural practices. As Stuart Hall (1997) argues, representation plays a central role in the production and exchange of cultural meaning. These perspectives allow the Istanbul Cinema Museum to be examined as a site of cultural translation in Bhabha's (1994) sense.

Cinema is one of the most powerful tools for shaping and developing national identity. Anderson (1991) states, "I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p. 6). This concept helps frame the question of how selected films and their preservation contribute to narratives of belonging. It does not imply that Yeşilçam or Hollywood expresses a single national ideology. In the cases examined here, the relevant issue is how particular narrative conventions enter Turkish popular cinema and are subsequently situated within a museum account of cinematic heritage.

Translation is an active form of communication between two or more entities, and museums play a crucial role in this cultural exchange (Bennett, 1995). The selected Yeşilçam and Hollywood films offer examples of cultural translation through both shared conventions and local differences. The Istanbul Cinema Museum is

an important cultural heritage site that presents a range of cinematic works, each with unique stories and experiences. Museums, as *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1989), reflect cultural history. Within this setting, cultural artifacts reveal connections between different historical contexts. For example, Yeşilçam films are a significant part of Turkish cinema history, and their themes revolve around melodramatic issues such as tragic family dynamics, class conflicts, and romantic resolutions. These recurring themes offer selective representations of social relations rather than a comprehensive account of Turkish culture; their preservation in museums makes those representations available for retrospective interpretation.

The museum therefore serves as a translational sphere in which individual objects carry histories that contribute to a broader account of cinematic culture. This study examines Yeşilçam's relationship with Hollywood within the history of Turkish cinema. Points of cultural translation between selected Yeşilçam and Hollywood films are compared through their narrative and visual features. The Istanbul Cinema Museum brings Turkish cinematic materials into relation with their historical contexts, particularly those associated with Yeşilçam films. It can be understood as a translational space (Bhabha, 1994), where costumes, posters, and other film artifacts connect cinematic representations with historical memory. This interpretation draws on Hall's (1997) account of representation as the production and exchange of cultural meaning. The study examines how the museum presents cultural objects and how their recontextualization can be understood through translation (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990). It also explores Yeşilçam, often described as Turkey's "Little Hollywood" (Sarı Karademir, 2012, p. 637), to examine cultural transfer through both film texts and their institutional presentation. The museum is interpreted as a site of cultural memory (Bennett, 1995; Nora, 1989), without assuming that all visitors respond to its displays in the same way.

This study examines how the Istanbul Cinema Museum constructs cultural meaning and national identity through representations of Yeşilçam films, particularly in relation to Hollywood's global influence. The research combines direct observation of exhibition arrangements and curatorial choices with comparative analyses of Yeşilçam and Hollywood films. Cinematic objects, narrative themes, and exhibition strategies are analyzed as vehicles of cultural translation. Through the concepts of imagined communities (Anderson, 1991), representation (Hall, 1997), and cultural translation (Bhabha, 1994), museum displays can be examined as selective representations of national identity. The primary objective is to develop a framework for understanding Turkish cinematic heritage: the museum frames Yeşilçam as a resource for cultural memory, while film comparison identifies transnational transformations within that heritage.

This article asks two interconnected questions: how does the Istanbul Cinema Museum construct Yeşilçam as a site of cultural memory, and how do selected comparisons between Yeşilçam and Hollywood films reveal processes of cultural translation in Turkish cinema? I argue that the museum and the film adaptations should be read together: the museum curates Yeşilçam as a national cinematic memory, while the selected film comparisons identify localization through melodramatic conventions, religious references, and heroic narratives. These comparisons do not assume an identical, direct Hollywood-to-Yeşilçam source relationship in every case. By combining museum observation with comparative film analysis, the article argues that cultural translation in these cases is not merely a matter of adaptation or influence, but a process of reinterpretation through which foreign cinematic forms are reshaped into locally meaningful cultural texts. This article also makes two main contributions. First, it brings museum studies and film adaptation studies into dialogue by examining the Istanbul Cinema Museum not simply as a commemorative space but as a curatorial site where posters, props, stills, and exhibition narratives acquire significance as cinematic heritage. Second, it demonstrates that the selected Yeşilçam films should be understood not as derivative

copies but as culturally situated reinterpretations that transform genre conventions, moral codes, and symbolic meanings through specific representations of social values, religious references, and historical memory.

