



# Orientalism in the *Cinématographe*: The Visualization of Eastern-Exoticism in Alexandre Promio's Recorded Films in Egypt 1897

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**Abstract:** This study discusses the representation of Eastern-Islamic exoticism in Egypt's earliest films recorded by Alexandre Promio, an operator for the Société Antoine Lumière et ses Fils (Société Lumière) owned by the Lumière Brothers, using the late 19th-century European invention, the Cinématographe Lumière. The primary objective of this research is to examine the cultural transformation of Western-European (French) visual representation and how Alexandre Promio represented Eastern-Islamic (Egyptian) exoticism through the first moving pictures (films) about Egypt, to establish or reinforce ideological stereotypes held by Western Europeans. The primary sources used in this study include 21 of the 35 Egypt's earliest films made by Alexandre Promio, along with contemporary photographs, lithographs, paintings, books, magazines, and newspapers. This study utilizes the historical research method with a constructionist approach. The research findings indicate that Promio did not merely record reality, but through the selection of subjects, framing, and scene duration, he systematically visualized exoticism centered on monumental landscapes, bustling markets, and religious objects. This confirms Promio's effort to construct new visual stereotypes and reinforce Western-European (French) ideological understanding of Egypt as *The Other* that is exotic, static, yet visually stunning. These films served as a visual blueprint that subsequently influenced stereotypes in later colonial cinema, making them an important vehicle for reinforcing Western ideological understanding of the Orient.

**Keywords :** Alexandre Promio, Earliest Egyptian Films, Cinématographe, Representation, Exoticism, Eastern-Islamic.

**Abstract:** Penelitian ini mendiskusikan representasi eksotisme Timur-Islam dari film-film pertama tentang Mesir yang direkam oleh Alexandre Promio, seorang opérateur Société Antoine Lumière et ses Fils (Société Lumière) milik Lumière Brothers, dengan menggunakan benda temuan bangsa Eropa akhir abad ke-19, *Cinématographe Lumière*. Tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji perubahan budaya representasi Barat-Eropa (Perancis) secara visual dan cara Alexandre Promio dalam merepresentasikan eksotisme Timur-Islam (Mesir) melalui gambar bergerak (film) pertama tentang Mesir untuk membangun atau menguatkan stereotip ideologis yang dimiliki orang-orang Barat-Eropa. Sumber utama yang digunakan adalah 21 dari 35 film tentang Mesir pertama yang dibuat oleh Alexandre Promio, foto-foto, litografi-litografi, lukisan-lukisan, buku-buku, majalah-majalah, dan surat kabar sezaman. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian sejarah dengan pendekatan konstruktivistis (*constructionist approach*). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Promio tidak hanya merekam realitas, namun melalui pemilihan subjek, *framing*, dan durasi adegan, ia secara sistematis memvisualisasikan keeksotikan yang berpusat pada pemandangan monumental, keramaian pasar, dan objek keagamaan. Hal ini mengonfirmasi upaya Promio dalam membangun stereotip visual baru dan memperkuat pemahaman ideologis orang-orang Barat-Eropa (Prancis) tentang Mesir sebagai *The Other* yang eksotis, statis, namun secara visual memukau. Film-film ini berfungsi sebagai cetak biru visual yang kemudian memengaruhi stereotip dalam sinema kolonial selanjutnya, menjadikannya sarana penting dalam penguatan pemahaman ideologis Barat tentang Timur.

**Kata Kunci:** Alexandre Promio, Film Pertama Mesir, *Cinématographe*, Representasi, Eksotisme, Timur-Islam.

## 1. Introduction

December 28, 1895, marks a historic event: the *Cinématographe* was perfected and introduced by the Lumière Brothers, who projected several films, including *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon*, *La Voltige*, *La Pêche aux Poissons Rouges*, *Le Débarquement du Congrès de Photographie à Lyon*, *Les Forgerons*, *Le Jardinier*, *Le Repas*, *Le Saut à la Couverture*, *La Place des Cordeliers à Lyon*, and *La Mer*. This event constituted the world's first commercial cinema, held in the Salon Indien—a basement room of the Grand Café at No. 14, Boulevard des Capucines, on the corner of rue Auber, Paris.<sup>1</sup> From that moment, film screenings by the Lumière Brothers spread throughout the world, including the Middle East. In Egypt, the first screening occurred on November 5,<sup>2</sup> 1896. The films were projected in one of the passages of the *Toussoun Bourse*<sup>3</sup> (*Café Zawani*) in Alexandria,<sup>4</sup> and later at the Hamam Schneider (*Schneider Baths*) in Cairo on November 28, 1896<sup>5</sup>, by a Lumière *concessionnaire*, Henri Dello-Strologo. This year also saw the first film screenings in Algeria and Tunisia.<sup>6</sup>

Four months later, on March 8, 1897, Alexandre Promio—one of the first *opérateurs*, directors, and photographers for the Société Lumière, set foot in Egypt. He arrived on a French ship and immediately began capturing Egyptian scenes at the port of Alexandria, accompanied during his time in Egypt by Henri Dello-Strologo.<sup>7</sup> Promio was one of the individuals commissioned by the Lumière Brothers to travel the globe, recording social activities worldwide; Egypt was one of his destinations. This event established Egypt as one of the first Eastern nations involved in the dissemination of film, cinema, and early filmmaking, eventually earning it the moniker "*Hollywood on The Nile*"<sup>8</sup> and making it the largest film industry in the Arab region of its time.<sup>9</sup> Today, Egypt produces high-quality films, supported by the many Egyptian students and scholars who study film abroad and gain experience in foreign studios.<sup>10</sup> For the Egyptian bourgeoisie, cinema even became a primary investment and an essential tool for continuously controlling the culture of society at large, and the urban population specifically.<sup>11</sup>

The *Cinématographe* was an 'object' or device that represented the cultural advancement or a cultural product of the West/Europe, achieved through the successes of capitalism—

<sup>1</sup> Deac Rossell, "Film History: A Chronology of Cinema, 1889-1896", *Film History*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Indiana University Press (1995), pp. 139.

<sup>2</sup> According to another article, the moment occurred on November 15, 1896. Cornell University Library, "Middle Eastern and North African Cinema and Film: Egyptian Cinema and Film", <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/MidEastCinema/Egypt> accessed on November 1, 2016, at 12:02 p.m.

<sup>3</sup> *Toussoun Bourse* has many rooms used for meetings, one of which is *Café Zawani*, in Alex Cinema, "Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>4</sup> Alex Cinema, "Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>5</sup> Cornell University Library, "100 Years of Egyptian Cinema: A Timeline", <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/MidEastCinema/Egypt> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 11:00 a.m.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Abel, *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Catalogue Lumière, "Série: Alexandre Promio en Égypte (1897)", <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/series/alexandre-promio-en-egypte-1897/> accessed on October 2, 2017, at 05:14 p.m.

<sup>8</sup> Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2003), pp. 29-33.

<sup>9</sup> Terri Ginsberg and Chris Lippard, *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2010), pp. xxxv.

<sup>10</sup> Farid El-Mazzaoui, "Film in Egypt", *Hollywood Quarterly*, Vol. 4 No. 3, University of California Press (1950), pp. 250.

<sup>11</sup> Qussai Samak, "The Politics of Egyptian Cinema", *MERIP Reports*, No. 56, Middle East Research and Information Project, Inc. (1977), pp.12.

its industrial revolution, and colonialism—as well as imperialism. Therefore, the problematic concerning the *Cinématographe*—as a form of French intellectual culture and a manifestation of the scientific revolution—lies in its new method within the culture of French representation, especially in the culture of representing the East, *Orientalism*. This is evident in how the representations of ideas and concepts of Alexandre Promio, the Lumière Brothers—as Western/European subjects possessing authority—and their company—Société Lumière—are reflected in the films Promio captured in Egypt in 1897. This implies that Promio's arrival in Egypt in 1897, with the purpose of capturing images or films of the East, was not merely to show his communal audiences what he had seen; rather, there were other, more political and ideological objectives.

This leads the author to suspect several possibilities: **First**, the event served as a “truth” legitimization of the textual imagery (in this case, exoticism) previously represented by *textual-Orientalists*, as explained by Edward W. Said in his works; **Second**, conversely, the event might be seen as a legitimization of the “falsehood” that the textual imagery (in this case, exoticism) represented by *textual-Orientalists* was a fabrication or lie; **Third**, the event “possibly” gave birth to a counter-narrative (or even a “reinforcement”) to the idea of Eastern (Egyptian) exoticism that had been constructed by *textual-Orientalists* (including *visual-Orientalists* who focused on paintings, lithographs, and photography).

Furthermore, Promio's films could potentially generate new ideas or strengthen old ones about the nature of Orientalism—that is, it is not concerned with the correspondence between the reality of the Eastern world or its conformity to the ‘actual’ East. In other words, the essence of Orientalism is merely a collection of Western images about the East, or other ideological constructs (like exoticism) that represent the East (especially Egypt). However, this becomes irrelevant if the visual representation undertaken by Promio through his films of Egypt shows the reality of the East itself, not a collection of imagery. Yet, one thing is certain: “The West succeeded in making itself superior (masculine) and the East inferior (feminine).”

If one scrutinizes Said's view, then Orientalism and its inherent ideological stereotypes are not only bound to textual matters (representing Western imagery) but also to visual ones, such as film, which imparts a more realistic impression. In short, *visual-Orientalism* participates in representing, translating, and even interpreting or defining the East (Islam), and even defining the West itself. *Visual-Orientalism* partakes in “reducing” that *actualité* (actuality) and even “revising” it visually, by *visual-Orientalists*, based on what *textual-Orientalists* had already represented. Of course, this cannot be accepted without question; further study and rigorous effort are required to investigate this research. However, one certainty is that the existence of Alexandre Promio's films demonstrates that Western ideological concepts and notions (in this case, exoticism and orientalism) were successfully (or forcibly) inserted, exchanged, and juxtaposed with Eastern and Western cultures, thereby displacing previous Eastern ideological concepts through imperialism or modern colonialism, which served as its vehicle. In other words, the ideas of capitalism, orientalism, and exoticism during *la belle époque*—marked by the birth of the *Cinématographe*—were concepts that developed or were controlled under the umbrella of imperialism or modern colonialism, aiming to dominate, hegemonize, and control territories or colonies through culture and scientific-technological advancement.

