# THE NEW IRANIAN CINEMA

## Politics, Representation and Identity

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# 2

# Islamizing Film Culture in Iran: A Post-Khatami Update[1]

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On 10 August 1978, a hot summer's day during the last year of the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, Hoseyn Takab-'Alizadeh and his two friends, Farajollah and Hayat, walked into the Rex Theatre in Abadan, the site of one of the largest oil refineries in the world. They were each carrying a brown paper bag containing a bottle of high-octane aircraft fuel and matches. They joined the audience, which was engrossed in Massoud Kimia'i's *The Deer* (1975), a film about an anti-government smuggler. Half way through, Hoseyn and Farajollah left the hall, doused the three closed exit doors with fuel, set the doors on fire and fled from the scene. The fire quickly spread, engulfing the entire building. Unable to escape or quell the flames, Hayat burned to death in the inferno, along with over 300 others trapped inside.[2]

Anti-Shah revolutionary fervour found its rallying point, and the city of Abadan, which up to that time had remained relatively calm, was galvanized into action and joined the protest movement. Although government sources attempted to place the blame for the incident on religious factions, overwhelming public consensus held the by now discredited government responsible. Testimonies and documents compiled after the fall of the Shah, however, established a clear link between the arsonists and anti-Shah clerical leaders.[3]





From then on, the destruction of cinemas became a key symbolic act against the government of the Shah, during whose time cinema was considered – especially by clerics and religious folk – to be filled with Western mores of sex and violence, and part of the imperialist strategy to 'spray poison' and corrupt people's thoughts and ethics.[4] Although some among the opposition accused the Shah's government of setting cinemas on fire the leaflets and samizdats they themselves issued clearly show that they either urged the destruction of cinemas and banks as symbols of the Pahlav cultural and economic system, or reported such actions in glowing terms.

Anti-cinema feelings run deep in Iran. Since the introduction of films into Iran in 1900, religious attitudes, intensified by activist clerical leaders have consistently condemned cinema as a morally offensive and ethically corrupting Western influence. This influence was thought to be direct and unidirectional. In fact, the clerical elite seem to have subscribed to a 'hypodermic theory' of ideology whereby, similar to Althusser's formulation, the mere injection of ideology transforms an autonomous and ethical 'individual' into a dependent, corrupt 'subject'.[6] Cinema as a Western import is condemned consistently in religious literature on account of its hegemonic and interpellative power, which is seen to be irreversible and total. For instance, there is a report that in 1904 a major clerical figure, Sheykh Fazlollah Nuri, attended Iran's first public cinema in Tehran and proscribed it, causing it to shut down after only one month of operation.[7] We do not know for certain his reasons for this, but this action fits his general paradigm of westernization as either a drug ('sleeping potion')[8] that puts believers in a stupor or a 'fatal, killer disease'[9] that annihilates its victims.

Mojtaba Navab-Safavi, one of the leaders of Fedayan-e Eslam, fundamentalist group operating in Iran in the 1940s, selects a different but equally powerful and graphic metaphor to describe cinema and its supposedly direct effect on society. Along with other Western imports (romantic novels and music), he calls cinema a 'smelting furnace', which melts away all the wholesome values and virtues of a Muslim society.[10]

In two of his important pre-revolutionary works, Ayatollah Khomeini too links cinema directly with the onset of corruption, licentiousness, prostitution, moral cowardice and cultural dependence. While Nu employs a medical metaphor, Navab-Safavi's is industrial, and that of Khomeini in *Kashf ol-Asrar* is sexual. According to Khomeini, cinema and other manifestations of westernization (theatre, dancing and mixed-sex swimming) 'rape the youth of our country and stifle in them the spirit of virtue and bravery'.[11] In *Velayat-e Faqih*, written years later, Khomeini

reiterates this theme of cinema and entertainment as the direct cause of prostitution, corruption and political dependence. Indeed, he is a proponent of the hypodermic theory of ideology, using the term *tazriq* (injection) to describe the ill effects of westernization. For example, he posits that Reza Shah's policy of removing women's veils and making men wear hats and Western clothing 'injects' immorality, vice and dishonesty,[12] while religious education 'injects self-sacrifice and service to the country and to the people'.[13]

It is significant to note that, despite the hypodermic and unmediated formulation of the effect of motion pictures, these leaders seem to have considered cinema's ideological 'work' only in the context of overdetermination of westernization in Iran. Cinema is seen as part of the ideological apparatus imported from the West by a despotic regime, which in tandem with other media and leisure activities such as theatre, radio, popular music, dancing, mixed swimming pools and gambling, is said to produce its ideological work of interpellation. This formulation is significant in that it considers, however crudely and unself-reflectively, the intertextuality and cross-fertilization of the signifying institutions of the society, such as mass media. The drawbacks to this formulation, however, are that, unlike Michel Foucault's polysemic cultural analysis,[14] that of Khomeini elides the possibility of resistance, ignores the local conditions and the contradictions existing among the media, and effaces the specificity of their unique ideological work, all of which can undermine and *mediate* the effects of the 'injection' of westernization. Without taking into consideration these contradictory structurations, we can discuss neither what Horkheimer and Adorno have pessimistically called the 'ruthless unity' of the culture,[15] nor what Khomeini and others have called the 'society of idolatry' or the 'culture of idolatry'.[16]

It is also significant to note that both Navab-Safavi and Khomeini are willing to entertain the idea of adopting cinema only if it is done 'properly' and 'ethically'. They talk about this in rare passages. Here is what Navab-Safavi says:

> Cinemas, theatres, novels and popular songs must be completely removed and their middleman punished according to the holy Islamic law. And if the use of motion picture industry is deemed necessary for society, [then] the history of Islam and Iran and useful material such as medical, agricultural, and industrial lessons should be produced under the supervision of chaste professors and Islamic scholars observing the principles and criteria of the holy religion of Islam and then shown [to the public] for education, reform, and socially wholesome entertainment.[17]



Khomeini spelled out a similar theme, years later, on his triumphar return to Iran after the fall of the Shah. In Behesht-e Zahra cemetery, h announced:

> We are not opposed to cinema, to radio or to television... The cinema is modern invention that ought to be used for the sake of educating the peopl but as you know, it was used instead to corrupt our youth. It is the misuse cinema that we are opposed to, a misuse caused by the treacherous policies our rulers.[18]

These clerical leaders are not proposing the removal and proscription cinema; instead, they are advocating its adoption as an ideological tool t combat Pahlavi culture and usher in an Islamic culture.

The major concepts frequently pronounced by authorities when speal ing of 'Islamic culture' can be classified under the following categorie nativism (return to traditional values and mores), populism (justice, defen of *mostaz'afan*, the disinherited), monotheism (*towhid*), anti-idolat (anti-*taqut*), theocracy (*velayat-e faqih*, rule of the supreme jurisprudent ethicalism and puritanism *(amr-e be-ma'ruf va nahy az monkar*); politic and economic independence (*esteqlal*), and the combating of arroga world imperialism (*estekbar-e jahani*), a concept often condensed in th slogan 'neither East nor West'.

In order to appreciate the process of its development, a more or le chronological history of cinema since the Revolution of 1978–9 will no be presented, making reference to these cultural categories when warrante

Over the two decades after the establishment of the Islamic Republi a new cinema has emerged which is markedly different from the one th existed previously. Periods of transition and social turmoil seem to produ some of the most innovative cinéastes and cinematic movements.[19] Thu there is good cause to expect the Iranian Revolution and its preconditio to have helped create a new cinema. This expectation is marred, however, b the perception, almost universal in the West, that Shi'i Islam as practis in Iran today is anti-modern and backward. The Islamic Republi widely reported curtailment of Western-style performing arts and ente tainment and its maltreatment of entertainers have certainly reinforc such impressions.

Nevertheless, it is the thesis of this chapter that the Revolution led the emergence of a new, vital cinema, with its own special industrial a financial structure and unique ideological, thematic and productio values. This is, of course, part of a more general transformation in t political culture of Iran. However, Iranian post-revolutionary ciner

is not Islamic in the sense that it is not by any means a monolithic, propagandistic cinema in support of a ruling ideology. In fact, at least two cinemas have developed side by side. The 'populist cinema' affirms post-revolutionary Islamic values more fully at the level of plot, theme, characterization, portrayal of women and mise-en-scène. The 'art cinema', on the other hand, engages with those values and tends to critique social conditions under the Islamic government. There are many variations and cracks in the hegemony of the post-revolutionary cinema, which in this overview cannot be fully considered, so passing references must suffice.

## From '*Taqut* Cinema' to 'Islamic Cinema' (1978–82): The Purification Process

### The Film Theatre

The first stage in transforming Pahlavi cinema – dubbed 'cinema of *taqut* (idols)' by Islamists – into an Islamic cinema was the cleansing of the Pahlavi film theatres by means of what in retrospect turned out to be a literal baptism by fire. By the time the Islamic government was established, less than a year after the Rex Theatre fire, up to 180 cinemas nationwide (32 in Tehran alone) had been burned, demolished or shut down, leaving only a total of 256 cinemas extant.[20] Fortunately, with the exception of the Rex, no casualties were reported, since most of the theatres had been empty at the time of attack.[21]

The theatres that remained had their names changed, usually from Western names popular during the Pahlavi period to Islamic, third world ones. For example, in Tehran, Atlantic was changed to Efriqa (Africa), Empire to Esteqlal (Independence), Royal to Enqelab (Revolution), Panorama to Azadi (Freedom), Taj (Crown) to Shahr-e Honar (City of Art), Golden City to Felestin (Palestine), Polidor to Qods (Jerusalem) and Ciné Monde to Qiyam (Uprising).[22]

### The Imports

Immediately after the Revolution, the volatile and uncertain economic and political conditions discouraged investment in the production of new films, but encouraged the exhibition of old films and the importation of new ones. Thus, foreign-made films flooded the market. Comedies and 'spaghetti' westerns came from Italy, and karate films from Japan American imports covered a broad range, from comedy to political an from classical to current, such films as *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World Modern Times, Three Days of the Condor, The Cassandra Crossing, Th Great Escape, Cinderella, The Jungle Book*, and *Papillon.*

Russian and Eastern-bloc films – inexpensive to import – also flourishe to the point of overtaking American, Italian and Japanese films. For example 74 – more than a third – of the 213 foreign films licensed by the Ministr of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG) in 1981 came from the Sovie bloc. Sixty-nine of these were produced in the Soviet Union alone. Ital ranked second with 38 films and, surprisingly, the US was in third plac with 27 films.[23] Of the new imports, those that catered to the revolutionar spirit of the time clearly dominated. The best known of these, banne during the Shah's era, were such films as Costa-Gavras's *Z* and *State o Siege*, Guzman's *Battle of Chile*, Akad's *Mohammad, Messenger of God*, an Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers.* The latter was so popular that it was show simultaneously in 12 cinemas in Tehran and 10 in the provinces.[24]