2. Methodology

This study involved three structured visits to the Istanbul Cinema Museum, focusing on Yeşilçam film artifacts, exhibition strategies, and curatorial choices. For the comparative analysis, selected Yeşilçam films and their Hollywood comparators included: *Drakula İstanbul'da* (*Dracula*), *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar* (*City Lights*), and *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan* (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*). These pairs were analyzed for narrative themes, character representation, and cultural signifiers, providing a framework for comparing specific productions rather than treating them as representative of two homogeneous national cinemas. Selected Yeşilçam-Hollywood film pairs are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Selected Yeşilçam–Hollywood film comparisons and thematic focus

Yeşilçam film	Hollywood comparator	Thematic focus
<i>Drakula İstanbul'da</i>	<i>Dracula</i>	Shared <i>Dracula</i> tradition, urban and religious localization
<i>Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar</i>	<i>City Lights</i>	Melodramatic comedy, social commentary
<i>Vatan Kurtaran Aslan</i>	<i>The Adventures of Robin Hood</i>	Heroic narratives, adaptation of myths

Source: Author's comparative analysis.

These three film pairs were selected purposively because they represent different genres—horror, melodramatic comedy, and historical adventure—and therefore allow the study to trace cultural translation across distinct cinematic forms. They make visible different modes of localization, including religious symbolism, comic sentiment, and heroic narratives. The comparison is analytical rather than a claim that all three Turkish films directly remake the paired Hollywood production: *Drakula İstanbul'da* also draws on Ali Rıza Seyfi's literary adaptation of Stoker, as discussed below. Three structured museum visits were conducted between March and May 2023, each lasting approximately two hours. Field notes and photographs documented exhibition layouts and artifacts. These materials were subsequently coded according to narrative motifs, exhibition strategies, and artifact types. The selected film pairs provide a comparative basis for interpreting the horror motifs, heroic narratives, and melodramatic comedy associated with this cinematic heritage.

The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, the museum observations focused on how Yeşilçam was curated through exhibition design, artifact placement, posters, stills, and explanatory panels. Field notes and photographs were coded according to three analytical categories: (1) representations of national cinematic memory, (2) references to adaptation and transnational influence, and (3) curatorial strategies that framed Yeşilçam within broader film history. Second, the selected film pairs were comparatively analyzed according to four categories: narrative structure, characterization, symbolic/religious motifs, and representations of social values such as family, morality, and heroism. These categories enabled examination not only of visual and narrative similarities between the films but also of how shared genres and narrative devices were reinterpreted in these Turkish productions. The museum analysis addresses how cinematic objects become heritage, while the comparative analysis addresses how meanings change within film narratives.

The two bodies of material are connected through a distinction between narrative reworking and curatorial recontextualization. Film comparison identifies changes in setting, characterization, dialogue, and symbolism; museum observation examines how posters, stills, and artifacts are selected and placed within an account of Yeşilçam history. The case-study discussions bring these findings into relation, without treating an exhibited object as proof of a particular adaptation pathway or attributing the article's comparisons to the curators. The paired illustrations below are analytical juxtapositions, not documentation of side-by-side museum installations. The observations support an interpretation of exhibition framing, not conclusions about visitor reception, curatorial intention, or the historical effects of state policy.

3. Istanbul Cinema Museum as a translational sphere: Exploring cultural translation between Yeşilçam and Hollywood films

Translation is a complex activity that involves the interaction of at least two cultures. Museums are crucial in this context, as they convey diverse cultural messages. The Istanbul Cinema Museum serves as a cultural archive that documents the historical development of Turkish cinema and its interactions with global film traditions. Through curated film artifacts, posters, archival materials, and references to international cinema, the museum enables visitors to observe how Turkish films were shaped through processes of adaptation, influence, and cultural translation. In this context, the museum environment constructs a translational space where visitors encounter the historical narratives of Yeşilçam cinema and its dialogue with global cinematic traditions. Newmark (1988) relates culture to the way of life and forms of expression associated with a community, emphasizing the cultural specificity of language use.