*La belle époque* (late 19<sup>th</sup> century) in France signified the transition to a more modern era, characterized by rapid scientific development in Europe. This was also true for the culture of visual representation in France; the birth of photography—as a product of

science, technology, and Western/European modernism—slowly began to rival the supremacy of painting. From the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the dissemination and development of photography expanded, causing painting to lose much of its historical purpose; its dominance was threatened. This situation was contrasted in the 1890s when the *Cinématographe* was invented by Louis Lumière (1864-1948) and Auguste Lumière (1862-1954), famously known as the Lumière Brothers, in France. This technology was a device for capturing and projecting images—moving pictures (film)—and was also a transformation of photographic advancement, as well as a transformation in the culture of representation. The *Cinématographe* subsequently became a French cultural product and a new medium for Orientalists (especially French) to represent the East by producing films or moving pictures. Consequently, studies of the East, or orientalism, are colored not only by *textual-Orientalism* (or *visual-Orientalism* such as paintings, lithographs, and photography) but also by *visual-Orientalism*, such as the cinematographic films captured by Promio in 1897 in Egypt. This subsequently allowed ideological stereotypes within Orientalist practices, such as exoticism, to change and evolve.

Exoticism is a philosophical concept in Orientalist practice that demonstrates how the depiction of radical difference (*exotic*) leads to the destabilization of the very subject, which is made and unmade in contact with “otherness.” Exoticism is the Orientalist way of perceiving other cultures as exotic, and thus as inferior or superior from the European perspective, and it has a long tradition in Western modernity. Since the age of exploration and discovery began, subsequently initiating Western expansionism towards the East, a stream of representations about exotic peoples and places (particularly the East-Egypt) has emerged in various forms. These peoples were often judged and classified based on supposedly universal grounds.<sup>12</sup> This is precisely what occurs in the films captured by Alexandre Promio.

This attitude towards cultural difference (viewing it through exoticism) is not only witnessed in the first films of Egypt taken by Promio; 19<sup>th</sup> century travel writers often depicted non-European societies as innocent communities. Non-European peoples found themselves idolized, their worlds reduced to projections for Western-Europeans who were wary of their own civilization. By the turn of the century, technology, bureaucracy, political turmoil, poverty, and class differences substantiated this fact. A Western Orientalist or “exoticist” travelled to savour a cultural difference that was, in his view, pure and beautiful: a community that knew no strife.<sup>13</sup>

If observed, these forms of cultural critique regarding the discourse of difference, otherness, and alterity in general (exoticism) have been considered early examples in the recent approach to the culture of Western-European hegemony. Therefore, studies of exoticism need to be explored. This is evident from the fact that studies on exoticism through visual forms, especially the very first films, are extremely difficult to find. In fact, to date, the author has not found any study of exoticism in the world’s first films, especially those made by Alexandre Promio.

Existing studies on exoticism that show proximity to this research topic include Charles Forsdick’s (2001) study on the concept of travel. That research explores the evolution and complexity of the exoticism concept in postcolonial theory. Forsdick develops Edward

<sup>12</sup> Andreas Michel, “The Subject of Exoticism: Victor Segalen’s *Equipée*”, *Surfaces*, Vol. 6, Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal (1996), pp. 4-20

<sup>13</sup> Andreas Michel, “The Subject of Exoticism: Victor Segalen’s *Equipée*”, *Surfaces*, Vol. 6, Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal (1996), pp. 4-20

W. Said's "Travelling Theory" model, identifiable through four stages—*departure, transit, transplantation, and emergence*—stating that theories can be weakened or strengthened as they travel. Forsdick also discusses the shifting term "exoticism" since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the ambivalence inherent within it. Furthermore, Forsdick discusses postcolonial theory as a result of the concept of travel, influenced by the French and French thinkers.<sup>14</sup>

Another study on exoticism close to this research is the one discussing Egyptian Belly Dance culture by Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young (2003). This research discusses the cultural and performative dimensions of belly dance within the framework of orientalism and exoticism. It also examines how belly dance was used in romanticized depictions and stereotypes, such as sultans, harems, and veils, in Western-European media and performances, subsequently becoming a site of fantasy and exoticism.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, a study on exoticism showing proximity to this research is that conducted by Ralph P. Locke (2007). Locke discusses that the concept of exoticism in music relates to the depiction of foreign places. Moreover, according to him, exoticism in the visual arts often lies in the subject and the creator's attitude, not the style, as often depicted in 19<sup>th</sup> century French Orientalist painting. Conversely, musical exoticism has traditionally been identified with specific stylistic devices that evoke a foreign culture.<sup>16</sup>

The absence of studies on Eastern-Egyptian exoticism through visual forms (especially the first films) presents an opportunity for the author to conduct a study on exoticism, hoping to provide new perspectives on orientalism studies, and especially on contemporary approaches to the culture of Western-European hegemony.

## 2. Research Method

This study employs a "descriptive-analysis" method. This writing method begins with a general depiction or illustration of the problem based on collected sources or data, which are subsequently analyzed specifically and narrowed down, allowing for the extraction of its core and conclusions. This method becomes a process of critically examining and analyzing the change in visual representation culture in France, as seen in the first Egyptian films recorded by Alexandre Promio. This method is also supported by representation studies and ideological studies, such as exoticism and orientalism.

The primary sources analyzed consist of 21 films, obtained and downloaded from two websites, Huntley Film Archives and YouTube. This is out of the total number of films recorded by Alexandre Promio in Egypt, which numbers 35 films according to the *Catalogue Lumière* (CL) data, and 37 films according to the *Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée* (CNC) data. The two additional films are titled *Embarquement II* and *Panorama des rives du Nil*, [IX]. Huntley Film Archives is a site specializing in archives of the first films in celluloid form, providing a special collection of pioneer filmmakers starting from 1895, mostly documentaries. YouTube is a public site offering a video-sharing system for its users. Therefore, it is highly probable that certain individuals or institutions have shared the first films about the world, including Egypt. These sources

<sup>14</sup> Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001).

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Shay dan Barbara Sellers-Young, "Belly Dance: Orientalism–Exoticism–Self-Exoticism", *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Congress on Research in Dance (2003).

<sup>16</sup> Ralph P. Locke, "A Border View of Musical Exoticism", *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 24, No. 4, University of California Press (2007).

are then supported by photographs, lithographs, paintings, books, journals, working papers, website documents, web articles, and other websites.

This study uses exoticism as its main theory. Exoticism is a cultural criticism approach that addresses the discourse of difference, otherness, and alteritas in general through a European (Western) view of Western cultural hegemony. Exoticism is the attraction and shock that *le divers* (difference, otherness, alterity) exerts on the traveler. Exoticism involves an encounter with the "Other" that emphasizes the uniqueness of another culture without necessarily assimilating it. A core aspect of the concept of exoticism is the resistance to the assimilation of the exotic into the popular. The essence of exoticism is the ability to perceive diversity and enjoy the difference it entails. Exoticism is a moment of fleeting perception, a temporal encounter that rejects permanence and embraces change. The subjective nature of exoticism provides an individual experience shaped by one's cultural background and personal sensibilities. The perception of exoticism varies from person to person. An ethical approach to exoticism demands respect and genuine engagement with the "Other" to avoid superficiality and exploitation.<sup>17</sup>

The theory of exoticism examines the essence of the encounter between different cultures through the breakthrough of modernity in re-articulating the idea of the subject and experience. This theory is practiced by an "exoticist"—someone who enjoys the experience of radical cultural difference, tied to the age of exploration and discovery, which inaugurated Western expansionism, giving rise to literary, scientific, and philosophical representations of exotic peoples and places. This theory also describes the Western belief in the superiority of the mind's classificatory powers in terms such as science, industry, and empire; a belief in universal natural laws, and timeless norms of truth, justice, morality, aesthetics, and so on.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Alexandre Promio

Jean Alexandre Louis Promio<sup>18</sup> (Lyon, July 9, 1868 – Asnières-sur-Seine<sup>19</sup>, December 24, 1926) was an immigrant optician from an Italian family that had settled in Lyon, France. Between June 10 and 12, 1895, Promio was among the audience for Lumière's experimental film projection by the Société Photographiques de France in Lyon, before the commercial, paid projection on December 28, 1895, at the Salon Indien, Grand Café No. 14 – now changed to Restaurant Le Lumière (close to Place de l'Opéra), Boulevard des Capucines, Paris.<sup>20</sup> From that time, Promio became interested in working at Société Lumière, owned by the Lumière Brothers.

<sup>17</sup> Victor Segalen, *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 14-70.

<sup>18</sup> According to Jean-Loup Passek, Alexandre Promio is also called Eugène Promio. Cf. Jean-Loup Passek, *Dictionnaire du Cinéma* (Paris: Larousse, 2001), pp. 1043.

<sup>19</sup> Catalogue Lumière, "Opérateur: Alexandre Promio", <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/operateur/alexandre-promio/> accessed on August 16, 2017. According to Enes Midžić, Promio has died in Paris. Cf. Enes Midžić, "Alexandre Promio u Hrvatskoj 1898 ili U Potrazi Za Izgubljenim Filmom Između Publike i Nekoliko Država", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, Vol. 47, Dubrovnik (2006).

<sup>20</sup> Enes Midžić, "Alexandre Promio u Hrvatskoj 1898 ili U Potrazi Za Izgubljenim Filmom Između Publike i Nekoliko Država", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, Vol. 47, Dubrovnik (2006), pp. 8.

