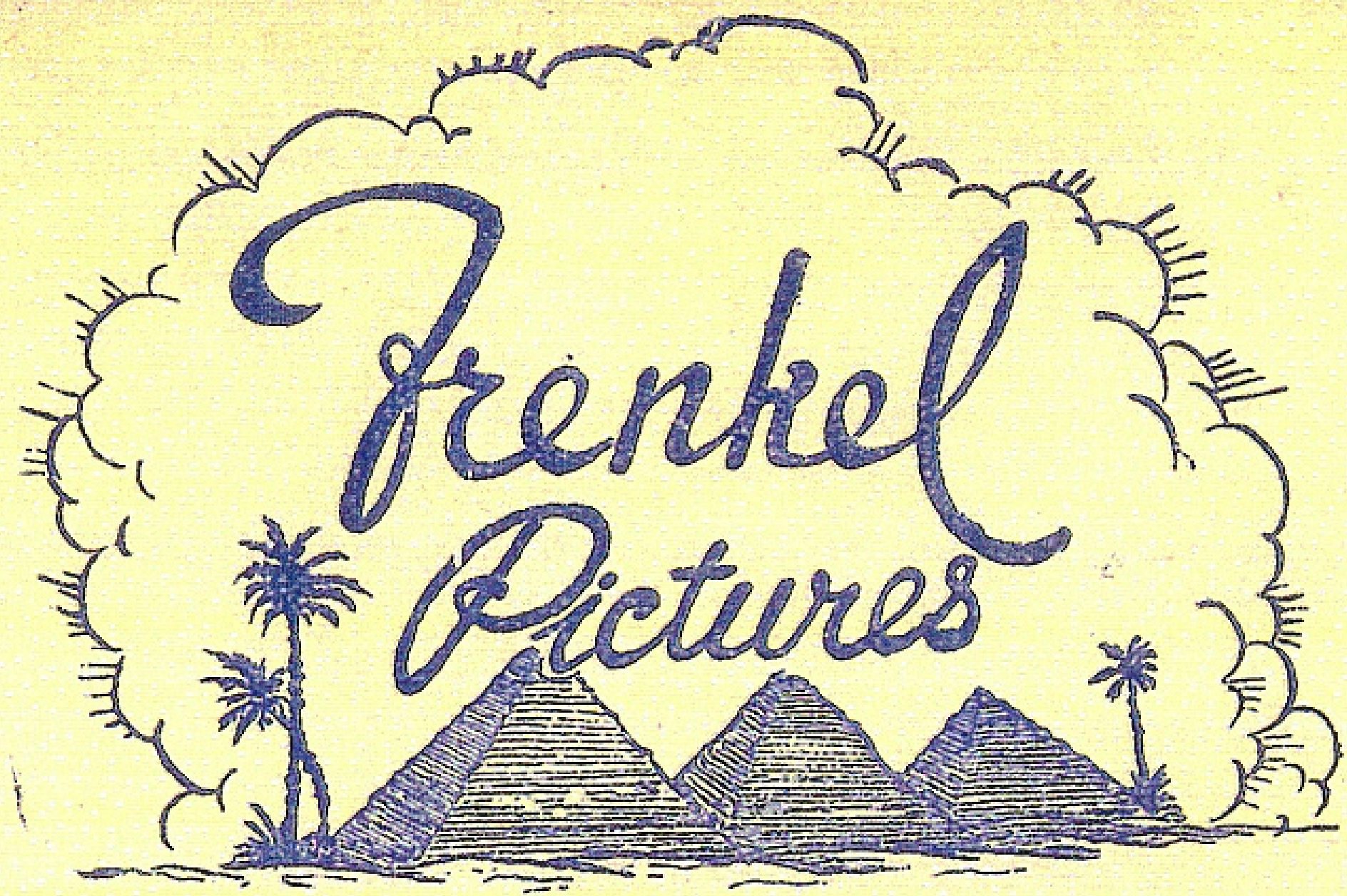


HEAD OFFICE CAIRO, EGYPT.