Cultural differences are examined here at the level of particular films and conventions, rather than as fixed attributes of Turkish and American cinema. Family obligation, class conflict, and moral recognition are recurrent concerns in the Yeşilçam melodramas discussed in the literature, but their meanings are neither uniform nor confined to Turkish cinema. Erdoğan's (1998) account of melodrama between 1965 and 1975 emphasizes ambivalence toward Western cultural models, complicating any simple opposition between Turkish collectivity and American individualism. Accordingly, differences in dialogue, performance, setting, and visual style in the present comparisons are interpreted in relation to the films' genres and production periods. The comparisons are therefore organized by genre, period, and scene, with each contrast treated as a feature of the films under discussion.

The cultural dialogue between Turkish and American cinema discussed in this study is interactive. Bhabha's (1994) account of cultural translation as a performative process of communication provides a basis for interpreting the Istanbul Cinema Museum as a space for reflecting on Turkish culture. The cultural turn in translation studies (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990) emphasizes the relationship between translation and culture, directing attention to how meanings are negotiated across cultural contexts. Located in the historic Atlas Passage in Beyoğlu, the Istanbul Cinema Museum preserves the legacy of Atlas Sineması, an established venue in Turkish film culture. It exhibits the cultural legacy of Yeşilçam through cinematic works, artifacts, and visual materials that document the history of Turkish cinema.

However, it is necessary to consider the contributions of factors such as geographical location, natural environment, and social customs in shaping local culture. Within this framework, the Istanbul Cinema Museum can be interpreted as a translational site where cinematic artifacts mediate cultural meanings

between Turkish and American film traditions, particularly through references to films that reveal patterns of adaptation and cultural borrowing between Yeşilçam and Hollywood. Lefevere's (1992) account of translation as rewriting emphasizes that translation is a cultural and ideological act as well as a linguistic one. The Istanbul Cinema Museum can therefore be read as a translational space that presents the dynamic cultural exchanges between Turkish and American cinematic traditions. The following sections distinguish the historical circulation of films from their later preservation. The museum provides a framework of cinematic memory; the paired readings examine narrative transformations that cannot be established from exhibition objects alone.

4. Cultural translation and cinematic influence between Yeşilçam and Hollywood films

Cultural translation is a process that focuses on cultural differences and the negotiation of meaning between cultures. This process involves the social, political, and aesthetic frameworks that shape cultural production. Sarı Karademir (2012, pp. 633–637) interprets Turkey as a “willing receiver” of American soft power in relation to its Cold War alignment and film policies. Here, that formulation describes historically situated institutional conditions, not a uniform willingness among filmmakers or audiences to adopt American values. Nye's (1990, 2004) concept of soft power provides a framework for examining attraction, but the circulation of a film does not by itself demonstrate ideological acceptance.

The circulation of American films in Turkey during the mid-twentieth century created opportunities for cultural translation within cinema. Sarı Karademir (2012, pp. 636–637) argues that Turkish authorities applied the 1939 Regulation on the Control of Films and Film Screenplays selectively within the Cold War alignment, restricting Soviet films while favoring the circulation of American productions. The historical mechanism was selective regulatory practice within an existing censorship framework.

American institutional activity also shaped circulation. Sarı Karademir (2012, p. 637) discusses USIS interventions and the Information Media Guaranty program, which eased payment constraints for Turkish importers. Etem's (2022) archival research documents a related but distinct sphere: USIS collaboration with Turkey's Educational Film, Radio, and Television Center, including educational films, equipment, and media infrastructure. These studies provide evidence of specific distribution and institutional mechanisms. They do not establish that every Hollywood release or commercial Yeşilçam production was an instrument of a coordinated state campaign.

The distinction matters for the comparative analysis. The historical literature establishes conditions under which American films and images became available; the close readings examine what particular Turkish productions did with circulating narratives. Neither museum observation nor formal resemblance alone demonstrates audience persuasion, direct state sponsorship, or the political intentions of the filmmakers.

Schiller's (1976) account of cultural domination helps identify inequalities in the international circulation of media. It does not, however, supply evidence that a particular film transmitted a uniform ideology or that viewers accepted its meanings. In this study, the historical discussion therefore contextualizes the selected comparisons rather than determining their interpretation in advance. Cultural translation involves choices

and tensions that must be examined within each film, including the coexistence of borrowed conventions and localized meanings.