On March 1, 1896, Promio decided to leave his job as an optician and was officially employed by the Société Lumière as an *opérateur* and *filmmaker* (*cinéaste*) or *réalisateur*.<sup>21</sup> He was tasked with circling the globe, visiting major cities to record, photograph, print, preserve, reflect, present, and produce moving pictures of the real world—and the material world within it—(in short, to film the world's great cities) using the Lumière *Cinématographe*. These films were then shown at a different time, or even simultaneously, using the same device. This event also constituted the introduction of moving pictures (*motion pictures/films cinématographiques*) or film, (especially) cinema, the Lumière invention (*Cinématographe*), and most importantly, the representation of the world (particularly the Eastern world) based on the concepts and ideas (*mental representations*) of Promio through a screening of moving pictures or film—as a form of the development of French visual and heterogeneous culture—which he captured during his travels or adventures to various major cities around the world.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.2 Cinema and the First Moving Picture Projections in Egypt

Based on the *Catalogue Lumière* data, 348 film titles have been identified as captured or recorded by Alexandre Promio during his journey around the world's major cities.<sup>23</sup> According to this data, Promio began his journey in May 1896 from Geneva (Switzerland), capturing his first images: *Maison Lavanchy-Clarke*, *Exposition Nationale*, *Village Suisse*, *Palais des Fées*, and *Place Bel-Air*.<sup>24</sup> During this trip, Promio successfully obtained 7 film titles. After that, around late May to early June, Promio continued to Barcelona (Spain) and captured images of the port, titled "*chargement d'un navire*." Then, during June, Promio went to Madrid and took several images of the *Plaza de toros de la route d'Aragon*, *Puerta del Sol*, *the Toledo Gate*, *the Palais Royal*, *Kamp Vicálvaro*, and *the Barracks of Principe Pío*. During his time in Spain, according to the *Catalogue Lumière*, Promio successfully captured 13 film titles.<sup>25</sup>

In July and August 1896, Promio continued his journey to London, England. There, he successfully captured 11 film titles covering Sydenham, Crystal Palace Park, the Zoo, Regent Park, Saint-James Street, Tower Bridge, Piccadilly Circus, and Marble Arch. Meanwhile, during September, Promio spent his time capturing images in several major

<sup>21</sup> According to Marie-Thérèse Journot, the term "*cinéaste*" was used by Louis Delluc to refer to everyone who worked in cinema. Today, the term has become synonymous with *réalisateur* (or director) or *metteur* (or director) in the professional world. Cf. Marie-Thérèse Journot, *Le Vocabulaire du Cinéma* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2006), pp. 18.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *Histoire du Cinéma Français* (Paris: Éditions Nathan, 1995); Enes Midžić, "Alexandre Promio u Hrvatskoj 1898 ili U Potrazi Za Izgubljenim Filmom Između Publike i Nekoliko Država", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, Vol. 47, Dubrovnik (2006); Jean-Loup Passek, *Dictionnaire du Cinéma* (Paris: Larousse, 2001); Catalogue Lumière, "Opérateur: Alexandre Promio", <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/opérateur/alexandre-promio/> accessed on August 16, 2017; Paul Burns, "The History of The Discovery of Cinematography", <http://precinemahistory.net/> accessed on March 26, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> However, based on data from the CNC (*Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée*) Archives Françaises du Film, Alexandre Promio has several roles or jobs, being a *Réalisateur* (Director), *Cadreur* (Camera Operator), *Cascadeur* (Stuntman), and *Intervenant* (Speaker). The data shows that there are 388 film titles related to the name "Alexandre Promio" on the search page of the CNC website. From this data, there were 360 film titles when he became a *Réalisateur* (Director), 26 film titles when he became a *Cadreur* (Camera Operator), 1 film title when he became a *Cascadeur* (Stuntman), and 1 film title when he became an *Intervenant* (Speaker). This data is not known or does not mention that the films in question are related to the Lumière Brothers. However, the data shows that Promio has another role as a *Réalisateur*. Cf. <http://www.cnc-aff.fr/> accessed on September 1, 2017.

<sup>24</sup> According to Enes Midžić, the first image taken by Promio was when he was in Vanesia, Italy, and took a picture of the Gondola, a traditional rowboat from Vanesia. In addition, according to Midžić, Promio began his journey from Spain in May 1896. Cf. Enes Midžić, "Alexandre Promio u Hrvatskoj 1898 ili U Potrazi Za Izgubljenim Filmom Između Publike i Nekoliko Država", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, Vol. 47, Dubrovnik (2006), pp. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Catalogue Lumière, "Opérateur: Alexandre Promio", <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/opérateur/alexandre-promio/> accessed on August 16, 2017.

cities in the United States. In New York, Promio filmed Broadway, Battery Place, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Wall Street Corner, Union Square, Reade Street, Central Park, and Whitehall Street, and Promio successfully obtained 11 film titles. In Boston, Promio filmed Washington Street, Market Street, Commercial Street, Atlantic Avenue, and Tremont Row, managing to collect 5 film titles. In Chicago, Promio filmed Michigan Avenue, Wrightwood Corner, and Clark Street, collecting 3 film titles. In Niagara, Promio obtained only 2 film titles of Horseshoe Falls, and in Brooklyn (now New York), Promio captured only one film title of Fulton Street. From his travels in the United States, Promio successfully gathered 22 film titles.<sup>26</sup>

In October 1896, Promio took several images of Paris, such as the Champs-Élysées, Place de l'Opéra, and the Military School, managing to collect 6 film titles before continuing his adventure around the world. It was likely during this time in Paris that Promio carried a reserve of *roll film celluloid* or *perforated-celluloid film* to capture films at his upcoming destinations, including the Near East or North Africa.<sup>27</sup>

Based on the *Catalogue Lumière* data, there are 2 film titles that raise doubts for the author in narrating Promio's journey during October 1896. These two films depict Venice, Italy, and are known to have been taken by Promio between October 25 and December 13, 1896. The titles are *Panorama du Grand Canal pris d'un bateau* and *Panorama de la place Saint-Marc pris d'un bateau*.<sup>28</sup> However, Enes Midžić argues and asserts that the film *Panorama du Grand Canal pris d'un bateau*—which captures scenes of the city of Venice, famous for its Grand Canal and Gondolas—was taken on December 13, 1896, not in October 1896. According to Midžić, this film also secured Promio's place in history as one of the first *filmmakers* (*cinéaste*) or *réalisateur* to capture scenes of the Gondola and the first *filmmaker* to place a camera (*Lumière Cinématographe*) on a boat. It was from this method of filming that Promio often placed the camera on a vehicle—be it a boat, train, tram, or otherwise—to obtain the desired moving pictures or film,<sup>29</sup> including when he visited Egypt in 1897.

Based on the 'data of films taken by Promio' in the *Catalogue Lumière*, Promio continued his journey to the East in December 1896, taking the opportunity to visit Venice, Italy, on December 13, 1896.<sup>30</sup> He chose Algeria as his first destination in the East to introduce cinema, project Lumière's commercial films, introduce the Lumière invention (*Cinématographe*), and most importantly, to capture images and obtain new films. The cities Promio visited were Algiers and Tlemcen. In Algiers, Promio successfully collected 7 film titles of the port, *Place du Gouvernement* [now Place des Martyrs], and *rue Bab-Azoun*. In Tlemcen, he only obtained 3 film titles: *Rue Mascara*, *Rue Sidi-Bou-Medine*, and *Rue de France*. The total number of films Promio obtained in Algeria was 10.

<sup>26</sup> Catalogue Lumière, "Opérateur: Alexandre Promio", <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/operateur/alexandre-promio/> accessed on 16 August 2017; Promio started his journey in May in Spain, July in London (UK), September in New York and Chicago (United States), November in Italy, and December in Algeria. Cf. Enes Midžić, "Alexandre Promio u Hrvatskoj 1898 ili U Potrazi Za Izgubljenim Filmom Između Publike i Nekoliko Država", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, Vol. 47, Dubrovnik (2006), pp. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Paul Burns, "The History of The Discovery of Cinematography", <http://precinemahistory.net/> accessed on March 26, 2018, at 07:29 a.m.

<sup>28</sup> Catalogue Lumière, "Opérateur: Alexandre Promio", <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/operateur/alexandre-promio/> accessed on August 16, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Enes Midžić, "Alexandre Promio u Hrvatskoj 1898 ili U Potrazi Za Izgubljenim Filmom Između Publike i Nekoliko Država", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, Vol. 47, Dubrovnik (2006), pp. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Enes Midžić, "Alexandre Promio u Hrvatskoj 1898 ili U Potrazi Za Izgubljenim Filmom Između Publike i Nekoliko Država", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, Vol. 47, Dubrovnik (2006), pp. 8.

After that, from mid-December 1896 through January 1897, Promio continued his journey to Tunisia and successfully captured 12 film titles. In Tunisia, Promio filmed in several cities: in Tunis, he captured 10 film titles of *Rue Bab-el-Khadra*, *Porte de France*, *Rue El-Halfaouine*, *Rue Sidi-Ben-Arous*, *Place Bab-Souika*, and *Souk-El-Bey*; in Sousse, he obtained only one film titled *Marché aux Charbons (avec chameaux)*; and in Hammam Lif, also only one film, *Halte à la Gare*.<sup>31</sup> It was because of this journey around the world that Promio became the primary filmmaker (*cinéaste*) or *réalisateur* at Société Lumière.<sup>32</sup>

Based on this data from the *Catalogue Lumière*, it is clear that Promio did *not* capture images or produce a film in Egypt in 1896. In fact, there is no historical trace indicating that Promio (or the Lumière Brothers) went to Egypt in November 1896. However, this contradicts the fact that November 5, 1896,<sup>33</sup> is established as the day when moving pictures were first projected in Egypt (specifically in Alexandria)—and indeed the first film projection in the Eastern world. This projection used the Lumière *Cinématographe*,<sup>34</sup> and the films shown were the 10 commercial Lumière films; the same 10 films first projected on December 28, 1895, in Paris.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, according to information from the *Catalogue Lumière*, the first film projection in Egypt on November 5, 1896, was indeed not conducted by Alexandre Promio or the Lumière Brothers (Auguste or Louis), but by Henri Dello-Strologo,<sup>36</sup> a Lumière *concessionnaire*.<sup>37</sup> He organized and facilitated the first projection of the 10 Lumière commercial films at the Toussoun Bourse<sup>38</sup> (*Café Zawani*) in Alexandria, Egypt.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Catalogue Lumière, "Opérateur: Alexandre Promio", <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/operateur/alexandre-promio/> accessed on August 16, 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Enes Midžić, "Alexandre Promio u Hrvatskoj 1898 ili U Potrazi Za Izgubljenim Filmom Između Publike i Nekoliko Država", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, Vol. 47, Dubrovnik (2006), pp. 8.

<sup>33</sup> According to another article, the event occurred on November 15, 1896. Cf. Cornell University Library, "Middle Eastern and North African Cinema and Film: Egyptian Cinema and Film", <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/MidEastCinema/Egypt> accessed on November 1, 2016, at 12:02 p.m.

<sup>34</sup> According to an article from Alex Cinema, the 10 Lumière films that were projected for the first time in Egypt (Alexandria) include films in the documentary genre, namely films that show historical and social events. This certainly makes the documentary genre the first film genre projected in Egypt (Alexandria). The term documentary encompasses a fairly broad category with factual and non-factual representations or expressions, including *newsreels* and instructional films. In the 1920s, along with the gradual increase in the production of feature films, the production of short films in the documentary genre experienced a relative decline. This certainly causes documentary genre films to be in second place in the interest of audiences and producers. Cf. Alex Cinema, "Films: The Early Years of Documentaries and Short Film in Egypt", [http://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/films/Early\\_Films.html](http://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/films/Early_Films.html) accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 p.m.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Sāmī Ḥilmī, *Bidāyāt al-Ṣinimā al-Miṣrīyah: 1907-1939* (al-Qāhirah: al-Hay'at al-Āmmah li-Quṣūr al-Thaqāfah, 2013), pp. 11; Catalogue Lumière, "Opérateur: Alexandre Promio", <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/operateur/alexandre-promio/> accessed on August 16, 2017; Alex Cinema, "Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 p.m.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Alex Cinema, "Cinemas: Early Projection Halls/Salles (Cinematographs – Cinema[phone] – Cinemas) Alexandria 1896-1925", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/industry/Cinemas.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 p.m.