The clerical establishment was concerned but divided on the issue o film imports. Some praised these so-called 'revolutionary films' becaus they felt, such films show 'the struggle of people oppressed by colonialis and imperialism'.[25] Others condemned them as made-in-Hollywood film with only a 'revolutionary mask'.[26] Likewise, Hojjat-ol-Eslam Ahma Sadeqi Ardestani, a leading cleric in charge of supervising the film industr in 1981, invoked the Islamic values mentioned earlier when writing tha Iran had 'continued its cultural dependence on imperialists' by importin American (Western) and Russian (Eastern) films into the country, whe 'millions of people are mentally and culturally nourished by cinema Updating the language of Navab-Safavi and Khomeini, he predicted tha continued 'acceptance of Western and Eastern films will lead us to cultur colonization and economic exploitation'.[27]

Secular intellectuals, too, worried about the influx of so-calle revolutionary foreign films, but for different reasons. For exampl Gholam-Hoseyn Sa'edi, a leading dissident writer and editor of th literary monthly *Alefba*, would later – from exile – define the 'revolutionar films shown in Iran as 'full of cannons, tanks, rifles, weapons and corpse without regard to quality or artistic merit'.[28]

As early as July 1979, efforts were begun to purify the imports, b restricting their inflow. First, the importation of B-grade Turkish, India and Japanese films was curtailed, followed closely by a ban on a

'imperialist' and 'anti-revolutionary' films.[29] American films were the next group to be excluded, as the political relationship between the two countries deteriorated. A larger percentage of Western films were denied exhibition permit than films from any other region, corroborating the link made between films produced in the West and the moral corruption of the indigenous population. In the first three years of post-revolutionary government, a total of 898 foreign films were reviewed, 513 of which were rejected, the bulk of them Western imports.[30] The curb, however, was not hermetic, in that American films imported prior to the cut-off, such as *Airport 79* and *High Noon*, continued to appear on the screens even during the 'hostage crisis'.

## Locally Produced Films

To purify the existing stock of films, many pre-Revolution films were re-edited to conform to Islamic standards. Some films were cut, re-cut and re-titled. In this process, film producers engaged with the government in a cat-and-mouse game of resistance/submission. The most interesting result of these cinematic negotiations was the exhibition of films little changed apart from their titles. When the producers of these films were caught, they merely re-titled them. For example, the title of Amir Shervan's film *Freeze, Don't Move* (*Bi Harekat, Tekun Nakhor*), was changed in 1978 to *The Thug and the Student* (*Jahel va Mohassel*); after the Revolution it was changed again to *Heroin*. This apparently did not help the sale of the film. In general, changed elements in basically unchanged films created such contradictions that these films failed badly at the box office.[31]

Sensing the inevitability of the Islamization of cinema, film exhibitors attempted to contain the damage by voluntarily keeping sex off the screens, claiming that 'our contribution to the Islamic Revolution would be made best by replacing dirty films with entertainment of an educational caliber.'[32] One way to accomplish this was the 'magic marker' method of censorship, which involved painting over naked legs and other exposed body parts. When this failed, more drastic methods were used. As the manager of the Rex Theatre in Tehran stated, 'We have to show films in keeping with Islamic standards. When the Magic Marker doesn't work, we cut.'[33]

Dissatisfied with the limited changes made by producers and exhibitors, the government threatened to close down the cinemas and made exhibition permits compulsory for all films.[34] The procedures for acquiring permits meant a review of all films made, with the result tha many indigenous films produced before the establishment of the Islami Republic were banned outright. Table 2.1 shows the outcome of th official review of Iranian features produced both before and immediatel after the Revolution. Since post-Revolution films were few in number, thes figures can be construed as a decisive condemnation of Pahlavi-era film and an effective end to the post-revolutionary *laissez-faire* atmosphere.

**Table 2.1: Iranian Films Granted or Denied Exhibition Permits, 1979–82**[35]

| Year | Films Reviewed | Permit Granted | Permit Denied |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 2000 | 200 | 1800 |
| 1980 | 99 | 27 | 72 |
| 1981 | 83 | 18 | 65 |
| 1982 | 26 | 7 | 19 |
| **Total** | **2208** | **252** | **1956** |

As well as cheaply produced exploitation films, many films produced l progressive New Wave directors were banned, among them *The Divi One* (Khosrow Haritash, 1976), *The Chess of the Wind* (Mohammad Re Aslani, 1976), *OK Mister* (Parviz Kimiavi, 1979) *Tara's Ballad* (Bahra Beyza'i, 1978), *The Yard Behind Adl-e Afaq School* (Daryush Mehrju 1980), *Mr Hieroglyphic* (Gholam Ali Erfan, 1980) and *Yazdgerd's Dea* (Beyza'i, 1980).[36]

While most filmmakers applauded the curbing of sleazy imports, th did not condone their banning, as Beyza'i, a noted New Wave filmma (whose films *Tara's Ballad* and *Yazdgerd's Death* had been bann observed, 'It is enhanced public awareness which should be driving th trite films off the screens, not government force.' What is more, he sa the vacuum created by the absence of imports must be filled with lo productions, but the regulations, mechanisms and structures conducive the flourishing of local films are non-existent.[37]

## Entertainers, Filmmakers

Many entertainers and filmmakers were regarded as too closely associa either with the westernized excesses of the Shah or with SAVAK, national security agency. As a result, they were not immune to purifica measures, which included the bringing of legal charges, incarceration,

banning of activities, the censoring of products, and, on rare occasions, execution.[38] Mehdi Misaqiyeh, a famous producer, was jailed for five years and his properties and theatres confiscated.[39] He was released apparently some time after he publicly renounced his Baha'i faith.[40] In March 1983, when New Wave filmmaker Bahman Farmanara returned to Iran after an absence of four years, he was prevented from leaving the country again. His powerfully allegorical film, *Tall Shadows of the Wind* (1978), had been banned by the Forbidden Acts Bureau, and he was accused of making anti-Islamic films. Farmanara commented, 'Ironically both the Shah's and the Islamic regime interpreted the scarecrow, which in the film terrorizes a village, as symbolizing their own rule and tried to ban it.'[41] Some theatre owners were arrested and charged with crimes such as smuggling narcotics, peddling pornographic material and prostitution.[42]

The aforementioned purification measures and persecutions, however, are only one set of reasons for the slow revival of cinema during the transitional period. Islamization was by no means a given, as many other factors contributed to the creation of a fluid and contentious atmosphere within the film industry. These included the financial damage that the industry suffered during the Revolution, a lack of government interest in cinema during the transitional period (for example, the first five-year budget plan in 1983 ignored cinema altogether),[43] the absence of centralized authority and thus antagonistic competition over cinema between various factions (for example, MCIG, the Foundation of the Disinherited, and the Revolutionary Committees),[44] a lack of an appropriate cinematic model (there was no 'Islamic' film genre),[45] heavy competition from imports, a drastic deterioration in the public image of the industry as a whole, the haphazard application of censorship, and the flight of many film professionals into exile.

In January 1980, in a letter addressed to the Minister of Culture and Higher Education, the Society of Cinema Owners justifiably chided the government for its neglect of cinema. It declared that, if the government 'approved the necessity of the existence of cinema', then, with government assistance, the private sector could align the film industry with 'the revolution and the people' within five years. The letter concluded by reminding the Minister that unplanned, 'spontaneous reform' in cinema is not possible.[46]

Filmmakers, too, shared the concerns of theatre owners, and in 1981 in an open letter to the 'people and government' they took the government to task. They charged that two years after the 'holy and anti-dependence revolution of Iranian people' the Revolution had failed to take root in the film industry and 'fostered a kind of dependency', akin to that existing before the Revolution. The writers urged the government to apply the ne Constitution 'organically and comprehensively'; Iranian cinema would othe wise become a caricature of Eastern-bloc solutions to cinema, and th 'solution to the problem will result in the elimination of the problem'.[47]

## Negotiating an Islamic Cinema (1982–9)

In this period, the Islamic hardliners gradually took charge of all maj institutions, and, with the continuation of the Iran–Iraq war, the resoluti of the American 'hostage crisis' and the defeat of major organized oppositio they consolidated their grip on the country. Political consolidation entail direct control of the mass media and the film industry. However, the tran formation of cinema from the Pahlavi to the Islamic involved a maj cultural and ideological shift, which could not take place unidirectional monolithically or rapidly. Mohammad Beheshti, director of the Fara Cinema Foundation (FCF) observed that 'transformation in the context cinema occurs with a "dissolve" not a "cut".'[48]

The new structure of the entertainment and broadcasting industr under the Islamic Republic partly resembles that which existed during t Shah's time, but there are major differences, which have helped to sha an Islamized cinema.

### Emergence of Committed Islamic Filmmakers

One factor in the Islamization of cinema seems to have been cronyi based on shared Islamic ideology and values. A case in point is that o production company named Ayat Film, which was formed prior to t Revolution, apparently in response to a call by Ali Shari'ati urging the you to turn to the arts to express their Islamic beliefs and their anti-Pahl politics. In 1979, immediately after the Revolution, Ayat Film produc two films: *Athar's War* (Mohammad Ali Najafi), a work of fiction, and *T Night of Power* (Ali Najafi), a documentary about the Revolution.

The impact of Ayat Film, however, far exceeded its limited producti output because of the way in which its committed (*mota'ahhed*) a religious (*motadayyen*) members fanned out soon after the Revolution take key positions in government, the motion picture industry and all institutions. Mir Hoseyn Musavi became Prime Minister; Fakhred Anvar took up a number of high posts within both the MCIG and

Voice and Vision of the Islamic Republic TV networks; Mohammad Ali Najafi obtained high policy positions within the MCIG and continued to direct films; Mostafa Hashemi was appointed to a high position in Khomeini's propaganda office; Mohammad Beheshti became the director of the powerful FCF. Immediately after the Revolution, these and other members and affiliated members of Ayat Film were among those few whom the government could trust on account of both their artistic abilities and their 'correct' Islamic values. As a result, they became ensconced in positions that allowed them, from early on, to influence the direction of the Islamization of cinema. Their impact was augmented by their longevity in office, since by and large they retained their influential positions throughout the first decade of the Islamic regime.

## Regulations Governing Exhibition of Films and Videos

The MCIG has overall responsibility for supervising the motion picture industry. The concentration at the Ministry of the power to set, regulate and enforce policy has helped both to reduce the confusion of the previous period and to enhance government control, thereby setting the stage for the emergence of Islamic unity out of revolutionary destruction and post-revolutionary uncertainty.