In this study, the terms translation, adaptation, and influence are related but not interchangeable. "Influence" refers to the broader circulation of Hollywood genres, styles, and narrative conventions within Turkish cinema. "Adaptation" refers more specifically to the reworking of identifiable film texts or story structures in Yeşilçam productions. "Cultural translation," however, is used here in a broader analytical sense to describe the process through which foreign cinematic forms are reinterpreted, localized, and ideologically reframed within Turkish social, religious, and national contexts. In this sense, adaptation constitutes one form of cultural translation, while influence describes the broader transnational conditions that enable such translations.

5. Cultural translation and adaptation in Yeşilçam–Hollywood film comparisons

This section analyzes three pairs of films as instances of cultural translation, examining how narrative structures, character archetypes, and symbolic meanings are reworked. Yeşilçam is treated as a film industry and production tradition, not as a single genre. Gürata (2006) places remaking within a broader practice of adaptation drawing on diverse filmic and literary materials; it should not be reduced to an undifferentiated transfer from Hollywood. The comparisons below therefore specify their claims through particular scenes and motifs. The museum observations address a related question: how objects associated with this production history acquire the status of cultural heritage. The article brings these levels together through interpretation, rather than assuming that museum panels establish every source relationship discussed here.

The first case study compares *Dracula* (1931) and *Drakula İstanbul'da* (1953) as related screen versions within a wider adaptation history, rather than treating Browning's film as Muhtar's sole source. The second compares *City Lights* (1931) with *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar* (1971). The third examines *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) alongside *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan* (1966), focusing on their reworking of heroic adventure.

The analysis also examines how Turkish filmmakers modified these themes and structures to articulate particular moral, religious, and historical meanings. Cultural translation and adaptation provide ways to interpret the relationship between Hollywood conventions and the selected Turkish productions (Hutcheon, 2006).

Across these comparisons, shared stories and recognizable conventions coexist with changes in characterization, language, and setting. These changes are interpreted as situated creative choices rather than direct expressions of what all Turkish audiences expected. As Hutcheon (2006) argues, adaptations are reinterpretations shaped by the contexts in which they are produced and received. This perspective permits attention to both continuities and differences without equating resemblance with passive imitation or cultural difference with a fixed national essence.

5.1. *Dracula – Drakula İstanbul'da*

The posters and archival materials discussed in the museum observations position *Drakula İstanbul'da* within Yeşilçam's visual history. Their relevance is the shift from a film's commercial and narrative setting to its preservation as Turkish cinematic heritage. The comparison in Figure 1 adds another interpretive step: the Turkish title places a recognizable vampire figure in Istanbul. The museum context establishes the object's place in a history of cinema; comparison with the film identifies how location and symbolism alter the narrative. These are related claims, but the exhibition material alone does not establish direct dependence on Browning's film.

Figure 1: Poster comparison of *Dracula* (1931) and *Drakula İstanbul'da* (1953)



Sources: Posters for *Dracula* (Browning, 1931) and *Drakula İstanbul'da* (Muhtar, 1953).

Dracula (1931), directed by Tod Browning, is a useful Hollywood comparator for *Drakula İstanbul'da* (1953), directed by Mehmet Muhtar and featuring Atif Kaptan and Annie Ball. The adaptation history is more complex than a direct remake relationship. Hürer (2021, pp. 8–9) traces the Turkish film's script to Ali Rıza Seyfi's *Kazıklı Voyvoda*, itself a localized version of Bram Stoker's novel. This literary mediation matters: similarities between the two films can arise from shared narrative antecedents, while the Turkish version also carries choices made before its cinematic production.

Both films construct *Dracula* as a symbolic figure of fear, retaining recognizable vampire motifs while giving them different cultural settings. Religious imagery offers a specific point of comparison. Fundalar et al. (2023, p. 623) note that the cross present in the blood-related encounter in Browning's film is absent from the corresponding Turkish scene. This supports a reading of altered religious coding, without assuming a uniform opposition between Christian and Muslim audiences. The localization of names and urban settings likewise changes the narrative's frame of reference. *Drakula İstanbul'da* can therefore be read as a culturally situated reinterpretation within a wider *Dracula* tradition, rather than simply as a Turkish copy of an American original.

