Ottoman Cinema from 1917-1919
by Serdar Öztürk

One of the most distinctive features of the Ottoman Empire in the years between 1917 and 1919 is the tendency to make both fictional movies and documentaries. There was a remarkable number of potential spectators in the capital city; consequently there was a significant rise in the number of Cinema Halls. The first local fictional films were met with great excitement and were advertised in newspapers and magazines. Reviews in the press in the years between 1917 and 1919 revealed a keen interest in the cinema and it drew huge audiences. The first screenings of local documentaries, dramas and comedies attracted both a general audience and intellectuals. The transformation of the cinema into a medium of mass entertainment in Istanbul did not take place in the Republican period, but during the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Ottomans tried to build their own fictional world at a time when the Empire was collapsing. The lecture will delineate the details of this process, accompanied by the screenings of film examples from 1917-19.

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