<sup>37</sup> Alaa Al Aswany, "Egypt's Fondness for Foreigners", <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/15/opinion/alaa-al-aswany-egypts-fondness-for-foreigners.html> accessed on November 25, 2019, at 1:17 p.m.

<sup>38</sup> Toussoun Bourse has many rooms used for meetings, one of which is *Café Zawani*, in Alex Cinema, "Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 p.m. Cf. Viola Shafik, "Egyptian Cinema", in Oliver Leaman, *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 23; and, Alex Cinema, "Cinemas: Early Projection Halls/Salles (Cinematographs – Cinema[phone] – Cinemas) Alexandria 1896-1925", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/industry/Cinemas.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>39</sup> Catalogue Lumière, "Série: Alexandre Promio en Égypte (1897)", <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/series/alexandre-promio-en-egypte-1897/> accessed on August 16, 2017, at 11:37 a.m.

This event took place in a projection room—now called a ‘cinema’—named “Salle de la Bourse Toussoun Pasha”, which is located on Rue Bab el Hadid (Rue de L’ancienne Bourse), Alexandria. After this event, the Toussoun Bourse (Toussoun Stock Exchange), the site of the first film projection in Egypt, was transformed into the prestigious Muhammad Ali Club, and later became the Horreya Cultural Center, now known as *Qasr el Ebdaa’* (Palace of Creativity). One of the many rooms in the Toussoun Bourse was known as Café Zawani, which became the venue for film projection activities following the success of the first screening, establishing it as the inaugural site for film projection and cinema in Egypt.

Café Zawani was chosen as the venue because cafés in Alexandria at that time served as places of business, almost entirely controlled by foreigners. They—especially Italians, Greeks, and French—met for stock exchange activities, leading many popular cafés in Alexandria to be known as ‘*borsas*’. When local filmmaking first began in Egypt and the *Cinématographe* was used as a projection and filmmaking device, the new invention proved profitable for businessmen like them. This profitability was certainly known from the reaction of the Egyptian public, where families, upon learning their relatives had been filmed, would rush to the crowded cafés to watch a projection featuring their loved ones.<sup>40</sup> Indirectly, this event also provides a partial answer to a question often asked today—the reason why figures with many fans or acting expertise are chosen as actors in a film.

The first films projected at Café Zawani were the short Lumière films, lasting about 15–30 minutes in total. Ticket prices varied, depending on the target audience, *niche de clientèle* (customer niche), and facilities offered. When the first cinemas appeared, audiences were charged 5 *piasters* for the exclusivity and novelty. This soon dropped to 3 or 2 *piasters*, and was even cheaper for children.<sup>41</sup> However, to watch the Lumière films at the very first projection in Egypt in 1896, audiences were charged 4 *piasters* for adults and 2 *piasters* for children. Furthermore, as early cinema developed in Egypt, different types of tickets were offered, such as first-class tickets offering comfortable seating, whereas third-class tickets, or ‘*terzo*’, were merely backless benches.<sup>42</sup>

The first film projection in Egypt in 1896 by Henri Dello-Strologo did *not* offer local films or films *about* Egypt (the East) to the audiences in Alexandria, as Promio had done when he visited Algeria. It was only when Promio visited Egypt and filmed the country in March 1897 that films *about* Egypt were projected to audiences, albeit after a considerable delay. This event clarifies the assumed difference in roles held by individuals at the Société Lumière. This is based on the findings by the *Catalogue Lumière* research team that exclusive operators, usually *projectionnistes* [projectionists] (like Henri Dello-Strologo) were only responsible for disseminating views from the existing directory, while others (like Alexandre Promio) were authorized to capture images.<sup>43</sup> This means that everything

<sup>40</sup> Alex Cinema, “Cinemas: Early Projection Halls/Salles (Cinematographs – Cinema[phone] – Cinemas) Alexandria 1896-1925”, <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/industry/Cinemas.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>41</sup> Since the first projections took place in Alexandria, children in Alexandria’s schools have been busy raising money to witness the magical discoveries projected in local cafes. Cf. Alex Cinema, “Production and Distribution Companies”, [https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/industry/Production\\_Distribution\\_Companies.html](https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/industry/Production_Distribution_Companies.html) accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>42</sup> Alex Cinema, “Cinemas: Early Projection Halls/Salles (Cinematographs – Cinema[phone] – Cinemas) Alexandria 1896-1925”, <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/industry/Cinemas.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>43</sup> Catalogue Lumière, “Série: Alexandre Promio en Égypte (1897)”, <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/series/alexandre-promio-en-egypte-1897/> accessed on August 16, 2017, at 11:37 a.m.

is regulated and has rules for everyone who plays a role in the efforts to introduce cinema, Lumière's invention (Lumière's *Cinématographe*), and film projection in the early days of the introduction of film and cinema.

That first projection on November 5, 1896, became a topic of lively discussion in Alexandria, causing people to wonder. As an anonymous writer in *El-Mou'ayed* expressed on November 12, 1896—seven days after the first projection in Alexandria—in an article titled “*When Will We Catch Up With Them?*” which raises the issue of the great differences between East and West through Lumière's invention – the *Cinématographe* – and the function or use or ability of the *Cinématographe* to display or offer moving pictures. This is marked by his regret about how far the East is behind compared to the West, and most importantly, the emergence of a critical question about ‘how can the East catch up, when everyone (including the East itself) uses the progress of Western culture’?:

“...there is much evidence we can see and touch with our fingers, to admit that ‘we (the East) are as far behind them (the West) as a tortoise (the East) is from a hare (the West)’... what happened is that a few days ago some foreigners came to Alexandria with a camera (device or machine) capable of capturing moving pictures, which they call the “*Cinématographe*”. They presented it in the spacious Hall of Toussoun Pasha Bourse. A large number of people gathered to watch it, and I was among them. **I was intoxicated by the wonder I had seen...**”<sup>44</sup>

This marvel made everyone who saw it feel disbelief and amazement, including *El-Mou'ayed* anonymous writer. He continued:

“...This extraordinary invention that has aroused awe or amazement has also made me aware of many things, the most important being that I have understood the secret of the foreigners’ progress. I discovered that we (the East) would not lag behind them (the West) if we (the East) had the same materials, and if, doing as they (the West) do, we (the East) connect work with science and connect the tangible with the intangible...”<sup>45</sup>

He contextualized this amazement by comparing it to the social and material conditions in Europe:

“...Indeed, how can a scholar in their country (the West) not advance which leads them to discovery and creativity, towards producing amazing things in his works? At school, he (a Western scholar) discovers all the tools of science available to him, present before his eyes to reveal to him the mysteries of knowledge. This he accepted, opening for him the closed door of science and discovery. He left school with a mind full of everything necessary for the advancement of his country and the race against others for the happiness and leisure we see foreigners enjoy. Then, wherever we turn, in European capitals and their thriving cities, we see beautiful museums and exhibitions, scientific and political clubs, as well as industrial and artistic offices and meetings. **If a fool (*ignoramus*) visits them (the West) once a week, he will become a scientist in a few years...**”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Alex Cinema, “Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria”, <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>45</sup> Alex Cinema, “Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria”, <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>46</sup> Alex Cinema, “Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria”, <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

The anonymous writer also lamented the situation in Egypt:

"...If we (the East) know all this, and also that trade, industry, and agriculture are resources in the land of strangers, ...which makes life easier for them (the West) and eliminates the fear of hunger and poverty that is so strongly fixed in our country. If we knew all this, we would no longer hesitate to admit that to compare us, the peoples of the East, with the West is to compare the dead with the living or the earth with the sky. All we can do is mourn our good fortune, mourn our fate, and grieve that our government is in the iron grip of strangers. The soul of his people rose to their throats due to the harsh pressure and murderous oppression. Then there is nothing wrong with blaming our rich people, who have turned their vaults into the graveyard of a pile of money where termites gnaw away..."<sup>47</sup>

This was the reaction of the anonymous *El-Mou'ayed* writer upon seeing a Western invention displayed before Easterners. To him, the *Cinématographe* was an invention ready to ensnare anyone in the name of progress. To catch up, he suggested eliminating the attitudes that stifled innovation:

"...This is all that comes to mind when I see the amazing machine I mean (*Cinématographe*). I leave behind the thought that as long as we walk that path, we are heading for the inevitable abyss that has been dug for us by the progress and civilization of foreigners. If we don't do what our ancestors did, and get rid of the dust of apathy, we will be overwhelmed or overwhelmed by the flood or flood (of innovation and creativity) of them (the West). **Oh, children of the nation, our only salvation lies in following in their footsteps and making progress of our country is our only goal, so that we can catch up with them.** I show in today's letter, which describes the progress of the West, the beauty of the *Cinématographe*."<sup>48</sup>

This letter shows that the writer truly understood that his words would soon materialize. This is known because, within a few years, the people of Alexandria were able to produce their own films, although historically it is difficult to identify who these people were. Indeed, while the emergence of cinema in Egypt was dominated by Westerners (first French, then Italians), Egyptians eventually became involved. Despite the liberal tolerance of the Egyptian government in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, relations between Egypt (as the East) and the West were sometimes inharmonious, as Egypt was occupied by the British (formerly the French) and central roles in trade and wealth were in Western hands.