مسمس افندى

Mish-mish Effendi



On 1935, May 24th one could read on the front page of *La Bourse Egyptienne* :

"Mickey Mouse got an Egyptian brother
First Frenkel Brothers animated film

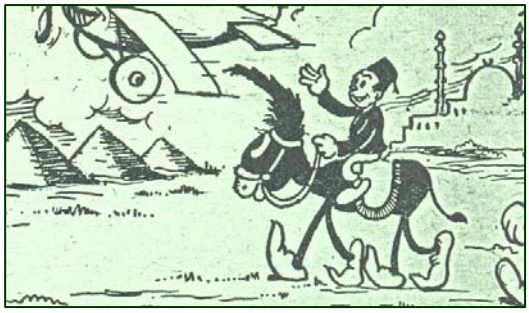
Like Mickey Mouse and Betty Boop in America, Egypt got today his national Mish-Mish Effendi. He is the hero of the first Egyptian cartoon screened this week in the cinema Cosmograph".



Sixty years later, Shlomo is entering the *Institut du Monde Arabe* (Arabic World Institute) movie theatre in Paris, with the cheers of the spectators. He is now 85 years old and he is the last survival of the Frenkel family as well as the last witness of an unusual and bounced story.

The lights wane as silence follows the hubbub. Suddenly an oriental music bursts out from the loudspeakers whereas appears the animation sequences on the screen. Threatened with damage and decomposition the silver nitrate film has fortunately been restored.

Norias are untiringly drawing water along the Nile River. Far away the Great Pyramid is outlining. A combined zoom and traveling effect brings us back to the foreground where we can see a little fellow hated with the traditional *tarbush*. Riding a donkey, Mish-Mish Effendi is singing how happy he is to meet soon his beloved Baheya!



Mish-Mish arose from David's pencil in 1935, in a flat in Cairo. According to few witnesses, when entering the place, no one could say whether they were in a joinery or in a studio or just in a room to live.

The February 25th 1996 is the very last day at *l'Institut du Monde Arabe* to commemorate the centenary of the Egyptian cinema. This was the opportunity to pay tribute at the Frenkel Brothers as pioneers of the Arabic animated films.



The Frenkel's story takes place far away from the lights of Egypt[1], in the darkness of the anti-Semitic pogroms that occurred in the early 20th century in Byelorussia.

In September 1905, Betzalel ran away from Retchitza with his wife Gnissa and child Hershel. They settled in Jaffa in Palestine then dominated by the Ottoman Empire. Betzalel created there a bookshop and tried to live of trading, printing and binding books until the Turks came into the First World War. In November 27th 1914, the Turkish expelled from Tel Aviv the Russian Jews suspected to become enemy spies. Compelled at another exile, Betzalel and his family counting then six children were deported to Alexandria, Egypt.



The oldest son Hershel was an American movies lover. He was a great admirer of Charlie Chaplin in which films he recognized some part of his own family destiny.



David was as much fascinated by cinema as his brother and he aspired one day to create his own production company. Besides he revealed and developed real talents in drawing and painting.



As for Shlomo he was the one gifted with good hands. Creative, resourceful, he felt good with mechanics, electricity, and technology. Most of all he was a master of repairing, making and transforming all kind of material, tool or engine into a complete new or practical one.



David had the exceptional opportunity to learn the Chinese lacquered technique from a famous professor, Mr. Stoloff. The 1930s highlight of Art Deco movement was also those of a craze for Far East art. Led by their father, the Frenkel brothers were involved successfully into making and decorating furniture. So they knew

[1] "Lights of Egypts" : subtitle of the 1995's Parisian exhibitions : « Egypt :100 years, 100 films »

The Ministry of Agriculture. Then more and more furniture was made even for King Farouk, while *Beys* gave orders to the Frenkel for being pictured for example on a screen carrying a Chinese dress or hated with the *tarbush.*

Each member of the family liked very much cinema. But since they saw Mickey Mouse for the first time in 1930 in Egypt, they just became haunted by an ambition: to be able one day to do as well as Walt Disney! All the money they won thanks to their business was saved and invested in this particular purpose. Of course no one knows anything about making films. So they just had to re-invent the technique.



All nights long father and sons talked and sketched again and again until they agreed together with a character. Finally the result was “Marco Monkey”. At that time, there’s nothing else to do than give it life! That’s of course the most difficult to achieve because it means that making it move 1O minutes suppose sketching about 15 000 times.

Shlomo is in charge of the steps after the cartoon: photography, developing, synchronization... Gathering here a lens, there a cogwheel he finally succeeded in making a shooting camera, an editing and mixing table. Little by little cartoons accumulated as much as roll film.