Technically, *Drakula İstanbul'da* differs in its visual and narrative style, with its lengthy takes, theatrical acting, and limited special effects, marking differences between these particular productions rather than

defining a national style. Additionally, the later action moves from the London setting of Browning's film to Istanbul, while retaining the earlier castle episode, placing the narrative's fear within an urban setting. Taken together, these cinematic choices localize the representation of fear, and the familiar vampire narrative is situated within a different urban frame of reference.

Figure 2: Comparison of the male protagonists: Bela Lugosi and Atif Kaptan as *Dracula*



Sources: Images from *Dracula* (Browning, 1931) and *Drakula İstanbul'da* (Muhtar, 1953).

Despite these differences, the films share several similarities, including the setting of Dracula's home and his appearance, which unsettle the protagonists in both films. Count Dracula also makes similar comments about wolves, creatures of the night. The characters' appearances, costumes, and gestures are similar in the two films. While cultural differences may lead to some changes in how a movie is adapted across cultures, similarities in themes and motifs can still be observed. *Drakula İstanbul'da* can be read through the relationship between original and translation discussed by Bassnett (2002), alongside Hutcheon's (2006) account of reinterpretation.

Figure 3: Comparison of the female protagonists: Helen Chandler in *Dracula* and Annie Ball in *Drakula İstanbul'da*



Sources: Images from *Dracula* (Browning, 1931) and *Drakula İstanbul'da* (Muhtar, 1953).

What emerges from this comparison is a culturally translated horror narrative in which familiar motifs acquire meaning through specific religious and urban references.

5.2. *City Lights*– *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar*

Figure 4: Poster comparison of *City Lights* (1931) and *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar* (1971)



Sources: Posters for *City Lights* (Chaplin, 1931) and *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar* (Tuna, 1971).

Following *Dracula*, this section examines melodramatic comedy through *City Lights* and *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar*. The shift from horror to comedy demonstrates how Yeşilçam filmmakers reinterpreted conventions associated with different Hollywood genres. *City Lights*, directed by and starring Charlie Chaplin in 1931, tells the story of a tramp who falls in love with a blind flower girl and tries to help her regain her sight. *Cafer*

Bey, *İyi, Fakir ve Kibar*, directed by Feyzi Tuna in 1971 and starring Nejat Uygur, develops a comparable narrative premise. Both films explore affection, economic vulnerability, and the difficulties faced by protagonists who seek to help the women they love.

Both films explore love and sacrifice through the relationship between an impoverished man and a blind woman. This shared premise prevents a simple opposition between an individualistic American film and a communal Turkish one: *City Lights* also makes care for another person central to its narrative. The difference examined here concerns how generosity is expressed. Cafer Bey uses spoken moral and religious language alongside comic performance, whereas Chaplin develops sympathy largely through gesture and visual misrecognition. These choices invite comparison between two forms of melodramatic comedy; they do not establish that either film represents the values of an entire society.

Figure 5: Comparison of the male protagonists: Charlie Chaplin in *City Lights* (1931) and Nejat Uygur in *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar* (1971)



Sources: Images from *City Lights* (Chaplin, 1931) and *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar* (Tuna, 1971).

One of the significant differences between *City Lights* and *Cafer Bey* is their use of sound. *City Lights* retains silent-film performance conventions, while its synchronized score and selective sound effects support the visual storytelling. The Turkish adaptation, *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar*, uses spoken dialogue alongside sound effects to develop its comic narrative. Despite this difference, both films employ cinematic techniques, such as close-ups and long shots, to emphasize their characters' emotions and reactions. While cultural differences shape specific details, such as Cafer Bey's disapproval of a striptease scene with the statement "Başımıza taş yağacak" ("Stones will rain down on us"), the overall similarities in narrative, gestures, and character portrayals demonstrate how Turkish cinema reinterpreted Hollywood motifs within a local cultural framework. Read through Hutcheon's (2006) account of adaptation as reinterpretation, this spoken expression makes moral disapproval explicit within the comic scene; it does not imply that ethical concern is absent from Chaplin's film.