In June 1982, the cabinet approved a set of landmark regulations governing the exhibition of films and videos, charging the MCIG with their enforcement.[49] These regulations, codifying many of the Islamic values noted earlier, were instrumental in facilitating the shift from Pahlavi to Islamic cinema. They stipulate that all films and videos shown publicly must have an exhibition permit. Further, they ban all films and videos which:

- weaken the principle of monotheism and other Islamic principles or insult them in any manner;
- insult, directly or indirectly, the Prophets, Imams, the guardianship of the Supreme Jurisprudent (*velayat faqih*), the ruling Council or the jurisprudents (*mojtaheds*);
- blaspheme against the values and personalities held sacred by Islam and other religions mentioned in the Constitution;
- encourage wickedness, corruption and prostitution;
- encourage or teach dangerous addictions and earning a living from unsavoury means such as smuggling;
- negate the equality of all people regardless of colour, race, language, ethnicity and belief;
- encourage foreign cultural, economic and political influence contra to the 'neither West nor East' policy of the government;
- express or disclose anything that is against the interests and policies the country which might be exploited by foreigners;
- show details of scenes of violence and torture in such a way as disturb or mislead the viewer;
- misrepresent historical and geographical facts;
- lower the taste of the audience by means of low production a artistic values;
- negate the values of self-sufficiency and economic and soc independence.

The first three regulations are the most telling; these establish t Islamic character of present-day Iranian cinema. According to these, fil that question, alter or negate any of the following are forbidden:

- monotheism and submission to God and to his laws;
- the role of Revelation in expressing laws;
- resurrection and its role in the evolution of man towards God;
- the justness of God in creation and in law;
- the continuity of religious leadership (*Emamat*);
- the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran under the leadership Ayatollah Khomeini in ridding Muslims and the downtrodd from world imperialism.

Clearly these regulations codify the Islamic values hinted at at t beginning of this chapter, which during the transition period remain largely undefined and subject to local and expedient interpretations. course, the above regulations themselves contain many ambiguities, whi the cabinet dictated must be resolved by appropriate committees.

## Cinemas and Audience Demography

Despite being incomplete and inconsistent, statistics show that t number of theatres and filmgoers increased in the first decade after t Revolution.[50] However, numbers did not reach the peaks of the Shah's – even though the curtailment of previously allowed activities ma cinema one of the few permissible forms of mass entertainment. In 198 in an audience survey of 1800 Tehran high school students, 78 per cent the boys and 59 per cent of the girls said that they went to the cinem This figure is not high, considering that this age group comprised a ma share of audiences. Apparent audience disinterest may be explained

a post-Revolution decrease in the number of theatres nationwide, the undesirability of theatre locations, the bad conditions of halls and projection systems, the low quality of many of the films exhibited and the demographics of spectators, who were predominantly young, unmarried and unemployed men who sometimes heckled women. These factors were compounded by the highly aggressive and male-oriented genres and themes of many of the films.[52]

## Film Imports

The regulations governing film production and exhibition, together with the centralization of the industry, gave the authorities a firmer grip on imports. After some deliberation, the government took control of all film imports. The non-profit FCF was created in 1983, attached to the MCIG and given, among other responsibilities, a complete monopoly over the selection and importation of ideologically suitable films.[53] Table 2.2 shows the numbers and origins of films imported in 1983–4.

**Table 2.2: Films Imported in 1983–4**[54]

| Exporting Country | 1983 | 1984 |
|---|---|---|
| USSR | 28 | 29 |
| US | 12 | 24 |
| Italy | 16 | 20 |
| UK | 9 | 15 |
| France | 6 | 5 |
| Yugoslavia | 6 | 1 |
| Japan | 4 | 5 |
| North Korea | 2 | 2 |
| People's Republic of China | 1 | 3 |
| Australia | 1 | 2 |
| **Total** | **85** | **106** |

In the mid-1980s, the Soviet-bloc countries dominated the import scene, but films from the US and its Western allies increased their share considerably. The anti-Western, especially anti-American, rhetoric of official mass media might have led an observer to conclude that a limitation on US and Western imports was – or should be – in effect. This was not so, demonstrating both the tensions in cultural policy within the Islamic



Republic and the pragmatism of the policy-makers. Exhibition permi were issued to any film, regardless of source, as long as it lived up to t aforementioned Islamic values. For example, in 1983 the followi American films were publicly screened: *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters of t Third Kind*, *The Ten Commandments* and *A Bridge Too Far*, and in 198 *War Hunt*, *Law and Disorder*, *Black Sunday* and *The Chase* were shown.

## Indigenous Productions

All film ideas had to go through a five-stage process at the MCIG befo being made and shown to the public. It was during this process that t regulations codifying 'Islamic values' were implemented. The MCI reviewed a film's synopsis, evaluated and approved the screenplay, issued production permit (approving the cast and crew by name), reviewed t completed film and, finally, issued an exhibition permit that specified t cinemas in which it would be shown. Until mid-1989, all film ideas we subject to this process, during which they underwent many changes befo final release.[55] Statistics bear out the effectiveness of the review process and perhaps the low quality of the scripts submitted: of the 202 scree plays reviewed between 1980 and 1982, only 25 per cent were approved

Despite the rigour of the review process, a large number of films th were made were not released.[57] In April 1989, however, the governme loosened its grip and began allowing previously censored films to screened.[58] Barely a month later, for the first time in Iranian cinema t requirement for screenplays to be approved was removed. There were tw chief reasons for this liberalization policy: the authorities were confide that Islamic values had been sufficiently inculcated (that is, interpellati or 'injection' had had the desired effect), so that less supervision was nc required; secondly, the government, being more self-assured, wished to op up cultural discourse and to reduce criticism of its iron-clad control, there boosting morale and film quality. Whatever the reason, it seemed likely th the black market in screenplays would disappear and that film subje would diversify.[59] At the same time, the removal of the script approval sta may have had a negative effect: concerned for their heavy investmen producers may have become more cautious and prone to self-censorshi

These measures were not isolated. From 1984, the governme introduced new regulations demanded by filmmakers to encourage lo production. In the first six months of 1984, for example, the municip tax was reduced from 20 per cent to 5 per cent on Iranian films, and w

increased from 20 per cent to 25 per cent on imports. Ticket prices were increased by 25 per cent. The FCF was exempted from paying any customs duty on its imports. Furthermore, representatives of producers and exhibitors were allowed to participate in the process of assigning films to film theatres.[60]

To generate funds for health, social security and injury insurance of entertainers and filmmakers, the Majles passed a resolution in late 1985, which imposed a 2 per cent tax on the box-office receipts of all theatres in the country.[61] To bolster local production further, the 1987 national budget passed by the Majles included a provision for banks to offer long-term loans for film production.[62] A year later, in June 1988, the MCIG instituted a system of rating films, according to which producers of highly rated films would earn increased revenues by exhibiting their films in higher-class theatres. In addition, they would be entitled to extensive publicity and advertising on TV.[63] In May 1989, the MCIG announced further measures to encourage local filmmaking: foreign exchange funds were allocated for importing technical equipment and supplies, of which there was a chronic scarcity; interest-free credits and long-term loans were made available; local films were sponsored in international film festivals; and the inauguration of a social-security system for film workers was approved by parliament.[64]

Political consolidation, the centralization of imports and the passing of regulations concerning production and exhibition enhanced co-ordination and cohesiveness within the industry, brought cinema into line with Islamic values and criteria and improved overall film quality. Yet the government had not entirely monopolized the industry. Indeed, there seemed to be more production centres in Islamic Iran than in Pahlavi Iran, and they were not all concentrated in Tehran. These production centres were dispersed among three sectors: public, semi-public and private. Table 2.3 lists production centres in the late 1980s under each sector, a number of which had branches in the provinces.

In 1987 the public sector produced one-third of all films but, given the government's financial contribution through loans and credits, its actual impact on film production exceeded the statistics.[65] At any rate, multiplicity of production centres and sectors bolstered competition among both production companies and sectors, leading to increased diversity and enhanced quality.

The figures for films produced during this period (Table 2.4) show an initial downward spiral followed by a definite pattern of increase, coinciding with the aforementioned reforms.

**Table 2.3: Motion Picture Production Sectors[66]**

| |
|---|
| Public (governmental) sector |
| Office of Film, Photo and Slide Production (MCIG) |
| Farabi Cinema Foundation (MCIG) |
| Centre for Developing Experimental and Semi-amateur Films (MCIG) |
| Islamic Centre for Film Instruction (MCIG) |
| Young Cinema Society (MCIG) |
| Foundation of the Disinherited |
| Centre for Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents |
| Voice and Vision of the Islamic Republic (TV networks) |
| Ministry of Reconstruction Jehad |
| University Jehad |
| War Propaganda Command |
| Revolutionary Guard's Cultural Unit |
| Revolutionary Committees' Film Section |
| Traffic Organization |
| Iran Air |
| Semi-public (semi-governmental) sector |
| Islamic Propaganda Organization |
| Islamic Culture and Art Group |
| Private (commercial) sector |
| film co-operatives |
| independent producers |
| commercial production companies |
| film studios |

**Table 2.4: Feature Fiction Films Produced, 1979–88[67]**

| Year | Films Produced |
|---|---|
| 1979–80 | 14 |
| 1980–1 | 16 |
| 1981–2 | 12 |
| 1982–3 | 11 |
| 1983–4 | 22 |
| 1984–5 | 56 |
| 1985–6 | 57 |
| 1986–7 | 49 |
| 1987–8 | 46 |

In addition to FCF and MCIG, other post-Revolution institutions, such as the Foundation of the Disinherited and the Ministry of Reconstruction Jehad, helped Islamize the motion-picture industry during the first decade of the Islamic Republic. Considered one of the largest economic conglomerates, controlling 15 per cent of all the industry in the country and owning an estimated US$10 billion worth of land,[68] the Foundation of the Disinherited was by mid-1983 operating some 137 cinemas in 16 provinces, approximately half of all cinemas in the country.[69]

Because of the large number of cinemas it was operating, the Foundation had a profound effect on the production and exhibition of films. But it was not economically successful, since attendance in its theatres dropped by 300,000 in just one year, 1981 to 1982,[70] and the number of theatres it owned declined to 80 by mid-1987.[71] The manager of the Foundation's cultural department attributed this to a shortage of foreign imports with appropriate Islamic values. To offset the situation, the Foundation began to assist 'Islamically committed' local filmmakers to make trend-setting 'model' films inspired by the Revolution and by Islamic values. One such film, *The Dossier* (Mehdi Sabbaghzadeh, 1983), deals with the revenge of a worker unjustly accused of the death of a feudal landlord and jailed for 15 years. *The Monster Within* (Khosrow Sina'i, 1984) focuses on an ex-SAVAK torturer's struggle with his own sense of guilt immediately after the Revolution, and *The Bus* (Yadollah Samadi, 1985) portrays a typical Heydari–Ne'mati family feud in a village. To adjust to the financial realities of production and exhibition and to increase the reach of its films, the Foundation announced in May 1988 that it would sell 40 more of its theatres in order to obtain sufficient funds to build new theatres in poorer areas of cities, and that it would subtitle and export Islamic films for exhibition to Iranian expatriates.