Having reached 1600 meters the film was ready. What an excitement the day when Shlomo put the film in the projector. What a satisfaction when everything lives up to expectations! All the four they made it, despite those who argued that they were undertaking a foolish thing. Moreover on the strength of newspapers the cartoon was appreciated even if the artists have been criticized because of an evident similarity of the sketches with Walt Disney.


Saad, la compagne de Mish-Mish Eff.

In the *Al Ahram* daily newspaper, the Frenkel have been given a precious advice: in the future they should find their inspiration in the Egyptian culture, native customs and finally create traditional characters. An Egyptian Betty Boop!

Encouraged and motivated thanks to the first success, the Frenkel tried everywhere to get necessary financial supports for new directions. Unfortunately they had to face hesitations to trust in such novices furthermore compared to the talented, matchless and prosperous American productions in Egypt.



On présente: le premier dessin animé égyptien

One day back from a meeting with one of potential producers, quite disappointed Hershel tells:
"After Mr. B. listened to me, he said "M*afish fayda!" (*No way out, dead end*).* As I tried to insist, he added: *"Bokra fel mish-mish" ("when pigs fly")".*

Rather than to destroy their determination this fact worked as a sting so that David soon created a new character. The name of *Mish-Mish Effendi* came quite naturally to their mind when it became necessary to give him a name. Then it occurred obvious to title the next script "*Mafish fayda*".



The film was screened in Cairo in 1936 February 8th at the Cosmograph cinema, still there in the center of town. Too much anxious, Hershel sent as a guide, couldn't get inside from the start of the projection. Soon he could feel and measure the public enthusiasm through laughs and applause he could hear from the outside.

Screened until 1939, the successful film was unanimously appreciated by the media.



The Cinema Cosmo Today

Then the Frenkel received official orders like in 1937. Ministry of agriculture asked Mish-Mish Effendi's contribution to a didactic film. The goal was to encourage peasants to eradicate cotton parasites.



In 1939 Ministry of war ordered a patriotic film to support the loan initiated by the Egyptian Government for the army.

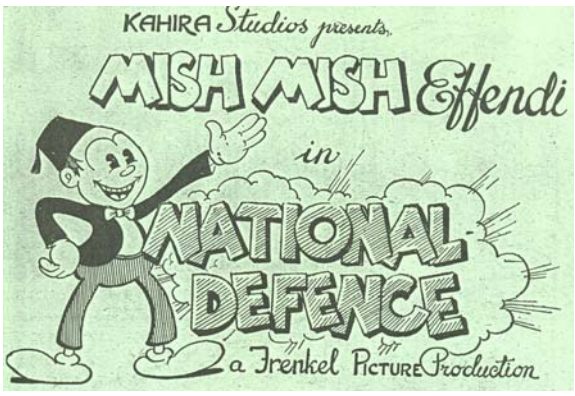
The Frenkel were of course concerned by the threats spreading over there in Europe. They involved more than ever in the achievement of "National Defense". They already had the presentiment of where would the forces that will stop Hitler's murderous madness come from. Therefore, The cartoon is marked out by admiring winks at famous artists like Laurel & Hardy, Charlie Chaplin, and Buster Keaton.



Mish-Mish Effendi aroused Egyptian citizen's patriotism and helped to give the army the means to modernize. In the cartoon when the country is attacked, Mish-Mish brings Egypt to victory along with the allied forces.

The film was screened in March 1940 after the Frenkel could overcome lots of problems such as to bring together the contradiction between the Egyptian nationalist censorship and the British colonialism.







In 1946 Mish-Mish was the hero of a burlesque cartoon, "Bon Appétit" where he was facing unusual situations in a circus with his fellow Fayoumi.



He is also performing into promotional films for the Royal Egyptian Automobile Club.



Between 1946 and 1951, The Frenkel brothers created at least one film a year, commercial shorts that can be considered as sociological testimonies of the cosmopolitanism in Egypt in that time.