The encounter with the blind woman offers another example of continuity and change. In *City Lights*, the protagonist's shy gestures and concealed financial help establish an ethical relationship through action. In *Cafer Bey, İyi, Fakir ve Kibar*, the expression of gratitude to God gives comparable acts of assistance an

explicitly religious verbal register. The point is not that one film possesses a collective morality while the other lacks it, but that the films make generosity legible through different combinations of gesture, dialogue, and cultural reference. This is a specific interpretive claim about characterization, rather than a description of the spiritual outlook of Turkish society as a whole.

The museum's presentation of comedy and melodrama-related Yeşilçam materials places popular performance within a history of cinema. Read alongside those materials, the comparison of Chaplin and Uygur in Figure 5 connects the preservation of recognizable screen performers with the narrative work of their performances. The artifacts preserve a visual record, while the close reading explains how gesture and dialogue organize sympathy. The relationship between museum and film analysis thus rests on their different contributions: the former frames popular cinema as remembered heritage, and the latter examines the meanings produced within particular films.

5.3. *The Adventures of Robin Hood – Vatan Kurtaran Aslan*

Figure 6: Poster comparison of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) and *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan* (1966)



Sources: Posters for *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Curtiz & Keighley, 1938) and *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan* (Başaran, 1966).

The Adventures of Robin Hood, directed by Michael Curtiz and William Keighley in 1938, stars Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Basil Rathbone, and Claude Rains. Its narrative follows a Saxon nobleman who resists the oppression of Prince John and the Norman lords. *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan*, directed by Tunç Başaran in 1966, relocates heroic adventure to an Ottoman and Byzantine setting. It tells the story of Kılıçarslan, who attempts to rescue Sultan Murat from the Byzantines.

While the two films have different storylines, both narratives revolve around resistance against unjust authority, and their settings invoke different historical imaginaries. For example, *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan* invokes Ottoman and Byzantine history, while *The Adventures of Robin Hood* emphasizes medieval England. Despite these differences, both films feature strong heroes who demonstrate courage in their fighting scenes. Additionally, the thematic resemblance is evident through the costumes and time settings. The titles of the two films also highlight cultural differences: *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan* foregrounds homeland and bravery

("aslan" means "lion" and can evoke courage), whereas *The Adventures of Robin Hood* names an established legendary hero. Both films combine resistance with loyalty to legitimate authority, so the comparison is not an absolute opposition between Turkish loyalty and American rebellion. Bhabha's (1994) concept of cultural hybridity is evident in *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan*, where Hollywood narrative structures are merged with Turkey's cultural memory.

The cinematic techniques in these films also shape the presentation of heroism. *The Adventures of Robin Hood* combines colorful spectacle, romantic dialogue, and forest settings with conflict over legitimate rule. *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan* places adventure within a narrative of rescuing the sultan and defending the homeland. The interpretive distinction concerns which historical symbols organize allegiance, rather than an opposition between American individualism and Turkish collective consciousness. In this comparison, cultural translation relocates recognizable heroic functions within a different account of political community.

Read in relation to the museum's narrative of Yeşilçam history, *Vatan Kurtaran Aslan* raises a question about how popular adventure becomes historical memory. The poster comparison in Figure 6 foregrounds the different names and historical identities through which heroic action is presented. The museum framework concerns the preservation of such representations as cinema history; the film comparison concerns their construction of loyalty and heroism. Bringing them together shows how transnational genre conventions can be remembered as national cinematic heritage, without treating a fictional adventure as historical documentation or its preservation as proof of official ideological endorsement.

Taken together, the cases connect two forms of recontextualization. The film readings identify changes in urban setting and religious imagery, comic expression, and the historical framing of heroism. The museum discussion asks how the material traces of such productions are brought into an account of Yeşilçam heritage. The connection is not that the museum independently proves each adaptation pathway, but that it gives a national historical frame to films whose meanings emerged through cross-cultural reworking. In this reading, cultural memory does not erase transnational exchange; it makes the relationship between exchange and belonging an object of interpretation.

6. Thematic resemblances between Turkish and American films in the context of Turkish melodrama

Turkish and American melodramas share concerns with love, family conflict, and moral recognition, but shared conventions do not establish a common political function. Elsaesser's (1972) account of family melodrama provides a framework for reading emotional conflict and social constraint, rather than evidence that all melodramas reinforce the status quo. More specifically, Erdoğan (1998, pp. 259–261, 270–271) reads Yeşilçam melodrama through ambivalence toward Western models, including the coexistence of imitation and resistance. This perspective qualifies the assumption that images of wealth or Western consumption necessarily endorse those lifestyles. In the present corpus, Cafer Bey's generosity and moralized dialogue are interpreted as narrative choices within a particular film, not as transparent expressions of state policy or a uniform Turkish morality.