The Jehad for Reconstruction, which later became the Ministry of Reconstruction Jehad, also contributed to the emergence of an Islamized cinema. The Jehad was established on 17 June 1979 by an edict from Ayatollah Khomeini, its aim being to 'repair the ruins' caused by the Shah's government and to help reconstruction and self-sufficiency of rural Iran.[72] The Ministry is in charge of rural development and the propagation of Islamic ideology, a mission it accomplishes by distributing appropriate films, slides, videotapes, posters and audio cassettes through its vast nationwide network. In 1983, for instance, it held 31,024 theatre, film and video shows, distributed 74,789 audio cassettes and 2,912,062 posters and photographs nationwide.[73] The Ministry's reach is actually wider than



these statistics indicate, since many of its films are shown on national TV in mosques and in theatres operated by the Foundation of the Disinherited. Such use of audiovisual media is not new in Iran, and is clearly influenced by the model of the mobile film unit programme started by the US Information Agency (Point 4 programme) in Iran in the 1950s.[74] The basic difference is not operational but ideological: while the Point 4 film programme emphasized Western-style modernization technology transfer and monarchy, the Ministry's film effort relies on indigenous, nativistic and Islamic solutions.

## Genres and Themes of Indigenous Features

The application of Islamic regulations and the political exigencies of the time resulted in the domination of action-adventure, war, comedy and family drama genres. But these genres embody varying themes, which taken together can throw light on the tensions the society is experiencing and the way Islamic values are played out on the screen. These themes can be seen in Table 2.5, taken from Mas'ud Purmohammad's study of the screenplays of films made in 1987.

**Table 2.5: Themes of Films Made in 1987**[75]

| Themes | Number of Films |
|---|---|
| Amnesia as a result of shock | 5 |
| Psychological disorders | 9 |
| Emigration or escape from the country | 11 |
| Family problems and disputes | 14 |
| War as a principal and ancillary theme | 12 |
| Wealth does not bring happiness (Islamic values) | 20 |
| Exposing the Pahlavi regime | 11 |
| Exposing anti-government groups (*goruhak-ha*) | 4 |

In what follows, the major themes identified in Table 2.5 are examined.

### *Exposing the Pahlavi Regime*

Given the anti-Pahlavi character of the Revolution, it is understandable that populist cinema was concerned with exposing that regime's moral corruption, economic dependence, subservience to the West and political

suppression. The rather large number of films in this category shown seven years after the fall of the Shah indicates that this topic had not been exhausted. Also, unsurprisingly, early favourite themes included the operations of SAVAK, torture and armed struggle against the Shah. Although some of these 'SAVAK films' deal with social and political ills under the Shah, the majority are amateurish, superficial tracts. An exception is Khosrow Sina'i's *Long Live* (1980). It portrays political repression by depicting the way in which a professional, affluent engineer inadvertently becomes involved with anti-Shah forces. Corruption, too, is shown effectively in *The Senator* (Mehdi Sabbaghzadeh, 1984), which focuses on graft and heroin smuggling: this film was the box-office record holder for 1984, with sales of nearly one million dollars.

### *Islamic Values*

Emphasis on Islamic ethical values and on spiritual – not material – rewards are also clearly indicated in Table 2.5. Post-revolutionary cinema can be characterized as a 'moralist cinema', whose films are imbued with a generalized sense of morality and dispense moral advice to the point that even bad guys participate in it. Traditional values and conventions characteristic of rural folk are compared favourably with the consumerist ideology of urban areas. However, the populist, moralist cinema, instead of concentrating on deeper Iranian and Islamic mystic values, catered chiefly to a superficial morality, characterized by easy hopes, cheap emotions and inexpensive good deeds.[76] The art cinema films are also moralistic, as exemplified by Abbas Kiarostami's *Where is the Friend's House?* (1987). This film, dubbed 'agonizingly slow' but ultimately rewarding,[77] depicts the relentless efforts of an honest boy to find a friend's house in order to return a copybook he had taken by mistake.

Leading clerics, including Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Khatami, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, urged filmmakers to propagate the notions of 'self-sacrifice, martyrdom and revolutionary patience'.[78] Accordingly, such themes inundate the moralist cinema and find their most natural expression in films about the war with Iraq.

### *War Films*

Soon after Iraq invaded Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini ordered the mobilization of all sectors. However, it took the MCIG and the private sector some time to solve the twin problems of the shortage of raw stock and the lack o funds. Many films were awaiting screening, and thus could not produc income to invest in war films.[79] Although the first film about this war, *Th Border* (Jamshid Heydari, 1981), was made by the private sector, the lion' share of war films were produced by the public sector, hence forming ar official cinema.

During the war period, a total of 56 feature films about the war wer made, two-thirds of which focused primarily on fighting and militar operations, the rest concerning themselves with war's social and psycho logical impact.[80] Apparently, many of the warfront films emphasize action and violence over sensitivity and psychological depth. But in th mid-1980s private-sector producers began to pay more attention to th specificity of the conflict by exploring both psychological and ideologica dimensions of the war. Hasan Karbakhsh's *The Domain of Lovers* (1983 examines the psychology of a young reserve soldier and the meaning o self-sacrifice and duty. Manuchehr Asgarinasab's *A House Waiting*, broad cast on TV in 1987, is a technically polished film that portrays a wartim society without showing trench warfare. Throughout the 1980s, Seyye Morteza Avini's Jehad TV Unit produced a massive series of films fo national broadcast, collectively called *Narrative of Victory* (*Ravayat-e Fath*) Finally, Islamically committed filmmaker Ebrahim Hatamikia, in his earl war films *The Sentry* (1988) and *The Emigrant* (1990), explored th psychological and sociological impact of the war on the home front.

Although war led to an increase in the quantity of films emphasizin the Islamic values of martyrdom and self-sacrifice, it had a negative effect o the quality of films, which by and large were limited to circulating cliché and slogans.[81] Issues relating to the causes, conduct and consequences o the war were foregrounded in the post-war cinema, so war remained viable topic. As early as 1985, New Wave filmmaker Beyza'i made *Bash The Little Stranger*, a deeply pacifist and humanist film, which suffere from censorship. Mohsen Makhmalbaf, the most promising 'Islamis filmmaker, made *Wedding of the Blessed* (1989), which used the war t critique government and society. In this film, the protagonist, a shel shocked photographer, is used to explore the social symptomatology o the war, its causes and many of its unresolved consequences.

The themes of shock and psychological disorder, split families, dislocation and exile are explored particularly in family melodramas which, because they involve women, bear particular scrutiny, for it is in the portrayal and treatment of women that the tensions surrounding the Islamization of cinema crystallize.

The film and video regulations mentioned above set out rules concerning the portrayal of women. According to these rules, Muslim women must be shown to be chaste and to have an important role in society as well as in raising God-fearing and responsible children. In addition, women were not to be treated like commodities or used to arouse sexual desires.[82] These general and ambiguous guidelines had a profound effect on the use and portrayal of women in cinema. Filmmakers could evade entanglement with the censors by self-censorship and the avoidance altogether of stories involving women. As the star of *Report of a Death* (Muhammad Ali Najafi, 1987) stated, filmmakers were 'afraid to turn to women ... even when authorities have invited [them] to consider women'.[83] Statistics compiled by Purmohammad point to the very low presence of women as heroes in films made in 1987: of the 37 films he reviewed, the chief protagonists in 25 films were men, in three films they were women, and in seven films, men and women shared equal billing.[84]

If women appeared at all, they were given limited parts: reflecting the role spelled out for them in MCIG regulations, they were usually portrayed as housewives or as mothers. To use women, a new grammar of film evolved, which included the following features: women actors being given static parts or filmed in such a way as to avoid showing their bodies. A post-Revolution film director underlined these practices by saying that women in Islamic performing arts should be shown seated at all times so as to avoid drawing attention to their 'provocative walk', thereby allowing the audience to concentrate on the 'ideologies' inherent in the work.[85] In addition, eye contact, especially when expressing 'desire', and touching between men and women were discouraged.[86] All this meant that until recently women were often filmed in long-shot, with few close-ups or facial expressions.

The processes of filming and acting were also affected, especially in the first few years after the Revolution. Government agents appeared during filming to ensure that no 'unethical' conduct occurred on set. In at least one case, the male and female actors playing the parts of husband and wif were reported to have had to marry each other for the duration of th filming in order to stay within Islamic interpretations.[87]

Since women in films have to don the *chador* or other Islamic cove their portrayal is unrealistic, as they are shown covering themselves fro close kin, which in real life they would not do. Such intrusions into th realm of acting and filming undermine the actors' art, distort th portrayal of family life and love relationships, and relegate women, i the words of an official, to a marginal position in the patriarchal syste of Iranian cinema.[88] Another side-effect is that depictions of the Pahla period and of the western world have been excluded from Iranian cine altogether. Naser Taqva'i, director of *Captain Khorshid* (1987), corroborat these points when he says,

> This very same problem about the character of woman has made it impossib [for us] to make a film about the Pahlavi era. You cannot show with ease th relationship of a husband and a wife, a sister and a brother, in the streets or home, let alone portray other relations of blood or marriage.[89]

Such constraints, which have gradually lessened, affect the relationshi of men on screen as well, resulting in fascinating gender reconfiguratio and re-inscription.[90] A few exceptional directors, such as Beyza'i in *Bash The Little Stranger* and *Maybe Another Time* (1988), did continue explore women, gender roles and women's issues seriously.

If women had problems appearing in front of cameras, they had le difficulty attending film schools and working behind the camera in bo the motion picture and TV industries – provided they observed the evolvi 'Islamic' codes of conduct, dress, acting and the gaze. There are mo women feature-film directors currently working in Iran than there were all the preceding eight decades combined. They include the followin Tahmineh Ardekani, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, Faryal Behzad, Marziy Borumand, Puran Derakhshandeh, Tahmineh Milani and Kobra Sa'i Their films deal with a range of topics – from family and housing proble to physical and mental disability – and genres – from social comedies psychological dramas.[91]

## The Ideological Repositioning of Cinema

A major criticism of films made in the Islamic Republic, especially t populist variety, is their low quality and ideological earnestness and sup ficiality. Even when ideas and screenplays are approved and made in

films, quality is not guaranteed. In 1985, the authoritative journal *Mahnameh-ye Sinema'i-ye Film* assessed post-Revolution films and found them utterly wanting. It rated 35 films 'sleazy' (*mobtazal*), 57 'bad', 22 'mediocre', one 'good', and none 'excellent'.[92] The general quality of films has improved because of measures taken since then, as borne out by a series of awards received in recent international film festivals.