However, Egyptians also accepted and needed Western art and technology, but they were determined to create their own film industry. This determination was realized when Aziz and Dorés, famed Alexandrian photographers, created the first cinematic (or documentary) film in 1907, "The Visit of Khedive Abbas Hilmi II to the Scientific Institute of the Sidi Abu el Abbas Mosque."<sup>49</sup> In the development of early films and cinema in Egypt, films about Egypt became a lively debate about the validity of "is this an Egyptian

<sup>47</sup> Alex Cinema, "Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>48</sup> Alex Cinema, "Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>49</sup> Viola Shafik, "Egyptian Cinema", dalam Oliver Leaman, *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 23; Alex Cinema, "Films: The Early Years of Documentaries and Short Film in Egypt", [http://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/films/Early\\_Films.html](http://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/films/Early_Films.html) accessed October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.; Alex Cinema, "Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

film or not?" related to the problem of the first film about Egypt made by Egyptians. Alexandria as a city involved in the emergence of the first film and cinema projections in Egypt gives several types of identity in the development of early film and cinema in Egypt, such as: films made by 'those born in Alexandria of Egyptian or Foreign origin', 'those who were born in Cairo but came to Alexandria to work – when cinema appeared in Alexandria', and 'those who were born in Alexandria but moved to Cairo with cinema'.<sup>50</sup> After the success of the first projection in Alexandria, twenty-three days later it was brought to the capital, Cairo. The event took place at the *Hamam Schneider* (*Schneider Baths*)<sup>51</sup> on November 28, 1896, showing the same 10 Lumière films.<sup>52</sup>

The fact that the 'first film projected in the East' was indeed from Egypt, and the film projected in Egypt was *not* a film about the East, but 10 Lumière Brothers commercial films – the first paid film projected on December 28, 1895 in Paris – projected by an *associate or concessionaire* Lumière, Henri Dello-Strologo, *not* the Lumière Brothers (either Louis or Auguste Lumière) or Alexandre Promio. It happened on November 5, 1896 in Alexandria, and November 28, 1896 in Cairo. As for the 'first film taken about the East' – if you refer to the *Catalogue Lumière* data – it is an Eastern film about Algeria, not about Egypt, and it was taken by Alexandre Promio when he visited the East for the first time in December 1896. The first film 'about Egypt' (not the first Eastern film – if you refer to the *Catalogue Lumière* data) is a film taken by Alexandre Promio when he visited Egypt in 1897.

The emergence and journey of the development of cinematography and photography did not always leave a pleasant story. This is based on Enes Midžić's argument that when the *opérateur* and *filmmaker* (*cinéaste*) or *réalisateur* or the early cameramen did their job, they and the equipment they used always attracted the attention of the public, so that eventually they – the *opérateur* and the *filmmaker* (*cinéaste*) or *réalisateur* – must be led or accompanied by police and militia, civilians and military, security services, porters (train guards or doormen) who are passionate and conscious citizens, and bodyguards, because people who see what *opérateurs* and *filmmakers* (*cinéaste*) or *réalisateur* are doing often do not know what *opérateur* and *filmmaker* (*cinéaste*) or *réalisateur* recorded and for whom, as today. This certainly causes *opérateur* and *filmmaker* (*cinéaste*) or *réalisateur* to become entangled in problems related to what they do in indigenous places or territories. One of the first *opérateur* and *filmmaker* (*cinéaste*) or *réalisateur* to deal with the police was, of course, Alexandre Promio. The handheld camera attached to his photographic tripod in Istanbul, which looked like a machine gun to police officers, ended up in prison.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to his role as an *opérateur* and *filmmaker* (*cinéaste*) or chief *réalisateur* at Société Lumière, Promio is someone who has a didactic soul, just like Silvestre de Sacy – a *textual-Orientalist*.<sup>54</sup> This is known when he always trains and directs a lot of *opérateurs* and *filmmakers* (*cinéaste*) or *réalisateur* who are interested in photography and (especially)

<sup>50</sup> Alex Cinema, "Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>51</sup> Viola Shafik, "Egyptian Cinema", in Oliver Leaman, *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 23.

<sup>52</sup> Cornell University Library, "100 Years of Egyptian Cinema: A Timeline", <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/MidEastCinema/Egypt> accessed on November 2, 2016, at 02:46 p.m.

<sup>53</sup> Enes Midžić, "Alexandre Promio u Hrvatskoj 1898 ili U Potrazi Za Izgubljenim Filmom Između Publike i Nekoliko Država", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, Vol. 47, Dubrovnik (2006), pp. 8.

<sup>54</sup> To find out about the attitude and nature of Sacy, who is didactic and revisionist. Cf. Edward W. Said, *Orientalisme: Menggugat Hegemoni Barat dan Menundukkan Timur sebagai Subjek* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2010), pp. 190-192.

cinematography. In addition, according to Enes Midžić, Promio is also included as one of the pioneers of historical filmmaking. This is evidenced by his works entitled *Assassinat du duc de Guise*, *Néron essayant des poisons sur des esclaves*, *Mort de Robespierre*, *Mort de Marat*, *Faust: apparition de Méphistophélès*, *Faust: métamorphose de Faust et apparition de Marguerite*, and so on. In addition to being an *opérateur* and *filmmaker* (cinéaste) or *réalisateur* who used the *Cinématographe* to obtain images and moving pictures (film), since 1904, Promio has also made panoramic films for 360° *photorama* systems using *Périphote* and *Photorama*, which is also an invention of Lumière patented in 1900. From 1907 to 1910, Promio's job then changed to director and production manager at the Compagnie Téophile Pathé. However, from 1911 to 1924, with obstacles and interruptions for two years in the military, Promio was forced to stay in Algeria and work on making films for the government. Later worked in Algeria to make a film for the Éclair Company.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.3 Alexandria and the Arrival of Alexandre Promio in Egypt 1897

The first film projection in Egypt began in Alexandria because it was *not* only a region with an atmosphere that encouraged innovation, creativity, and business, but it was also the pioneer of all progress in Egypt. Alexandria was able to encourage these things that led to the 'explosion' of popularity that dominated Egyptian culture in all major areas of Egypt. Historically, Alexandria was called '*Alexandrea Ad Ægyptum*' ('Alexandria for Egypt'). Since its founding by Alexander the Great in 331 BC, Alexandria has been an open city that crystallized his vision of the Hellenization of the world and became a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-domination city. It was during this era that Alexandria was able to become the capital of the classical world, which was marked by the existence of Pharos Alexandria and its library as a universal symbol of the enlightenment of the world. In the modern world, Alexandria remains in the human memory as a cosmopolitan city with its advantages – a rich mosaic of diverse races, languages and religions – where tolerance and diversity allow all kinds of cultural interaction and development.<sup>56</sup> In short, Alexandria was not only able to become a '*cultural control*' for Egypt (and even the world) in classical times, but also for Egypt in modern times. This ability is certainly the same as the city of Paris, where Louis XIV attempted (and succeeded) to move the center of European culture from Rome to Paris during the *Grand Siècle*.

Alexandria's superiority not only makes it the first city in the East in film projection because of its capabilities, but also the root of the cinema industry in Egypt with its various limitations, such as the limited specialists of the world of cinema, the main characters who write screenplays, film, direct, produce, and sometimes even become artists or figures in the films they make. They are cinematographers, not *opérateurs* and *filmmakers* (cinéaste) or *réaliseurs*.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Enes Midžić, "Alexandre Promio u Hrvatskoj 1898 ili U Potrazi Za Izgubljenim Filmom Između Publike i Nekoliko Država", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, Vol. 47, Dubrovnik (2006), pp. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Alex Cinema, "Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Alex Cinema, "Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria", <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.; Alex Cinema, "Films: The Early Years of Documentaries and Short Film in Egypt", [http://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/films/Early\\_Films.html](http://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/films/Early_Films.html) accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

Alexandria became a region where cinemas, films, studios, cinema companies, magazines dedicated to the world of cinema, and even film critics first appeared in Egypt. The first cinema in Egypt, for example, opened on January 30, 1897 – just a few months after the first projection in November 1896 – on *Mahatet Misr Street (Rue de la Gare du Caire)*, close to the Alhambra, Alexandria. The first cinema in Egypt was called ‘*Cinématographe Lumière*’, was certainly opened and owned by the Lumière Brothers because they saw the potential possessed by Alexandria. The ‘*Cinématographe Lumière*’ is a cinema that was briefly closed and then reopened between 1890 and 1899 as part of the Alhambra program between the Bourse Toussoun Pasha or Toussoun Bourse or the Toussoun Stock Exchange and the Teatro Alhambra, with access via Rue Moharrem Bey.<sup>58</sup>

After the projection of the first films in Alexandria and Cairo, as well as the inauguration of the cinema, Alexandre Promio was commissioned by the Lumière Brothers to take a number of images or moving pictures (films) in Egypt. Promio was tasked with filming exotic and captivating landscapes, as well as capturing major historical events. The films, which Promio captured while in Egypt, according to Alex Cinema, were then projected for the first time in France, in front of his communal audience, before they toured Europe and were finally projected in Egypt. The first scene he shot was a place in Alexandria, and the film *Place des Consuls à Alexandrie* (1897) became the first film ever shot by Promio in Egypt<sup>59</sup> and a film made in Egypt, as well as the first film about Egypt ‘on behalf of the Lumière Brothers or his company, Société Lumière’. The film also marked the first screening of “*pellicules*” (celluloid films) recorded in Egypt and the first local film production launched by Europeans in Alexandria. In addition, Lumière’s invention (*Cinématographe*), became the first device or device or machine to take moving pictures (films) about Egypt. The first film shoot in Egypt was followed by another *opérateur* and *filmmaker* (cinéaste) or *réalisateur* of the Lumière Brothers in 1906, Félix Mesguich, who took a documentary film at a famous Egyptian historical site and monument, which was also ‘on behalf of the Lumière Brothers or its company, Société Lumière’.<sup>60</sup>

Alexandre Promio with the *Cinématographe Lumière* set foot in Egypt on March 8, 1897 using a French ship through the Port of Alexandria. Promio was then accompanied by an Italian, who also served as Lumière’s *associate* or *concessionaire*, Henri Dello-Strologo, to travel to several places in Egypt with the aim of taking some pictures in some of these places.<sup>61</sup> If we pay attention to the travel mechanism of Promio’s arrival in 1897, it is the same as the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798. Napoleon was aboard a ship with the flag ‘*L’Oriento*’ and his fleet of about 40,000 soldiers, 13 large warships, and 6 warships,

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Alex Cinema, “Cinemas: Early Projection Halls/Salles (Cinematographs – Cinema[phone] – Cinemas) Alexandria 1896-1925”, <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/industry/Cinemas.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.; Alex Cinema, “Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria”, <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>59</sup> Viola Shafik, “Egyptian Cinema”, in Oliver Leaman, *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 23; Richard Abel, *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 216; Alex Cinema, “Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria”, <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Alex Cinema, “Cinemas: Early Projection Halls/Salles (Cinematographs – Cinema[phone] – Cinemas) Alexandria 1896-1925”, <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/industry/Cinemas.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.; Alex Cinema, “Historical Background: Alexandria, Why?: The Beginnings of the Cinema Industry in Alexandria”, <https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/historical/beginnings.html> accessed on October 31, 2016, at 06:20 a.m.