Remaking should also be situated within a longer production history rather than attributed to a single downturn in the late 1960s. Gürata (2006) describes extensive adaptation practices during the industry's

expansion and notes high production levels in the early 1970s. The present corpus itself spans 1953, 1966, and 1971. Its differences in genre and date are therefore significant: localization cannot be explained through one industrial crisis or one uniform ideological program. This chronology calls for attention to the circumstances of each production.

State regulation, international distribution, and the ideological meanings of individual films require different kinds of evidence. The historical literature discussed above supports claims about the conditions of circulation. The three film comparisons support interpretations of narrative and symbolic choices. They do not demonstrate that the Turkish state commissioned these productions to establish social order or promote American interests. Claims about such intentions would require production records or policy evidence specific to the films.

The interactions examined here suggest cultural hybridity without assuming a single national cinematic voice. The films retain recognizable conventions while reworking their meanings through particular settings and performances. Read through Bhabha's (1994) cultural translation and Hall's (1997) account of representation, this process concerns the production of meaning within specific texts. It allows for continuity, contradiction, and selective reinterpretation rather than a completed synthesis between two internally uniform cultures.

7. Conclusions

This study examines cultural translation through selected film comparisons and the institutional framing of cinematic memory. Its historical discussion situates the circulation of American cinema within Cold War cultural relations, but does not treat the Truman Doctrine or Marshall Plan as a sufficient explanation for the emergence of Yeşilçam. The analysis instead asks how particular films rework circulating conventions and how their material traces become part of an account of national cinema.

The three comparisons identify different forms of localization: the urban and religious framing of a vampire narrative, the verbal expression of generosity in melodramatic comedy, and the historical symbolism of heroic adventure. These findings concern the selected films, not Turkish and American cinema as homogeneous categories. The Istanbul Cinema Museum contributes a complementary institutional perspective by presenting Yeşilçam objects as cinematic heritage. The interpretive connection lies in reading that national framing alongside the cross-cultural histories visible in the films, while distinguishing the evidence supplied by each.

Hall's (1997) account of representation and Bhabha's (1994) cultural translation help explain why recognizable motifs can acquire different meanings when situated within another narrative. The selected films are neither interchangeable copies nor evidence of an unchanging national essence. Their religious references, comic performances, and heroic symbols organize specific relationships between familiarity and difference. The museum adds a further context by preserving cinematic materials within an account of the past. What once circulated as popular entertainment can thus be interpreted retrospectively as cultural heritage.

The scope of this argument is limited to the selected comparisons and the documented museum visits. The study does not measure how historical film audiences received American influence or how contemporary

museum visitors interpret the displays. Further research could bring audience testimony, curatorial interviews, and production or distribution records into dialogue with the present readings. Such evidence would allow the relationship between institutional policy, cinematic meaning, and reception to be tested more directly.

By bringing together museum observation and comparative film analysis, this study argues that cultural translation can be examined at both the level of film texts and that of cultural memory institutions. The museum frames Yeşilçam as heritage, while the film comparisons reveal cross-cultural transformations within that heritage. Their relationship is analytical rather than causal: the museum does not establish the sources or reception of each film. Read together, however, the materials challenge an account of national cinema as culturally self-contained and clarify how preservation gives renewed significance to earlier acts of reinterpretation.

Acknowledgements / Funding

The author received no financial support for this research.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethical statement

This study combines comparative film analysis with observation of publicly accessible museum displays. No ethics committee application was submitted. The research did not involve interviews, participant recruitment, or the collection of personal data.

Declaration of AI usage

AI tools were used for grammar and language editing. The author reviewed and revised the text and takes full responsibility for the final manuscript.

Data availability

The films analyzed in this study are identified in Table 1 and the reference list. The museum field notes and research photographs are available for sharing.

Author contributions

Gamze Ar is solely responsible for the conception, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, writing, and revision of this manuscript.

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