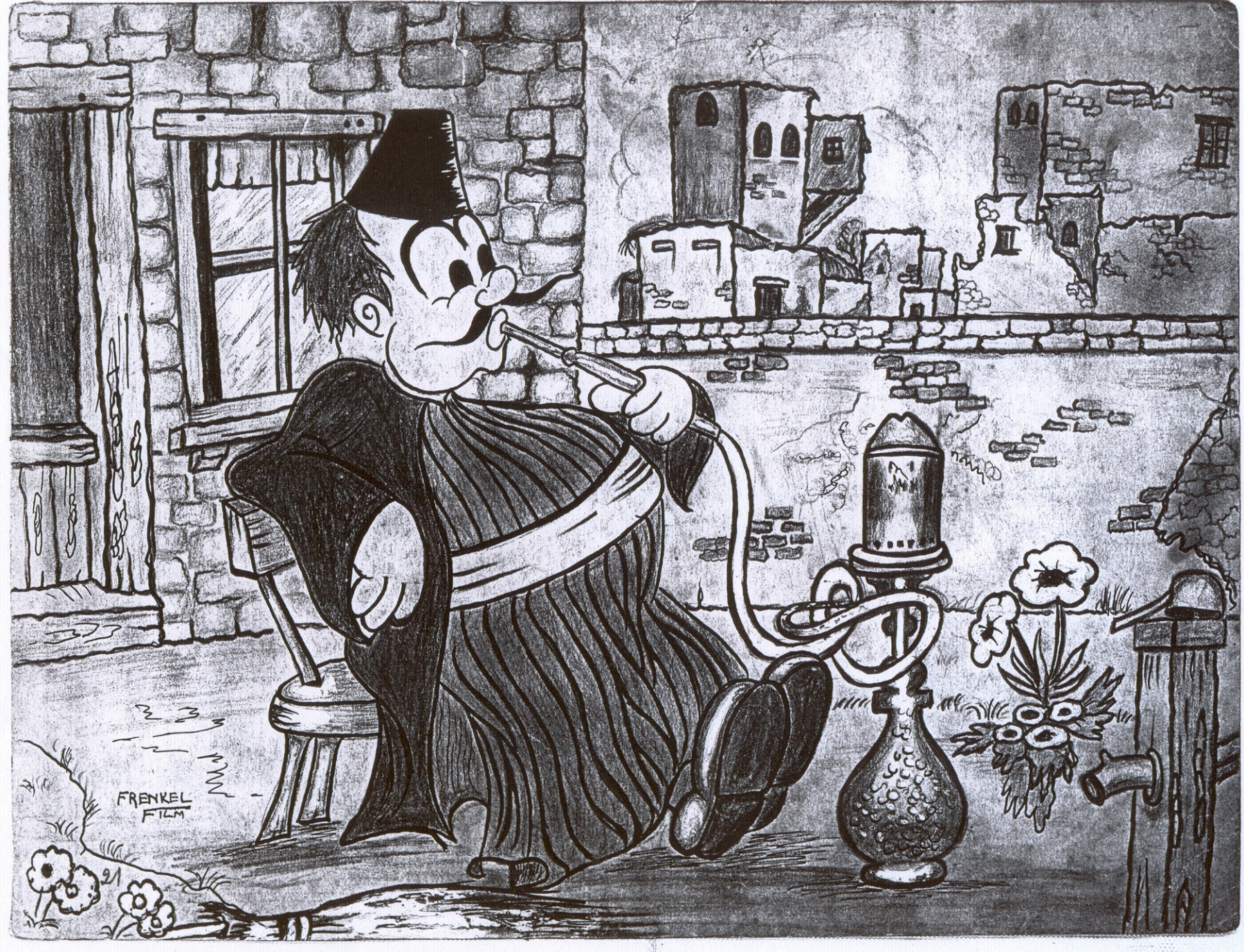
Before living Egypt, the Frenkel brothers managed to succeed in mixing in the same film Mish-Mish effendi with real actors. They realized some short sequences in which Mish-Mish effendi is dancing in front of the singer Sabah's, or with the great Taheya Carioca.

Just before the Egyptian revolution, the atmosphere became more and more strained, and xenophobic. The Frenkel family became aware of alarming facts, and even once escaped fortunately from a riot. From this moment they knew time has come to leave the country.

The Egyptian censorship commission considered all the Frenkel's films as foreign productions ; that is the reason why they could take their films abroad with them. They settled in France, near Paris. The cellar of their house became a studio and Shlomo had to manufacture again the cinema equipment.



To look like a real Frenchman, Mish-Mish effendi replaced his *tarbush* and from now worn on a *beret*. As Jew the Frenkel Brothers never missed a way of expressing it. Mish-Mish turned his name into *Mimiche* sounded more Parisian.


FRENKEL
FILM

رسوم متحركة

سمسم افندى

النهاية