The generally poor quality of the films and the overall lack of variety on TV and in the cinema helped to nurture a new medium, as VCRs provided a popular way of spending one's leisure time. In 1983, 74 per cent of Tehran's households had a black-and-white TV, 16 per cent a colour TV, and 2 per cent a VCR. The figures for the nation as a whole were much lower: 67 per cent, 6 per cent and 0.5 per cent respectively.[93] These figures, however, belie the actual size of the audience, since video-watching is a communal activity, during or after dinner. This development, like other aspects of society, was the subject of cultural negotiation. Over the years, government and public played a cat-and-mouse game, with government alternately banning and permitting importation of film videos, and the public purchasing, renting and circulating bootleg copies of videos on the black market. At any rate, the latest feature films from the West (including some pornographic material) are now easily available to those who want them.[94]

The ideological earnestness and superficiality of films are related to such issues as post-revolutionary conditions, the pall of the war with Iraq, the bureaucratization of filmmakers, the timidity of filmmakers unfamiliar with Islamic precepts, self-censorship, governmental censorship and the uneven application or varied interpretations of Islamic codes and regulations. For instance, the changing interpretations of codes, often based on political expediency, puts certain topics suddenly off-limits. This in turn tends to make filmmakers shy away from tackling controversial, social or political issues, encouraging them instead to seek safe topics. Barbod Taheri's feature documentary about the Revolution, *The Fall of '57* (1980), is a good case in point. Once popular, in 1984 it was banned because it dealt with topics that the authorities no longer wanted discussed. Taheri was told, 'There are moments in a nation's life when people no longer need to know what has actually happened.' If he were to apply for a new exhibition permit, he would have to remove documentary footage of actual events, showing wide participation by secular and leftist groups in the Revolution, armed forces attacking demonstrators, and even Khomeini's first speech delivered in a Tehran cemetery, in which he condemned the Shah making cemeteries prosperous.[95]

As documented above, after the mid-1980s there was a steady m towards the rationalization of the film industry and the encouragemen local production. Concurrently, and equally significantly, major shif attitudes and perceptions towards both cinema and working in the mo picture business have taken place. Cinema, rejected in the past as pa the frivolous superstructure, has been adopted as part of the nece infrastructure of Islamic culture. Fakhreddin Anvar, Undersecretar Culture and Islamic Guidance in charge of the Film Affairs Departm describes this process: 'Believing culture to be the structure undergi all aspects of running a society... the Department has directed a efforts towards ensuring that cinematic activities and filmmakin included in all legislation, laws, systems, and regulations.'[96] Worki film, once despised and disparaged, has become acceptable respectable. Hojjatoleslam Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, speaker o Majles, publicly endorsed this shift when he declared in March 1987, entertainers, male or female, did not enjoy the same esteem that they today from lay and religious people... This is a real revolution.'[97]

Films, judged immediately after the Revolution solely on ideological purity and instructional values, began to be assessed for ability to entertain and enlighten. In 1985, Rafsanjani acknowledge necessity for a lighter treatment of themes in cinema, stating, 'It i that a film must have a message, but this does not mean that we must its entertaining aspects. Society needs entertainment; lack of joy re one's effectiveness and involvement.'[98] Khatami, too, declared this sh perception and repositioning of cinema in no uncertain terms:

> I believe that cinema is not the mosque... If we remove cinema fr natural place, we will no longer have cinema... If we transform cine such an extent that when one enters a moviehouse one feels imposed u senses that leisure time has changed to become homework time, then w deformed society.'[99]

The morality codes that had become a straitjacket for cinema, limiti portrayal of women and the use of music, were eased considerabl December 1987 when Khomeini issued an edict to this effect.[100]

Mehrju'i's social satire *The Tenants* (1986) was immensely popul generated the highest revenues in the history of Iranian cinema. Th testimony that the public, too, wanted films to be well made and taining as well as enlightening. In fact, as Mohammad Beheshti obs

'a new and unprecedented situation has developed in post-revolutionary Iran, whereby the best quality films are also the most popular films'.[101] While this was not true of populist films, it was generally true of an increasing number of art cinema films.

## Conclusion

Throughout its existence, the Islamist regime has shown a surprising degree of flexibility and a great capacity for learning from its own mistakes. After 1983 it steadfastly sought to rationalize the film industry and to provide it with support and leadership. Filmmakers and audiences too demonstrated both resolve and ingenuity in the face of incredible constraints. In fact, it was through a process of cultural negotiation and haggling – not just through acclaim (interpellation) – that a new cinema emerged, embodying many of the aforementioned Islamic values. Gradually, a new crop of 'Islamically committed' filmmakers was trained, at the same time that experienced New Wave filmmakers of the Shah's era were resurrected and allowed to work. In fact, the latter group led the charge in transforming post-revolutionary art cinema, though neither type of filmmaker was forced into a rigid position. In the same way that pre-revolutionary filmmakers such as Beyza'i, Mehrju'i, Kiarostami, Taqva'i, Kimia'i, Hatami and Sina'i adapted to new post-revolutionary realities, the new generation of Islamist filmmakers, such as Makhmalbaf, Hatamikia and Bani-Etemad also evolved and matured. The price of adaptation and evolution, however, was accommodation and the charge that the filmmakers had sold out. For example, the endings of Mehrju'i's films *The Tenants* and *Hamoon* (1990), which seem to contradict the body of the films, have been criticized because of the perception that the director had caved in to the authorities and changed his original endings. Such textual contradictions reveal the process of cultural negotiation in Iran, and indicate the degree to which filmmakers must compromise or appear to compromise their own ideals if they want their socially critical films to be released. Refusal to compromise may relegate their controversial films, such as Makhmalbaf's *A Time to Love* (1991), to archival shelves, underground circuits and foreign markets.

These and similar cultural contradictions have found expression not only in the film texts themselves but also in the development of a lively film culture in general. A number of annual film festivals show a mixture of local and foreign-made products, film archives regularly offer screenin a number of institutions offer academic degrees and training in film a TV, serious film and theatre journals are being published, and film revie appear in a range of periodicals.[102] Since the late 1980s, Iranian cinema h gone beyond its national borders. After a period of mutual hostility, po revolutionary films began to appear in international film festivals increasing numbers, garnering high praise and recognition. In 1986 or two post-revolutionary films were shown in foreign festivals, while 1990 a total of 230 films were screened in some 78 international fi festivals, winning 11 prizes.[103]

## Post-Khomeini, Post-Khatami Cinema – a Postscript (1990–

Since the early 1990s, Iran's politics, economy and culture have und gone a number of significant developments affecting the film indust and cinema. One of these was a debate that surfaced during the summ of 1991 over what one faction of the government called an organize multifaceted 'cultural invasion' of the country by 'Western imperialisr Many high-ranking political figures, including the nation's religio leader Ayatollah Khamene'i, President Rafsanjani and Minist Khatami, as well as most of the mainstream and specialist press, par cipated in this debate. Surprisingly, the relatively new literary journ *Gardun*, whose cover (nos 15–16, Mordad 1370/1991) had origina sparked the cultural invasion debate, and had come under strong attac continued publication. It was shut down a few months later, howev and its editor prosecuted. Subsequently other editors were also harass and prosecuted. The debate took its toll among high-ranking offici too: Khatami, who as Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance h been one of the most enduring public leaders in the country, presidi over the flourishing of the arts and cinema since the Revolutic resigned in mid-1992. In February 1994, Rafsanjani's broth Mohammad, who had headed the broadcasting networks for many yea was ousted. Soon after, Mohammad Beheshti, who as director of t FCF had built it into a formidable film institution, was also remove These changes followed the earlier dismissal of prime minister M Hoseyn Musavi, during whose reign these and other officials had creat the nucleus of 'Islamically committed' cinema, culture and broadcastir With their removal, a new, post-Khomeini era began. The immedi

impact on the film industry was to set in motion a period of anxious uncertainty, from which it emerged relatively unscathed. The reasons for the industry's resilience may be found partly in the institutionalization of cinema and the film industry, with the result that it now appears both less subject to direct ideological manipulation and less dependent on the presence of sympathetic officials – although ideology and influence continue to be important factors.

The Rafsanjani government's attempt to privatize major industries led to the re-evaluation and partial removal of the subsidies provided to the film industry. This move prompted dire predictions of the industry's imminent collapse; this did not happen. Apart from censorship, factors that threatened the industry during Rafsanjani's term were high rates of inflation (30–50 per cent) and unemployment (12–20 per cent), low investment in non-oil industries, and the slow rationalization of foreign-exchange policies (three different rates competed).[104] Measures taken in this period that helped the industry included a progressive rating system, which encouraged the production of quality films. Grade 'A' films were awarded the best exhibition sites and opening dates, and longer runs; the makers of such films were granted higher budgets and lower interest loans. Grade 'A' filmmakers were also exempted from having to submit their screenplays for approval before production.[105] These measures created the unusual situation in which higher-quality films were sometimes the most popular. Censorship and intimidation of filmmakers, artists and intellectuals, however, continued. A number of films were banned, even those of grade 'A' filmmakers. Beyza'i's *Tara's Ballad* and *Yazdgerd's Death* continued to be banned, as were Makhmalbaf's *A Time to Love* and *Zayandehrud Nights* (1991). In mid-1995, a group of 214 film workers wrote an open letter to the MCIG demanding a thorough re-evaluation of the complex rules and procedures governing film production and exhibition. Noting that both state-subsidized and strictly commercial cinemas are likely to undermine the 'national film industry', the signatories demanded a reduction of the stifling rules and a strengthening of truly independent professional guilds, which could replace government agencies in supervising and controlling the industry.[106] In essence, they were demanding that the industry be allowed to move out of the political and into the professional sphere – a demand that may take years and a paradigmatic ideological reorientation to materialize. In the meantime, despite the 'cultural invasion' debates fanned by hardliners, the high cost of newsprint and stringent censorship, film journalism thrived, with a diverse menu of daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly peri about cinema.[107]

The exhibition of art cinema films in international film fe continued apace, garnering increasingly positive evaluations fo Iranian cinema and individual filmmakers. In 1992, the director New York Film Festival was quoted as saying that Iranian cinema of the most exciting in the world today'.[108] Likewise, the T International Film Festival called it 'one of the pre-eminent n cinemas in the world today'.[109] International acclaim for Iranian c did not translate into political prestige for the Islamist governm the regime's opponents in exile had feared. Iranian exiles, interna audiences and film-reviewing establishments abroad were sophis enough to understand the constricted political contexts in whi films were produced. Unlike some exiles who focused on the p issues and on governmental machinations and manipulations, viewers and reviewers tended to highlight the initiative and skil of the filmmakers. They credited these qualities, not gover largesse or manipulative capacity, for the high quality of the Iranian films are being shown in series and in festival forums ar in many countries and in many US cities, from Los Angeles to C and from Houston to New York.[110] A number of filmmakers hav praised repeatedly in US and European publications and fe among them Mehrju'i, Makhmalbaf, Kiarostami, Bani-Etemad, M Milani and Beyza'i. No-one has received more critical as well as p acclaim abroad than Kiarostami, whose picture appeared on the c the July–August 1995 issue of *Cahiers du cinéma* (no. 493) abo caption: 'Kiarostami le magnifique'. Inside, nearly 50 pages were d to discussions of his work.