<sup>61</sup> Catalogue Lumière, “Série: Alexandre Promio en Égypte (1897)”, <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/series/alexandre-promio-en-egypte-1897/> accessed on August 16, 2017, at 11:37 a.m.

as well as hundreds of *savants*<sup>62</sup>—astronomers, linguists, archaeologists, botanists, and others—set out from Toulon, on the Mediterranean coast of France, in April 1798. The ship quickly conquered Malta, evaded the British fleet led by Admiral Horatio Nelson, and landed near Alexandria on 1 July. It was only on July 21, 1798, that Napoleon's troops managed to enter Cairo.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.4 Eastern-Islamic Exoticism in Alexandre Promio's First Egyptians Films

Of the 21 films about Egypt recorded by Alexandre Promio in 1897, they radically demonstrate what Edward W. Said called the 'Orientalizing process' (the East being Orientalized).<sup>64</sup> This is because the films offered by Promio represent the 'exoticism' of the East (Egypt): a representation concerned with the perception and description of the West/Europe's difference from the *otherness* of the East<sup>65</sup>—its strangeness, foreignness, and remoteness—which tempted, attracted, and fascinated the West/Europe. The exoticism Promio sought to display was also a form of geographical remoteness (scientific) and Western/European interest (political) in foreign lands. It was this exoticism that the Lumière Brothers, through Promio (under Société Lumière), dared to import from outside the West/Europe (the East [Egypt]) into Western/European life or culture. The importation of these films shows that their content truly possessed '*legal exoticism*' within Western/European culture, especially during the *la belle époque* or *fin-de-siècle* France—also known as the era of modern colonialism or imperialism or decolonization process.

This is not because all exotic things (as well as Promio films) are foreign, strange, or distant, but because not all things that are foreign, strange or distant are exotic in Western/European culture,<sup>66</sup> especially in French culture. The exoticism of the East (Egypt) presented and offered by Promio is also the exoticism of the East (Egypt) that is 'actual or current or latest' by offering the reality of the 'attitude/behavior/activity' represented by the East through the medium of visuals (moving pictures or films).

This exoticism of the 'Atmosphere of the East' can be seen in Promio's attempts to offer his views on the Port of Alexandria, public squares, train stations, processions/customs/parades, the daily activities of Egyptians (farmers, herders), city crowds, bridges, deltas, cemeteries, villages, historical sites (Pyramids, Sphinx), and the Nile River. This exoticism is intensified when the foreignness, strangeness, and remoteness—such as camels, donkeys, or *dromedaries*, horse-drawn carriages, Egyptians in robes/gowns, women in niqabs/abayas/burkas, palm trees, the vast Nile, cultural heritage, etc.—are presented to the West/Europe in moving pictures (films) of less than one minute, where they collide with Western/European culture during screenings.

For example, Promio's film *Le Kédivé et Son Escorte*—the only film identified as having a valid public figure, Khedive Abbas Hilmi II—shows a crowd on a street that the Egyptian

<sup>62</sup> Max Rodenbeck, *Kairo: Kota Kemenangan* (Tangerang Selatan: PT Pustaka Alvabet, 2013), pp. 192-193.

<sup>63</sup> For more details, cf. Arthur Goldschmidt Jr, *A Brief History of Egypt* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2008), pp. 62-66; Cf. Max Rodenbeck, *Kairo: Kota Kemenangan* (Tangerang Selatan: PT Pustaka Alvabet, 2013), pp. 188-196.

<sup>64</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalisme: Menggugat Hegemoni Barat dan Menundukkan Timur sebagai Subjek* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2010), pp. 7.

<sup>65</sup> Julia Kuehn, "Exoticism in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Literature" (Power and Politics, 2014) <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/exoticism-in-19th-century-literature> accessed on March 3, 2020, at 05:55 p.m.

<sup>66</sup> Judy Sund, "Exotic: a Fetish for the Foreign", dalam GDC Interiors Journal (dipublikasikan oleh Phaidon), <https://www.gdcinteriors.com/exotic/> accessed on March 3, 2020, at 05:55 p.m.

ruler will pass. He rides in a horse-drawn carriage, escorted by uniformed troops running and on horseback, while spectators wait on the sidewalks to applaud and wave. The identification of Abbas Hilmi II enhances the exoticism for the West/Europe: an Eastern (Egyptian) or Arab (Islamic) ruler, wearing “exotic” attire, riding in a carriage, followed by guards and exotic animals—like camel, serves as a *role model* or identity that vividly depicts the East (Egypt), reinforcing the imagination previously built through popular textual forms (literature), other visual forms (lithographs, paintings, photography), and even material forms (such as exhibition).



Image 3.4.1 [Film] *Le Khédive et Son Escorte*

The impression of Eastern (Egyptian) exoticism is profoundly felt when the general Western/European view of the East (Egypt) through the image of the Pyramids is presented by Promio in *Les pyramides (vue Générale)* and *Descente de la grande pyramide*. These two films attempt to represent the Western/European imagination of historical sites in a real and realistic manner, which had been constructed by previous visual forms (lithographs, paintings, photography) and even material forms (such as exhibitions), by offering the illusion of motion, thus giving a more real, tangible, and trustworthy impression of authenticity.



Image 3.4.2 [Film] *Les Pyramides (vue Générale)*

In *Les Pyramides (vue Générale)*, Promio presents the Pyramids, the Sphinx, and even Egyptian culture within it, by showing several people in Eastern/Egyptian attire riding their camels, carrying sticks to force the camels to walk. The camel riders are followed by other Egyptians on foot, leading camels, and (notably) several people in

Western/European attire, giving an impression of difference between the two. One of the riders holds a rope to lead another camel.



*Image 3.4.3 [Photo] The Great Pyramid and The Great Sphinx (1858)*  
 – Francis Frith (1822-1898) [English Photographer]

In this film, an Egyptian man crosses past the procession of camels, approaching Promio and the *Cinématographe* with curiosity, as if called by someone. He stops to the left of the *Cinématographe*, possibly engaging in dialogue. This scene is displayed against the backdrop of the Sphinx and Pyramids; thus, besides providing a thick sense of the exotic, the film also verifies, validates, confirms, or perhaps even refutes the Western/European imagination about the Pyramids, the Sphinx, or the culture therein.



*Image 3.4.4 [Painting] In Search of The Pharaohs (1906)*  
 – Alois Stoff (1846-1926) [Austrian Painter]

Likewise, in *Descente de la grande pyramide*, Promio reinforces his realistic depiction of the Pyramids by showing a scene at the base, where several Egyptians in robes descend the Pyramids, stepping over the stones, which evokes an exotic impression.



Image 3.4.5 [Colored Lithograph] *The Sphinx at Giza/Sandstrom Approaching The Sphinx at Giza at Sunset* (1849) – David Roberts (1796-1864) [Scottish Painter and Lithographer] and Louis Hage (1806-1885) [Belgian Lithographer and Watercolourist]

Eastern (Egyptian) exoticism is also intensely felt in the films *Panorama des Rives du Nil [I]*, *Panorama des Rives du Nil [III]*, and *Panorama des Rives du Nil [IV]*. These three titles are part of *Huit vues différentes* (Eight Different Views).<sup>67</sup> The exotic impression from these films is seen when Promio presents the atmosphere of the Nile River landscape, where palm trees, rows of adobe houses, Egyptians, and *feluccas* – a ship from the Nile River, Red Sea and Eastern Mediterranean (including Malta and Tunisia) which is used for sailing and has a length of 8 to 13 meters – are displayed to complete his depiction of the Nile. This shows that Promio's depiction of the Nile is not just a complement to the artistic representation of orientalist art and 'Egyptology'; furthermore, it is also a development of the tradition of 'Nilotic Landscape' representation.

The exotic impression not only offers something clearly different, strange, distant, and foreign to the West/Europe in a real way, but it also offers **backwardness or primitivism**. Depictions of primitivism appear in Promio's films, such as *Bédouins avec chameaux sortant de l'octroi*, where Promio endeavors to present Egyptian Bedouins leading their camels, burdened with fodder, as a symbol of backwardness. This effort to show primitivism is emphasized by Promio's framing, which focuses on a Bedouin man bringing his camel toward the left side of the *Cinématographe*, thus identifying the 'typical characteristic' of an Egyptian Bedouin. Scenes showing the primitivism of an Easterner (Egyptian) with their animals (usually livestock) are frequently found in nearly all of Promio's films, such as *Sortie du Pont de Kasr-el-Nil (chameaux)*, *Sortie du pont de Kasr-el-Nil (ânes)*, and *Kasr-el-Nil*.

<sup>67</sup> Ketiga film ini adalah film yang telah didapatkan oleh penulis dari total 8, bahkan 9 film tentang sungai nil. *Huit vues différentes* (Delapan Pandangan yang Berbeda) ini berdasarkan data dari CL dan CNC. Namun, CNC memiliki satu pandangan tambahan, sehingga jumlah film tentang Sungai Nil ini berjumlah sembilan film. Cf. <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/> accessed on August 16, 2017; Cf. <http://www.cnc-aff.fr/> accessed September 1, 2017.



Image 3.4.6 [Film] *Bédouins avec chameaux sortant de l'octroi*

The measure of exoticism through forms of *primitivism* can also be seen in the beliefs and convictions of the Eastern (Egyptian) people, represented by their customs, processions, and inherent culture. This is offered by Promio in his films *Le Khédive et Son Escorte* and *Procession du Tapis Sacré*, which display a custom, procession, and culture related to the Holy Carpet; *Un Enterrement*, which displays a funeral procession; and *Descente de la grande pyramide*, which shows Egyptians in robes descending the Pyramid stones. In the latter films, one of them is seen sleeping on a pyramid stone; when others descend past him, the sleeping person awakens, sits up, and waits for the others to pass.

The understanding, view, or concept of the exotic can be derived not only from clear differences (e.g., in clothing) and primitivism, but also from **ethnocentrism**. This concept also appears in several of Promio's films as a form of Eastern (Egyptian) exoticism. Among these films is *Embarquement*, which shows a Porter (baggage carrier) carrying the belongings of an elderly-looking woman in Western/European attire boarding a ship.<sup>68</sup> Another is *Arrivée du Train de Ramleh*, where a Porter in Eastern (Egyptian) attire seeks passengers (who are Western-dressed) needing his services as the train stops.

The concept of ethnocentrism to convey exoticism is also visible in *Barrage du Nil*, which features two men in Western/European attire (Hats, Suits, Trousers) riding a *Draisine*—a rail vehicle propelled by human power—which is pushed by an Egyptian man running. This scene reappears from a different direction, but with the same attire and description. It is likely this scene was arranged by Promio to capture a strong *ethnocentric* impression, thereby presenting the concept of exoticism. Meanwhile, *Bourricots sous les Palmiers* and *Village de Sakkarah* show Westerners/Europeans riding donkeys, followed by young Egyptian boys and adults. However, the difference between the two films is the background: *Bourricots sous les Palmiers* features a statue (Ramses II) surrounded by palm trees, while *Village de Sakkarah* shows a rural road. In both films, a woman in Western/European attire is seen riding a white donkey, which is led by an adult Egyptian man carrying a stick.