Iranian participation in international film festivals is not just in to gain prestige – for the film industry, individual filmmakers, a government. However popular some current Iranian films might be Iran, the 65-million population of the country does not appear to b enough (or economically robust enough) nor the exhibition powerful enough to support fully an indigenous commercial film in Iranian cinema will not be able to flourish as a viable, non-governm commercial industry without foreign markets. Entering films in national festivals and airing them on European TV networks are th steps towards creating such markets, but they are only a beg More effort is applied to breaking into global commercial and ac

distribution networks. As a result, art cinema films are increasingly being screened by commercial exhibitors outside festival circuits. In summer 1995, for example, Makhmalbaf's *Salaam Cinema* (*Cinema, Cinema*, 1995) was screened not only at the Cannes International Film Festival but also simultaneously in three cinemas in Paris. At the same time, Ebrahim Foruzesh's *The Jar* (1992) was on the screen in a Paris commercial theatre. In the US, too, Iranian films are routinely shown across the country in commercial theatres, and several video mail-order outlets distribute them. This is highly significant, for the internationalization and commercialization of the art cinema has made possible the emergence of an inchoate, independent, auteurist cinema that is independent from Iranian tastes, commercial concerns and governmental control.

Although women continue to be the most regulated and officially controlled sector of Iranian society and cinema, their presence and influence both behind and in front of the cameras has steadily grown. As a legitimate profession, one that has been 'purified' of its previous ills of lax morality, sexuality and corruption, the film industry now attracts women to all its areas, including cinematography, which was until very recently dominated by men.

Video and satellite TV continue to pose particularly vexing problems for the regime, offering its opponents opportunities for cultural negotiation and resistance. From the beginning, the Islamist government had a love–hate relationship with video, fearing that it would undermine the 'Islamic culture' it was propagating. As a result, it frequently vacillated, alternately banning, curtailing, ignoring or grudgingly allowing video cassettes and VCRs. This in turn encouraged a burgeoning but fluctuating black market in major cities. However, the popularity of global satellite networks in Iran in the mid-1990s forced the government to act decisively by becoming itself a distributor of feature and TV films on video. It hoped by this means to combat the cultural invasion that the powerful global satellites were supposedly leading with their highly attractive programming. But the quantity, quality and variety of officially allowed videos fell short of expectation and of the competition. As a result, after much debate in parliament and the ruling circles, in 1994 Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Araki issued a *fatwa* banning satellite TV, declaring: 'Installing satellite antennae, which open Islamic society to the inroads of decadent foreign culture and the spread of ruinous Western diseases to Muslims, is *haram* (forbidden).'[111] It is interesting to note that Araki's description of foreign TV and pop culture as 'disease' is entirely in line with Navab-Safavi's and Khomeini's metaphors of decades earlier. The government urged owners
satellite equipment to remove their dishes 'voluntarily', and threatened to fi
culprits up to US$750 and to confiscate their equipment. It also declared th
those who were found to be importing, selling or installing dishes would
jailed and fined the huge sum of US$25,000.[112] Despite some arrests ar
fines, the ban was not entirely successful, as equipment owners four
creative ways of camouflaging or miniaturizing their satellite dishes. Th
failure, together with regulation loopholes exempting government offici
and foreign legations from the ban, created a fluid cultural space in which
kinds of slippage and transgressions, as well as countermeasures, are possib
The government responded to the fluidity of the situation not only
freeing video and banning satellite TV, but also by launching massi
efforts to increase film production, to build new cinema complexes and
create new TV networks aimed at satisfying the needs and desires of two
the largest segments of the population: young adults and city-dwellers.

Mohammad Khatami, former Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidan
who had been swept aside by the cultural invasion debate, was elect
president in a landslide election in 1997, massively supported by you
people and women. He introduced new secularist values of transparen
civil society, rule of law and pluralism. In terms of foreign relations,
replaced the previous 'neither East nor West' doctrine with the 'dialog
of civilizations'. These values were a marked departure from and mo
fication of the previously articulated Islamic values. Economically,
promoted privatization and heightened relations of exchange with ot
national economies. He appointed two women to cabinet positions a
nurtured a lively independent press, even though it was heavily persecu
by a legal system under the authority of Supreme Leader Ali Khamen
Everywhere there were signs of a deadly power struggle over culture,
most ominous of which were the assassinations of five intellectuals, wri
and opposition figures, apparently by rogue elements within the st
security apparatus. Incredibly enough, these elements were arrested.
cat-and-mouse game with the hardline courts, some of the reform
newspapers resurfaced under different names as soon as they were s
down. When *Jame'eh* was banned, *Tous* came out, looking exactly like
predecessor in typeface, layout and editorial policy; when *Tous* was s
down, *Neshat* was launched, similarly echoing its predecessor.

Khatami took a more public role in cultural negotiations over cine
defending quality films and openness. One example is Davud Mirbaq
*The Snowman* (1994/7), which had been banned for several years, and

released only after Khatami's election as president. The film immediately became highly controversial, however, as Islamist hardliners, including the militant Supporters of the Party of God (*Ansar-e Hezbollah*), attacked the theatres that showed it in major cities, including Tehran and Isfahan.[114] Significantly, government officials, including Khatami, voiced support for the film and audiences, too, endorsed it by flocking to the theatres. The film became so popular that the Isfahan theatre, which had been attacked, continued to show it for over a month afterwards.

Ostensibly, the reason for the attack was the film's theme of transvestism. Its protagonist (played by Ali Abdi) dreams of going to the US, but as there is no American embassy in Iran, he travels to Turkey to obtain a visa. After his various disguises fail to get him a visa there, he gets involved in a scheme, hatched by expatriate Iranian tough guys, to disguise himself as a woman and to marry a willing American, for US$6000. Abdi dons women's clothes, hair and makeup; thus dressed, he appears unveiled in public (which is unlawful in Iran) and he skillfully adopts a camp gay masquerade (also unlawful). The reasons for the hardliners' protests, therefore, may have been not just transvestism but also the film's treatment of such important taboo subjects as unveiled women, homosexuality and the celebration of tough-guy lifestyles – including drinking alcohol and singing – all of which are severely punished in Islamist Iran, where the boundaries segregating genders, inside and outside, self and other, and religiously lawful and unlawful are so strictly patrolled and enforced.

Khatami intensified the privatization of the country's shattered economy, and in 1999 offered a five-year plan to turn over the communications, post, railway and tobacco industries to the private sector in a 'total restructuring of the Islamic Republic's economy'.[115] Privatization meant the reduction of government involvement in film financing, production and exhibition. For example, to deal with the unauthorized use of videos and satellite TV, the government formulated a plan to relinquish its monopoly on video distribution to the private sector by licensing local film producers and video distributors to import foreign films on video. Up to this point, the government had protected the local film industry from competition by essentially banning foreign imports. This plan is likely to change things drastically. To prevent unfair competition, it has tied the importing of foreign films on video to the production of local films. Accordingly, local film producers can import four foreign films for every feature film they produce in Iran.[116] This is designed to encourage both production



and importation of film, raising the level and choice of films available However, the long-term effects of privatization on the film industry particularly on art-cinema films, is hard to predict, for under both th Pahlavi regime and the Islamic Republic this cinema benefited fron government support, which shielded it to a great extent from the vagarie of the markets. Fortuitously, a new factor has emerged this time: th foreign film markets. If managed properly, income from these market may be sufficient both to offset government withdrawal and to protec art-cinema films from low public taste at home and high competitio from abroad.

As demonstrated, the post-revolutionary cinema is not monolithic c univocal, although the state has dominated the private sector so fa This cinema cannot be regarded as one imposed by a 'ruthlessly unitec ideological apparatus controlled by the state; rather, it is one that ha grown out of considerable ideological work and negotiation.

No discussion of the Iranian cinema is complete without considerin the output of Iranians filmmakers in exile since the Revolution. In or study I conducted, they had made over 300 fiction, non-fiction, animate and avant-garde films in two decades of displacement in nearly a doze European and North American countries. This made them by far the mo prolific filmmaking group among the Middle Eastern exiles in the Wes Although these filmmakers are diverse politically and religiously, th majority of them are united in their opposition to the Islamist regime. An while they work in different countries, making films in various language their films share certain features that place them as films of exile and of th diaspora. Theirs is part of an emerging global cinema, what I have called a "accented cinema," which is centrally concerned with expressing the pai and pleasures of displacement and the problematics of multiple locations an identities. This is a cinema that is produced in the interstices of domina cultures and film industries, using an artisanal mode of production.[117]

The most accomplished feature narrative films made in exile include th following: Sohrab Shahid-Saless's *Utopia* (1982) and *Roses for Africa* (1991 Parviz Sayyad's *The Mission* (1983), Marva Nabili's *Nightsongs* (1984 Ghasem Ebrahimian's *The Suitors* (1989), Reza Allamehzadeh's *The Gue of the Hotel Astoria* (1989), Jalal Fatemi's *The Nuclear Baby* (1990), Cav Zahedi's *A Little Stiff* (1992, with Greg Watkins) and *I Don't Hate Las Veg Anymore* (1994), Amir Naderi's *Manhattan by Numbers* (1993) and *Aven A.B.C... Manhattan* (1997), Shirin Etessam and Erica Jordan's *Walls Sand* (1994) and Houshang Allahyari's *Fear of Heights* (1994).

This Iranian accented cinema evolved in several phases, from disavowing dislocation to seriously engaging with the problematics of multiple locations. Its form also evolved, from feature fiction to documentary to avant garde. Women are a rising force among non-narrative filmmakers, including Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa, Shirin Neshat, Shirin Bazleh, Persheng Sadeq Vaziri and Shirin Etessam. Of interest also is the emergence of the 'music video' genre in the US, particularly in Los Angeles. The videos are aired frequently on Iranian exile TV in Europe and North America, and they are also available in ethnic music and grocery stores – and in bootleg form in Iran. These videos offer the exiles a new form of both self-expression and collective identity formation, and they provide researchers of trans-national media with fascinating textual materials.[118]

## Notes on Chapter 2

1. This chapter updates two earlier versions: 'Islamizing film culture in Iran', in Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic* (London, Routledge, 1992), pp. 173–208, and 'Islamicizing film culture in Iran – an update', in *CEMOTI (Cahiers d'Études sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le Monde Turco–Iranien)* 20 (juillet –décembre 1995), pp. 145–85. It is reprinted with permission. Minor alterations and corrections have been made throughout and the section on 'Post-Khomeini and post-Khatami cinema' has been completely rewritten for this publication.
2. Mostafa Abkashak, *Mosabbebin-e Vaqe'i-ye Faje'eh-ye Howlnak-e Sinema Rex-e Abadan Cheh Kasani Hastand?* (Los Angeles, n.pub., 1985). After the Revolution, this incident was a hot topic in the Iranian press, where the proceedings of the trial of Takab-'Alizadeh and others accused of setting the theatre on fire were extensively reported. More details on the incident are available in mass-circulation newspapers such as *Kayhan*, *Ettela'at* and *Enqelab-e Eslami*, and opposition publications such as *Mojahed*, especially 1/93, 31 Khordad 1359/1980, p. 7 and *Peykar* 17, 29 Khordad 1358/1979, p. 12.
3. Homa Nateq, 'Yaran-e motahhed dar kudeta va enqelab', *Zaman-e Now* [Paris] 8 (Ordibehesht 1366/1987), pp. 17–19; 'Iran's film biz nipped in the bud by Islamic belief', *Variety*, 9 May 1979, p. 91.
4. Ruhollah Khomeini, *Velayat-e Faqih: Hokumat-e Eslami* (Tehran, Amir Kabir, 1360/1981), p. 188.
5. *Asnad va Tasaviri az Mobarezat-e Khalq-e Mosalman-e Iran*, vol. 1, part 3 (Tehran, Abuzar, 1357/1978).
6. Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes toward an investigation)', in Ben Brewster (trans.), *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York, Monthly Review Pres 1971), pp. 127–89.
7. Hamid Naficy, 'Iranian writers, the Iranian cinema, and the case of *Das Akol*', *Iranian Studies* 28/2–4, Spring–Autumn 1985, p. 237.
8. Fazlollah Nuri, *Lavayeh-e Aqa Sheykh Fazlollah Nuri* (Tehran, Nashr-Tarikh-e Iran, 1362/1983), p. 49.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
10. Navab-Safavi, *Jame'eh va Hokumat-e Eslami* (Qom, Entesharat-e Hejra 1357/1978), p. 4.
11. Ruhollah Khomeini, *Kashf ol-Asrar* (n.pub, n.d.), p. 194.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
14. Alan Sheridan (trans.), *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (Ne York, Vantage, 1979), pp. 209–22.
15. Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Joh Cumming (trans.) (New York, Herder & Herder, 1972), p. 123.
16. Khomeini's concept of the 'culture of idolatry' is reminiscent of Debor formulation of 'the society of the spectacle'. See Guy Debord, *Society of t Spectacle* (Detroit, Black and White, 1983).
17. Navab-Safavi, *Jame'eh va Hokumat-e Eslami*, p. 11.
18. Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Ima Khomeini*, Hamid Algar (trans.) (Berkeley, Mizan Press, 1981), p. 258.
19. For example, the Soviet formalist films of Eisenstein and Vertov followed t Russian Revolution, the British realist documentaries immediately preced and followed the Second World War, the Italian neo-realists emerged imm diately after the Second World War and the Polish 'black films' were ma possible during the 'spring thaw' of de-Stalinization in the mid-50s. Seve innovative film movements emerged alongside the worldwide social turm of the 1960s and the 1970s: *cinema novo* in Brazil, New Wave in Iran, *ciné vérité* in the US, France and Canada, 'new German cinema' in West Germa and 'militant' and 'liberationist' cinema in many parts of the third worl
20. See 'Iran's film biz nipped in the bud', *art. cit.*; 'Sadha sinema dar baraba atash bi-defa'-and', *Kayhan*, 15 Shahrivar 1357/1978, p. 12; 'Iran theat to ban sex on their own', *Variety*, 23 May 1979, p. 7; '300 sinema-keshvar fa'aliat-e khod-ra az sar gereftand', *Kayhan*, 23 Tir 1358/197 p. 12. In 'Lots of mullah in Iran's show biz', *Variety*, 13 June 1979, p. Hazel Guild estimates that 40 per cent of cinemas were burned down. T figures quoted in *Kayhan* are official figures issued by the Society Theatre Owners.
21. After the Revolution, many film theatres were used for other purposes. F example, the sole cinema in Ferdows was turned into storage for hay, a one of the film theatres in Gorgan was converted into a prison. See 'Tabdi sinema be kahdani', *Iran Times*, 26 April 1985, p. 15; *Mojahed*, 13 D 1363/1985, p. 4.

22. When renaming was deemed insufficient, revolutionary zeal produced bizarre syncretic rituals. Rudaki Hall, a major cultural centre with a revolving stage, on which many performances had taken place during the Shah's era, was made literally to undergo ceremonial ablution (*ghosl*) in order to be fully cleansed, causing the stage mechanism to rust. See Gholam-Hoseyn Sa'edi, 'Namayesh dar hokumat-e namayeshi', *Alefba* [Paris] 5, new edition, Winter 1363/1984, p 7.
23. 'Moscow gets Tehran's Oscar', *Iran Times*, 2 April 1361/1982, p. 16.
24. 'Salshomar-e sinema-ye pas az enqelab 2', *Mahnameh-ye Sinema'i-ye Film* (henceforth *Mahnameh*) 6, Mehr 1362/1983, p. 43.
25. 'Sokhani kutah dar bareh-ye namayesh-e filmha-ye khareji', *Enqelab-e Eslami*, 13 Khordad 1359/1980, p. 6.
26. 'Yaddasht-ha'i bar mas'aleh-ye sinema-ha-ye darbasteh dar Iran', *Enqelab-e Eslami*, 10 Tir 1359/1980, p. 5.
27. 'Barrasi va rahyabi-ye moshgelat-e film va sinema', *Ettela'at*, 27 Farvardin 1360/1981, p. 10.
28. 'Farhang-koshi va farhang-zade'i dar Jomhuri-ye Eslami', *Alefba*, new edition, Winter 1361/1982, p. 7. For a translation of this piece see, 'Iran under the Party of God', *Index on Censorship* (1/1984), pp. 16–20.
29. See, 'Az vorud va kharid-e film-ha-ye khareji jelowgiri mishavad', *Ayandegan*, 17 Tir 1358/1979; 'Vorud va kharid-e filmha-ye khareji mamnu' shod', *Kayhan*, 18 Tir 1358/1979, p. 14; 'Iran's Islamic regime kicks out Bruce Lee & "imperialist" films', *Variety*, 18 July 1979, p. 2; 'Sinema-ye Iran dar rah-e tazeh', *Ettela'at*, 28 Esfand 1358/1980, p. 10; 'Dowlat varedat-e film-ha-ye khareji ra beh ohdeh migirad', *Ettela'at*, 20 Farvardin 1360/1981.
30. Unpublished internal document obtained by the author: *Marahel-e Mokhtalef-e Nezarat bar Sakht va Namayesh-e Film* (Tehran, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance), pp. 38–9.
31. 'Salshomar-e sinema-ye pas az enqelab 2', *art. cit.*, p. 42.
32. 'Iran theatres to ban sex on their own', *art. cit.*
33. 'Magic Marker cinema censor', *Iran Times*, 29 June 1979, p. 16.
34. 'Namayesh-e film-e bedun-e parvaneh dar sinemaha mamnu' shod', *Ettela'at*, 9 Esfand 1358/1980, p. 3.
35. Sources: *Marahel-e Mokhtalef*, pp. 38–9; 'Namayesh-e film-ha-ye Hendi va Torki mamnu' shod', *Ettela'at*, 27 Esfand 1358/1980, p. 10.
36. 'Salshomar-e sinema-ye pas az enqelab 2', *art. cit.*, p. 42; also, 'Salshomar-e sinema-ye pas az enqelab 5, 1359', *Mahnameh* 17, Mehr 1363/1984, p. 28. For films banned in 1979 see Mas'ud Mehrabi, *Tarikh-e Sinema-ye Iran az Aghaz ta 1357* (Tehran, *Mahnameh-ye Sinema'i-ye Film*, 1357/1978), p. 184. In 1989, Daryush Mehrju'i's *The Yard Behind Adl-e Afaq School (Hayat-e Poshti-ye Madraseh-ye Adl-e Afaq)* was re-titled *The School We Went to (Madrase'i keh Miraftim)* and released.
37. 'Sinema-ye Iran dar rah-e tazeh', *art. cit.*



38. For details of the maltreatment of entertainers and filmmakers under th Islamic Republic, see Hamid Naficy, 'The development of an Islamic cinem in Iran', in *Third World Affairs*, 1987, pp. 447–63.
39. 'Iran's film biz nipped in the bud', *art. cit.*
40. Author's interview with film producer Ali Mortazavi, August 1985, Lo Angeles, CA.
41. Author's telephone interview with Bahman Farmanara in Toronto, Canada July 1985. For an extended review of this film, see Hamid Naficy, 'Ta Shadows of the Wind', in *Magill's Survey of Cinema: Foreign Languag Films* (Los Angeles, Salem Press, 1985), pp. 3016–20.
42. 'Yek modir-e sinema beh etteham-e dayer kardan-e eshratkadeh bazdash shod', *Kayhan*, 10 Khordad 1358/1979, p. 5.
43. 'Ja-ye sinema dar "Barnameh-ye Panj Sal-e Avval" kojast?' *Mahnameh* Mehr 1362/1983, pp. 4–5.
44. 'Dah sinema-ye Tehran ta'til shod', *Ettela'at*, 29 Bahman 1358/1980, p. *Iranshahr*, 20 June 1980, p. 1; *Iranshahr*, 4 July 1980, p. 2; 'Sinemaha-y sarasar-e keshvar ta'til shod', *Kayhan-e Hava'i*, 2 July 1980, p. 8.
45. 'Karnameh-ye dowlat-e Jomhuri-ye Eslami dar zamineh-ye siasat-ha-y kolli-ye keshvar va arzesh-ha-ye hakem bar an', *Sorush* 252, 3 Shahriva 1363/1984, p. 22.
46. *Ettela'at*, 10 Bahman 1358/1980, p. 20.
47. 'Nameh-ye sargoshadeh-ye sinemagaran-e Iran beh mellat va dowlat included as a flier inside *Daftarha-ye Sinema* 4, Ordibehesht 1360/1981.
48. 'Degarguni dar zamineh-ye sinema, ba "dizolv" ettefaq mi'oftad nah b "kat"', *Mahnameh* 46, 1366/1987, p. 4.
49. All the regulations listed and discussed here are taken from *Marahel Mokhtalef*, pp. 40–9.
50. For example, the number of theatres nationwide grew from 198 in 197 to 277 in 1984; seating capacity in the same period increased fro 141,399 to 170,265. Likewise, attendance at theatres in Tehran rose fro 24 million in 1984 to nearly 28 million in 1986. For sources, see *Salname ye Amari-ye Sal-e 1360* (Tehran, Esfand, Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, 1361/1983 p. 203; *Iran dar A'ineh-ye Amar* (Tehran, Mordad, Markaz-e Amar-e Ira 1364/1985), p. 46; *A Selection of Iranian Films* (Tehran, FCF, 1987 p. 8. The attendance figure nationwide for 1984 topped 48 million. F sources, see Gholam Heydari, 'Javanan va sinema', *Mahnameh* 44, D 1365/1986, p. 6. Theatres were classified into four distinct categories: f example, in 1984, the 78 theatres in Tehran were rated as follows: were distinguished, 30 were first class, 17 were second class and 17 we third class. See Edareh-ye Koll-e Tahqiqat va Ravabet-e Sinema'i, *Sinem ye Iran 1358–1363* (Tehran, MCIG, 1984), pp. 37, 295.
51. Heydari, 'Javanan va sinema', p. 7.
52. Heydari's survey of students in Tehran in 1983 shows an audience preferen for action and war films: 45 per cent favoured 'revolutionary' films, 39 p

cent comedies, 32 per cent religious films, 32 per cent crime films and 10 per cent socially relevant films.