<sup>68</sup> Based on CL data, this Passenger Ship will depart for Malta and Marseille, see the attachment with the title Data Source (in the form of a description). Alexandre Promio Film in Egypt in 1897. Based on the *Catalogue Lumière* (CL) dan *Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée* (CNC) or cf. <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/> accessed on September 1, 2017.



Image 3.4.7 [Film] *Barrage du Nil*

The Eastern (Egyptian) exoticisms that Promio sought to present in his films, based on Forsdick's ideas in *Travelling Concepts: Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism*, represent a manifestation of the *transition*, *re-cycling*, and *re-interpretation* of the concept of exoticism during the colonial or imperial era. This is because *exoticism* itself "changes as it repeats, repeats as it changes."<sup>69</sup> This means that the exoticism Promio showed was a concept that had been changed, recycled, and reinterpreted: an exoticism of the East offered as real, tangible, or actual, and not offered imaginatively as usual—such as exoticism in literary works or even paintings, in the sense that it does not depict something more real, such as a film.

According to Forsdick, this new form of exoticism emerged due to the ambivalence of the *representer* and the *represented* through colonial contact, which carried an almost universally pejorative tone and was constrained in its multiplication through colonial or imperial discourse.<sup>70</sup> Bongie, in his research on *fin-de-siècle exoticism*, emphasizes that the central element underlying this ambivalence was the erosion of difference by sameness, from the globalization process acting on the specificity of custom.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, this new manifestation of exoticism terminated the previous concept, which was considered obsolete by French colonial or imperial writers in the Interwar Period (1918-1939).

This new exoticism—illustrated by Promio's films—also bears witness to France's long-standing resistance to any comprehensive and active engagement with post-colonial thought.<sup>72</sup> As Victor Segalen stated in his *Essai sur l'exotisme*, 'exoticism in French literature is very fertile. This is necessary because France lacks the capacity for invention.'<sup>73</sup> Segalen's statement was a reaction to the changing perspective of

<sup>69</sup> Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 12-13.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 14.

<sup>71</sup> Chris Bongie, "Exotic Memories", in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 14-15.

<sup>72</sup> Two of Edward Said's texts have been translated, but have attracted little critical attention: "L'Orientalisme: l'Orient crée par l'Occident" and "Culture et imperialism". Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak remain unavailable in French translation, but James Clifford's work, "The Predicament of Culture" is in "Malaise dans la culture: l'ethnographie, la littérature et l'art au XXe siècle", in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 15-16.

<sup>73</sup> The Segalen *Essai* was a major contribution to the ongoing debate in the symbolic field of exoticism and contested meaning that culminated with the emergence of the French New Imperialism. Cf. Victor Segalen, "Essai sur l'exotisme", in "Œuvres Complètes",

Western/European *representer* and *represented*—especially French—in representing the concept of exoticism, including Eastern exoticism. Segalen's anger also implies that 'French identity had shifted—or even signaled its death—by the emergence of a new worldview—including a new view of exoticism—and would soon become a new identity.' Radically, the French capacity for invention, which relied on imagination, was killed by reality and actuality, as an effect of modernism and colonialism or imperialism. Before Promio's case, the representation of Eastern exoticism was presented imaginatively by *representer* and *represented* (*textual-Orientalists* as Said described) before 19<sup>th</sup> century, but in the (late) 19<sup>th</sup> century, this imaginative representation was killed by a *new representer* and *represented* form (*visual-Orientalists*)—like Promio—who presented reality and actuality.

Forsdick asserts that Segalen's *Essai* sought to critique and distance itself from this cultural shift in processing exoticism, exemplified by Promio's films of Egypt. Segalen called this "real" exoticism—the 19<sup>th</sup> century form—is '*latent exoticism*' from the people in early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>74</sup> However, on the other hand, Forsdick argues that Segalen's project is very radical and disturbing because *Essai* is a definition company with repeated redefinitions of exoticism, which allows Segalen to sketch out his personal understanding of the aesthetics of diversity. According to Forsdick, his critique of French exoticism – such as Eastern (Egyptian) exoticism in Promio's films – has many similarities with the new analysis—Segalen emphasizes more domestication and assimilation inherent in *representations of otherness* that rely on stereotypes and clichés to weaken the disorientation inherent in contact change. In addition, in dubbing the exotic the 'Pims of the Sensation of Diversity',<sup>75</sup> according to Forsdick, Segalen underlines the potential for *narcissism* associated with the stages of different-management, describing what he calls '*contemporary exoticism*' as a tendency that generates itself, little or nothing to do with the object it claims. However, *Essai* Segalen does what Forsdick calls a 'healing movement', that is, rejecting a certain understanding of exoticism on the one hand, while on the other, trying to endow the term with new significance:

"Apart from the 'exoticism' in the title, there is no question here about the tropics and palm trees, colonies and black souls, camels, ships, big waves, scents, spices, magical islands, from lack of understanding, about indigenous rebellions, about nothingness and death, colorful tears, Asian philosophy, strangeness, or about 'absurd ideas' encapsulated by the everyday understanding of the term 'exoticism'. (...) It's a good idea to avoid dangerous, charge-laden and vague terms. On the other hand, to hijack or impose new meanings on less frequently used words. I prefer to try my luck to keep this word which, in my opinion, still, despite its inappropriate use, should be adequate and healthy. (...) Exoticism: let it be understood that by that term I understand one thing – that is one big thing: the feeling we have about Diversity'.<sup>76</sup>

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edited by Henry Bouiller. The translation of this text belongs to Forsdick, in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 16.

<sup>74</sup> Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 17.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Victor Segalen, "Essai sur l'exotisme", in "Œuvres Complètes", edited by Henry Bouiller. The translation of this text belongs to Forsdick, in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 17.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Victor Segalen, "Essai sur l'exotisme", in "Œuvres Complètes", edited by Henry Bouiller. The translation of this text belongs to Forsdick, in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 18.

This certainly explains that what Promio did to the East (Egypt) using his *Cinématographe* was something that potentially generated *narcissism* (or was a form of it), producing sensation and popularity, even if it had little connection to the object it claimed (Eastern exoticism). Indeed, the process of sensation and popularity is the root of commercialism, which Société Lumière was also pursuing. Meanwhile, Promio's effort to present Eastern exoticism was a form of "contemporary exoticism" or "latent exoticism"—a new, re-interpreted, or recycled *exoticism* by *representer* and *represented* (visual-Orientalists), like Promio.

According to Forsdick, Segalen explored the meaning and etymological limits of exoticism to signify an anti-assimilation project where the Western/European traveler—like Promio—not only experiences (and represents) the 'radically other' elsewhere, but is also himself exotic in the eyes of the native. Segalen's *Essai*, Forsdick notes, is clearly anti-colonial. There is a striking difference between his texts and the pro-imperial texts of his time.<sup>77</sup> This difference is evident in Promio's efforts to construct pro-imperial or pro-modern-colonialist texts through the representations in his films. Forsdick continues that Segalen's ideological foundations – and *droit à la différence* (the right to be different) – reveal a complex interaction read by critics as nostalgia and conservatism: a response to an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century version of globalization—or the effects of Western/European modernity, because this exoticism lies in distance, space, and time. Segalen's responses, according to Forsdick, were to expose what he saw as the difference of 'cultural homogenization' and to reject their fusion or 'actual hybridity' (fusion between them).<sup>78</sup>

Segalen's exoticism – and his hatred of hybridity – according to Forsdick, was a product of the ideological discourse of his time. However, due to the problematicization of cultural diversity and its challenges to the mechanism of colonial representation, that is reductive and ultimately assimilative.<sup>79</sup> In the case of Promio, Segalen's criticism was a reaction to the films produced by Société Lumière, especially the films taken by Promio in Egypt as a form of reductive and assimilative colonial representation. The advent of moving pictures (films) may also be the cause of Segalen criticizing what he considers to be the feature of 'apocalyptic entropy' (entropy related to destruction) in the problems of exoticism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries—hybridity, globalization, multiculturalism, and the configuration of the self and 'the others'. Segalen's almost mathematical understanding of the decline of exoticism and its progressive marginalization may suggest that 'cultural diversity is a complete and endangered resource, i.e. threatened by the equitable effects of modernity'.<sup>80</sup> The threat of extinction of cultural diversity referred to by Segalen is seen when moving pictures (films) appear to represent new concepts of exoticism. But Segalen's thinking, according to Forsdick, is constantly shifting between the fear of homogeneity and the desire for heterogeneity. He claims that 'fusion, merger, or amalgamation is constantly increasing, the collapse of boundaries, radical changes in the conception of space must be balanced through new

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Charles Forsdick, "Victor Segalen and the Aesthetics of Diversity: Journeys between Cultures", in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 18.

<sup>78</sup> Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 18.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Charles Forsdick, "L'Exote mangé par les homes", in "Reading Diversity", edited by Charles Forsdick and Susan Marson, in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 19-20.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Victor Segalen, "Essai sur l'exotisme", in "Œuvres Complètes", edited by Henry Bouiller. The translation of this text belongs to Forsdick, in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 19-20.

divisions, unexpected gaps, networks of fine lines that make grooves in various fields that were originally thought to be uninterrupted<sup>81</sup> in anticipation of the rise of patterns of diversity in contemporary cultural shifts.<sup>82</sup>

In another perspective to understand the position of Eastern exoticism (Egypt) offered and presented by Promio in his film, Forsdick borrows the idea of Aimé Césaire in *Discours sur le colonialisme*, which looks at exoticism from a political perspective. Césaire argues that the ‘lovers of exoticism’ – in this case, the lovers who became accomplices of the Empire included in one of the author’s rhetorical catalogues – presented something wrong with the colonized culture (usually the East), and that it was all central to the preparation of a wider colonial space for domination and exploitation.<sup>83</sup> This shows that Promio, as a *representer* of Eastern exoticism that seeks to build pro-imperial texts, is an accomplice of imperialism to exploit, expand, and control power in colonial countries. The impact of what Promio did, according to Césaire, described a ‘new society’ that would emerge from the anti-colonial struggle, but refused to return to pre-colonial times. Césaire added, ‘it’s not a dead society that we want to bring back to life, we just want to leave it to *lovers of exoticism*’.<sup>84</sup> The exoticism associated with Césaire’s analysis is what Renato Rosaldo calls ‘imperialist nostalgia’, i.e. the Western/European desire to resurrect what has been destroyed by colonial contacts.<sup>85</sup>

In addition, in *Racism and Culture*, Frantz Fanon views exoticism as a way of simplifying, objectifying, neutralizing, and ultimately distorting a colonized culture: ‘exoticism is one of these forms of simplification. It does not allow for cultural confrontation. On the one hand, there is a culture in which the qualities of dynamism, growth and depth are recognizable. Instead, we find characteristics, curiosities, and things/things, never structured’.<sup>86</sup> This shows that the exoticism of the East (Egypt) in the film Promio is not only because the film is a form of simplification of something, but exoticism is also a form of cultural simplification, especially the culture that was colonized. Forsdick understood what Fanon described as a form of rejection of cultural conformity that showed that exoticism depends on the intricate twin process of restoring geographical relations and chronological displacement into the distant past,<sup>87</sup> while the colonial – or what Segalen considers imperial – is brought – in the sense of being domesticated and repaired – to the

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Victor Segalen, “Essai sur l’exotisme”, in “Œuvres Complètes”, edited by Henry Bouiller. The translation of this text belongs to Forsdick, in Charles Forsdick, “Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism”, *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 19-20.