53. 'Iranian film biz revisited: lotsa U.S. cassettes, picture backlog', *Variety*, 4 June 1984, p. 2.
54. From the author's correspondence with the MCIG, 15 Tir 1364/1985.
55. 'Doshvari-ha-ye filmsazi dar sali keh gozasht', *Mahnameh* 23, Farvardin 1364/1985, pp. 5–7.
56. *Marahel-e Mokhtalef*, pp. 35–6.
57. For a list of these films, see Jamal Omid, *Farhang-e Film-ha-ye Sinema'i-ye Iran, Az 1351 ta 1366*, vol. 2 (Tehran, Entesharat-e Negah, 1366/1987), pp. 696–713.
58. 'Sansur az do negah', *Mahnameh* 76, Ordibehesht 1368/1989, pp. 10–11.
59. 'Green light to screenwriters', *Mahnameh* 66, Mordad 1367/1988, p. 1, English section.
60. 'Sinema-ye Iran 1358–1363', *Mahnameh* 18, Aban 1363/1984, pp. 293–4.
61. 'Poshtvaneh-ye ta'min-e ejtema'i va herfe'i-ye dast andarkaran-e sinema', *Mahnameh* 35, Farvardin 1365/1986, pp. 6–8.
62. 'Vam-e banki bara-ye filmsazan', *Mahnameh* 52, Mordad 1366/1987, p. 18; also 'Rahi besu-ye esteqlal-e eqtesadi-ye filmsazan', *Mahnameh* 60, Bahman 1366/1988, pp. 5–8.
63. 'Goruhbandi-ye film-ha-ye Irani va sinema-ha dar sal-e jari', *Mahnameh* 63, Ordibehesht 1367/1988, pp. 12–13; also 'Iranian films rated according to merit', *Mahnameh* 49, Ordibehesht 1366/1987, p. 1, English section.
64. 'New policies for a year of challenge', *Mahnameh* 77, Khordad 1368/1989, p. 1, English section.
65. 'Moruri bar vizhegi-ha-ye moshtarak-e film-ha-ye Irani-ye emsal', *Mahnameh* 79, Mordad 1368/1989, pp. 12–13.
66. From Ahmad Talebi-Nezhad, 'Raval-e kar dar nahad-ha-ye filmsazi-ye Iran', *Mahnameh* 53, Shahrivar 1366/1987, pp. 6–11.
67. Statistics for all years except 1986–8 are from 'Iranian cinema: a turning point', *Mahnameh* 41, Mehr 1367/1988, English section, pp. 1–2. Statistics for 1986–8 are from Omid, *Farhang-e Filmha*.
68. 'Bonyad-e Mostaz'afan miliard-ha dolar beh bank-ha bedehkar ast', *Iran Times*, 9 December 1983; 'Bonyad-e Mostaz'afan 45 miliard rial bedehi darad', *Iran Times*, 24 February 1984, p. 5.
69. 'Az ravayat va qesas-e Qor'an film-e sinema'i sakhteh mishavad', *Iran Times*, 29 July 1983, p. 5.
70. 'Zarar-e Mostaz'afan az kar-e sinema-ha', *Iran Times*, 18 May 1984, p. 13.
71. 'Videotapes of Iranian films for export', *Mahnameh* 49, Ordibehesht 1366/1987, p. 1, English section.
72. From a leaflet entitled 'Reconstruction Jehad – 1', put out in the early 1980s by the Moslem Student Association in the US and Canada. For more information on the ideology and operations of the Jehad, see the periodical *Jehad*, published in Tehran by the Jehad.
73. Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, *Salnameh-ye Amari-ye 1362* (Tehran, Vezara Barnameh va Budjeh, 1363/1984), p. 723.
74. Hamid Naficy, *Iran Media Index* (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1984), 190–220.
75. From Mas'ud Purmohammad, 'Ebteda sang-ha-ye kuchek', *Mahnameh* Khordad 1367/1988, p. 8.
76. Iraj Karimi, 'In Nakoja-Abad kojast?' *Mahnameh* 72, Dey 1367/19 pp. 52–4.
77. *Variety*, 16 August 1989.
78. 'Sarmaqaleh', *Faslnameh-ye Honar* 3, Spring–Summer 1362/1983, p. 1
79. 'Basij-e emkanat-e jang dar khedmat-e jang', *Mahnameh* 37, Khord 1365/1986, pp. 6–7.
80. 'How the war was reflected on screen', *Mahnameh* 72, Dey 1367/19 p. 1, English section.
81. 'Sinema-ye Iran va Hafteh-ye Jang', *Mahnameh* 5, Shahrivar 1362/19 pp. 4–5. For a similar analysis three years later, see 'Durbin dar jebheh posht-e jebheh', *Mahnameh* 41, Mehr 1365/1986, pp. 6–7.
82. *Marahel-e Mokhtalef*, pp. 40–9.
83. 'Goftogu ba Homa Rusta, bazigar-e film', *Mahnameh* 58, Dey 1366/19 p. 59.
84. Purmohammad, 'Ebteda sang-ha-ye kuchek', p. 8.
85. 'Honarpishegan-e zan az film hazf shodeh-and', *Kayhan* [London], September 1985, p. 11.
86. Based on lengthy interviews with a prominent Iranian actress who wis to remain anonymous.
87. 'Andar ahvalat-e filmi keh mojavvez-e shar'i nadasht', *Fowgholadeh* [ Angeles], Mehr 1364/1985, p. 16.
88. 'Zan dar donya-ye honar hashiyeh-neshin ast', *Zan-e Ruz*, 18 Esfa 1362/1983, p. 33.
89. 'Aramesh dar hozur-e Hemingway', *Mahnameh* 60, Bahman 1366/1988, p.
90. For example, in *The Weak Point* (Mohammad Reza Alami, 1983), the re tionship between a political activist and the security agent who captu him displays strong but deeply ambiguous and incommensurate sex undercurrents: the captive is treated as though he were a woman. The t engage in activities that are typical of the boy-meets-girl-falls-in-l formula films. They go to a park and play soccer with the kids, kicking ball back and forth to each other like two lovers; at the beach they sit side side and gaze at the horizon as a wild horse gallops by and an extradiege romantic music seals the scene in its romantic moment. During the cou of the film the roles are reversed, with the captive assuming the mascul position.
91. For detailed historical, critical and theoretical analysis of the representati of women in post-revolutionary cinema and their aesthetics and polit see my articles, 'Zan va "mas'aleh-ye zan" dar sinema-ye Iran ba'd

enqelab', *Nimeye Digar* 14, Spring 1991, pp. 123–69; 'Zan va neshanehshenasi-ye hejab va negah dar sinema-ye Iran', *Iran Nameh* 9/3 , Summer 1991, pp. 411–26; 'Veiled visions/powerful presences: women in postrevolutionary Iranian cinema', in Mahnaz Afkhami and Erika Friedl (eds), *In the Eye of the Storm: Women in Postrevolutionary Iran* (London, I.B. Tauris, and New York, Syracuse University Press, 1994) pp. 131–50.

92. The figures are for the first nine months of 1985. See 'Movafaqiyat-ha-ye eqtesadi va natayej-e keyfi'.
93. *Natayej-e Amargiri az Hazineh va Daramad-e Khanevar-ha-ye Shahri Sal-e 1362* (Tehran, Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, 1363/1984), chart 3.7.
94. Naficy, 'The development of an Islamic cinema', pp. 461–2.
95. Author's interview with Barbod Taheri, September 1985, Los Angeles, CA.
96. 'Sinema-ye pas az enqelab, dar aghaz-e dahe-ye dovvom', *Mahnameh* 75, Nowruz 1368/1989, p. 73.
97. 'Sinema jozv-e zendegi-ye mardom shodeh-ast', *Mahnameh* 48, Nowruz 1366/1987, p. 73.
98. 'Khamene'i ba sinema mokhalef ast va Rafsanjani ba an movafeq', *Kayhan* [London], 30 May 1985, p. 2.
99. 'Ma agar sinema-ra az ja-ye khodesh kharej konim digar sinema nakhahim dasht', *Kayhan Hava'i*, 24 October 1984, p. 15.
100. 'Nazar-e Emam Khomeini dar bareh-ye film-ha, serial-ha, ahang-ha, va pakhsh-e barnameh-ha-ye varzeshi e'lam shod', *Kayhan Hava'i*, 30 December 1987, p. 3.
101. Interview with the author, Tehran, August 1991.
102. Hamid Naficy, 'Cultural dynamics of Iranian post-revolutionary film periodicals', *Iranian Studies* 25/3–4, 1992, pp. 67–73.
103. Jalal Khosrowshahi (ed.), *Baztab-e Sinema-ye Novin-e Iran dar Jahan* (Tehran, Entesharat-e Ghazal, 1370/1991), pp. 28–31.
104. The Statistics are from Robin Wright, 'Losing faith', *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, 25 April 1993.
105. *Mahnameh* 172, April 1995, p. 15.
106. *Mahnameh* 174, June 1995, pp. 24–25.
107. In the late 1990s, these periodicals included: *Asr-e Honar*, *Donya-ye Tasvir*, *Farhang va Sinema*, *Faslnameh-ye Sinema'i-ye Farabi*, *Film International*, *Film va Sinema*, *Gozaresh-e Film*, *Mahnameh-ye Sinema'i-ye Film*, *Setareh-ha*, *Sinema*, *Sinema va Video* and *Tasvir-e Ruz*. Almost all other general-purpose periodicals, even specialized journals such as those devoted to sports and women's issues, carry regular articles about cinema.
108. Judith Miller, 'Movies of Iran struggle for acceptance', *The New York Times*, 19 July 1992, p. H9.
109. *Toronto International Festival of Festivals Catalog* (4 September 1992), p. 8.
110. The largest festival of Iranian films was 'Life and Art: the New Iranian Cinema', at London's National Film Theatre, which screened over 50 films from 20 directors during June and July, 1999.
111. *Iran Times*, 25 May 1994, p. 1.
112. *Kayhan Hava'i*, 26 April 1995, p. 23.
113. *Kayhan Hava'i*, 19 July 1995, p. 15; *Kayhan Hava'i*, 26 July 1995, p. 15
114. Scott Peterson, 'Reluctant nod to cultural shift: Iran eases ban on its ov films', *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 December 1997.
115. 'Iran's President would privatize big industries', *The New York Times*, September 1999, p. A13.
116. 'Sakht-e sad sinema ta payan-e emsal', *Mahnameh* 239, Shahriv 1378/August 1999, p. 27.
117. 'Between rocks and hard places: the interstitial mode of production in exi cinema', in Hamid Naficy (ed.), *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, a the Politics of Place* (London and New York, Routledge, 1999), pp. 125–4
118. Hamid Naficy, 'Identity politics and Iranian exile music videos', *Irani Studies* 31/1, Winter 1998, pp. 52–64.