<sup>82</sup> Charles Forsdick, “Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism”, *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 19-20.

<sup>83</sup> Aimé Césaire, “Discours sur le colonialisme”, translated by Forsdick, in Charles Forsdick, “Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism”, *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 20.

<sup>84</sup> Aimé Césaire, “Discours sur le colonialisme”, translated by Forsdick, in Charles Forsdick, “Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism”, *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 20.

<sup>85</sup> Renato Rosaldo, “Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis”, in Charles Forsdick, “Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism”, *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 20.

<sup>86</sup> Frantz Fanon, “Racism and Culture”, in “Toward The African Revolution”, translated by Haakon Chevalier, in Charles Forsdick, “Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism”, *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 20.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Denial of Coevalness’ is a mechanism of Western anthropological representation, the first systematic study to be found in Johannes Fabian’s “Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object”, in Charles Forsdick, “Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism”, *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 20.

metropolitan center, simultaneously (occurring or in force at the same time; concurrently) was moved to a pre-modern (or even primitive) moment.<sup>88</sup>

However, despite the status of exoticism in the films of Promio as a form of *contemporary exoticism* that offers Eastern (Egyptian) exoticism, René Ménil in *De l'exotisme colonial*, argues that there was once a neutral '*normal exoticism*' resulting from moments of contact between different cultures:

"For him (them), I (we) am/are (a) strangers, because he (they) is/are (a) strangers to me (us): he (them) see(s) me (us) as exotic and I (we) see him (them) as also exotic. It is impossible in any other way ... The exotic view is the perspective 'from the other side', from outside and across geographical boundaries".<sup>89</sup>

According to Forsdick, with the advent of colonialism and modern colonialism or imperialism, this sense of neutrality is replaced by a form of exoticism determined by the relative power of the *representer* and *represented* (*visual-Orientalist*) – and its power over science. Ménil continued, the falsification resulting from colonized self-image creates a cycle of dependence in which, in the end, the self-referential '*exotisme contre-exotique*' offers no way out.<sup>90</sup>

This neutral exoticism or '*exotisme contre-exotique*' can be felt in several Promio films in the East (Egypt) that show the interest of the Orientals (Egyptians) in *Cinématographe* and Promio's actions towards the object or tool. These films that show the interest of the Oriental (Egyptian) people are in the film *Embarquement*, which features scenes in Alexandria Port, where some people on board and around the ship are attracted to the *Cinématographe*. From this scene, it can be seen that someone who is interested in the *Cinématographe* invites some of his friends to see what Promio is doing with the tool, and they are facing right in front of the *Cinématographe*'s camera. Likewise, the film *Place Méhémet Ali* gives a different reaction of interest, where most of the people who are in and passing by the square stop walking because they are interested or enthusiastic to see what Promio is doing/working on with the *Cinématographe* in his hands. In fact, some of them tried to get closer in the direction of the *Cinématographe*. Those who were stopped by their interest in *Cinématographe* and Promio were people of different races and social classes in the East (Egypt). This interest occurred because Promio managed to get a strategic place, which is a place high enough, to take in the scenery or atmosphere of the square. The reaction of interest to *Cinématographe* and Promio's action towards *Cinématographe* can also be seen in other Promio films, such as *Pont de Kasr-el-Nil*, *Sortie du Pont de Kasr-el-Nil (chameaux)*, *Kasr-el-Nil*, *Un Entertainment*, *Barrage du Nile*, *Bourricots sous les Palmiers*, *Village de Sakkarah (cavaliers sur ânes)*, *Les Pyramides (vue Générale)*, and *Descente de la grande pyramide*.

<sup>88</sup> Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 20.

<sup>89</sup> René Ménil, "de l'exotisme colonial", in "Antilles déjà jadis", translated by Forsdick, dalam Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 20-21.

<sup>90</sup> René Ménil, "de l'exotisme colonial", in "Antilles déjà jadis", translated by Forsdick, in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 20-21.



Image 3.4.8 [Film] Place Méhémet Ali

However, even though neutral exoticism or '*exotism contre-exotique*' occurs as offered by the Promio films, it cannot destroy the power of exoticism discourse production determined by Western/European *representer* or *represented* (or *visual-Orientalist*), such as Promio, who has full power over the depiction of the East (Egypt) through its means of representation, the *Cinématographe* – as a form of scientific excellence and Western/European progress. Moreover, Promio's power and knowledge to describe the East through the concept of exoticism is only a small part – a text – of the various productions of Eastern discourse – or other texts – in the time of modern colonialism or imperialism. However, the representation of Eastern exoticism (Egypt) shown in Promio's films, according to Ménil, depicts a paradoxical situation, in which the concept of exoticism offered by Promio is determined by a colonial understanding of exoticism.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, for Bhabha, exoticism is essentialization, that is, as an integral element of neo-colonialism,<sup>92</sup> or what the author calls – to borrow the language of Edward W. Said and Ania Loomba – as imperialism or modern colonialism or the process of decolonization.

Peter Mason, describing exoticism as a representational effect that relies on decontextualization and recontextualization, claims that exoticism differs radically from orientalism in that it 'does not care about ethnographic or geographical precision and tends to serve imaginative rather than concrete political goals'.<sup>93</sup> For Forsdick, Mason's claims not only overemphasized the orientalist importance in the accurate representation of his subjects; but also underestimated the recent ideological intentions of many products of colonial exoticism. The difference between exoticism and orientalism stems more from the different epistemological traditions and terminology on which they depend.<sup>94</sup>

However, in contrast to Mason's statement, the status or position of Eastern exoticism presented by Promio through his films produced from *Cinématographe* is actually an

<sup>91</sup> In this subject, cf. Susan Hawthorne, "The Politics of the Exotic: the paradox of cultural voyeurism", and Roland Suvélor, "Folklore, exoticism, connaissance", in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 21.

<sup>92</sup> Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 22.

<sup>93</sup> Peter Mason, "Infelicities: Representations of the Exotic", in Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 15.

<sup>94</sup> Charles Forsdick, "Travelling Concepts Postcolonial Approach to Exoticism", *Paragraph*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory (2001), pp. 15.

exoticism that is affected by the representational effects of European/Western modernism and is dependent on modern imperialism or colonialism by recontextualizing the concept of Eastern (Egyptian) exoticism with the aim of dominating, hegemonizing, and (most importantly) controlling colonial countries by giving rise to a new discourse about the East (Egypt) – in the sense of owning the East completely. This means that the status or position of Eastern exoticism (Egypt) from the Promio film is a film that has a political goal and is very concerned with the suitability of ethnographic or geographical as previously explained. This also certainly brings Promio as a Western/European as well as a *visual-Orientalist* (filmmaker-orientalist); *Cinématographe* as a product of Western/European heterogeneous culture that can produce mental representation; and the product or result of *Cinématographe*, which is a film about Eastern exoticism (Egypt), as an activity or study of orientalism. This claim is based on the changes that occurred to the concept of exoticism during the colonial period – more precisely in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century or the period of *la belle époque* France – which were represented in the films of Promio, which is what Segalen referred to as *real exoticism* or *latent exoticism* or *contemporary exoticism*. This change in the concept of exoticism is also in line with the change in the concept of orientalism described by Said, or the process of *re-orientalization*.

The Eastern (Egyptian) exoticism offered by Promio in his films is a pre-built process of *re-orientalization* of *textual-Orientalism* and *visual-Orientalism* (painting) – both of which offer imaginatively – because of their nature that shows a *new exoticism* or ‘*contemporary*’ *exoticism* or ‘*latent*’ *exoticism* – i.e. exoticism that offers a real, actual, and realistic picture or the real ‘East’ with the naked eye, yet not essentially’ – about the East (Egypt) as a representational effect of Western modernism. The East (Egypt) offered by Promio is an East that has been (or has been) constructed or even re-constructed, i.e. treated as an isolated region from Western/European advances in science, art, law, and economics or commerce, even technology. Therefore, the West/Europe always presents the good and bad East to ‘fulfill their interests’ in the East.<sup>95</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

Promio’s films show Timur as a *real exoticism* but not essential. This representation is part of the process of *re-orientalization*, which is the development from *textual-Orientalism* (as described by Said) to *visual-Orientalism*. It shows exoticism as something real and realistic, but still a construct from a Western perspective. In addition, Promio’s efforts to contrast the differences between East and West actually resulted in hybridity, which gave rise to new ideologies in the West. This shows that technological advances, as reflected in the *Cinématographe*, can challenge and change Western ideology itself.

In addition to showing that Promio is a *visual-Orientalist*. The most interesting about this finding is the criticism of the ambivalent Western perspective in representing the East-Islam (Egypt). An example of this criticism is Victor Segalen’s work, which criticizes how exoticism in the colonial era is processed and interpreted by the West, including in Promio’s films about Egypt. This *new exoticism* replaces the old concept of exoticism that has been considered obsolete by colonial or imperial French writers. Finally, the process of globalization that erases customary differences through equality strengthens ambivalence in the representation of exoticism. This led to the emergence of a new form of exoticism that later became a witness to France’s old resistance to post-colonial

<sup>95</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalisme: Menggugat Hegemoni Barat dan Menundukkan Timur sebagai Subjek* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2010), pp. 317-318.

thinking. In general, the representation of the East in Promio films is not just a visual documentary, but also a political and ideological tool that reflects and shapes the West's view of the East in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This representation helps to reinforce the cultural and political dominance of the West through an exotic and orientalist perspective.

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