PARDEH-KHANI A CONCEPTUAL MODEL
FOR IRANIAN NATIONAL CINEMA

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ABSTRACT

This research has proposed Iran's traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* as a suitable and applicable model for attaining a national cinema in this country; *Pardeh-khani* (pictorial storytelling) or *Parde-dari* is a kind of storytelling and minstrelsy with painted canvases that some scenes of epic, myth, moral and especially religious stories are painted on them. Mixture of speech and image in *Pardeh-khani* cause this kind of storytelling in the most popular and dramatic kind within Iran ancient arts. *Pardeh-khani* is very similar to modern art of cinema which served an analogous function in the past. Iran's cinema, despite producing decorated works and eye-catching successes in global festivals during its 110-years history (1900-2010), has not been able yet to gain its actual position and status. It has failed to become a national cinema having a unique identity. As a matter of fact, despite all cultural and artistic potentials and capabilities of ancient Iran's civilization and also presence of creative artists, Iran's cinema has not managed to possess a national style with an identity commensurate with culture and identity of this civilization.

By investigating different dimensions of this art that enjoyed remarkable popularity among Iranians along the history until a near past, this study attempts to render a theoretical and practical framework for national cinema in Iran.

ABSTRAKT

Kajian ini adalah mengenai kesenian tradisional Iran *Pardeh-khani* yang boleh dijadikan aplikasi model yang sesuai untuk mendapatkan pawagam bertaraf nasional di Negara ini. *Pardeh- khani* (bercerita melalui gambar) atau lebih dikenali sebagai *Parde-dari*, adalah sejenis konsep bercerita yang menggunakan gambar-gambar yang dilukis di atas kanvas yang memaparkan cerita epik, kemoralan dan keagamaan.

Disebabkan keunikan dari segi percakapan dan gambar, *Pardeh-khani* merupakan kaedah bercerita yang paling popular dan dramatic dalam seni Iran. *Pardeh-khani* sangat mirip kepada seni pawagam moden yang mempunyai fungsi yang sama pada masa yang lalu. Walaupun pawagam Iran menghasilkan karya yang dekoratif dan terkenal di festival-festival global pada 110 tahun bersejarahnya (1900-2010), ia masih belum mendapat statusnya. Ia telah gagal untuk menjadi pawagam nasional yang mempunyai identity yang unik. Dalam pada itu, walaupun terdapat kesenian dan unsure artistic serta potensi peradaban Iran dan artis kreatif, pawagam Iran masih belum mendapat unsure nasional dengan identity yang berteraskan kesenian dan identity peradabannya.

Dengan mengkaji dimensi yang berlainan berkenaan kesenian yang mendapat sambutan di kalangan warga Iran berserta dengan sejarahnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk memberi struktur theory dan praktikal untuk pawagam nasional di Iran.

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

Artistic and cultural accomplishments and achievements acquired over many years are indicative of the national and native identity of each civilization and culture. These concepts are influenced by dominating religious and moral aspects of that culture and civilization. It might be asserted that many artistic and cultural activities in countries particularly ancient civilizations and eastern societies, originated from and were inspired by social and religious rituals and customs. These elements could be sources of creating novel works commensurated with native culture and traditions if studied, investigated and applied by art and culture enthusiasts of any civilization. With the advent of technological arts and visual media in the West which seemingly intends to hegemonize and implement its own cultural domination, traditional arts and customs seem to be capable of playing a substantial and significant role in protecting cultural and traditional achievements of ancient and invaded societies in this cultural domination struggle (Arjomand 20). On the other hand, it seems that Modernism in the arts has led to a conclusion by some people that cultural integration is not only possible and desirable but also very tedious and even disappointing in many cases. Hence, the Post-modern school of thought unlike Modernist beliefs highly emphasizes maintaining cultural and artistic heritages of all nations and ethnicities (Akbarpour 26).

In terms of culture and art, human nature and experiences have also shown that beauty and attractiveness of art are not realized by unification and domination of a certain artistic and cultural style in the whole world, if that's even possible. Instead, these goals could be achieved by artistic and cultural diversity and variety. However, a majority of ancient and traditional societies especially developing countries have

unfortunately moved or are moving toward acceptance of the dominant western culture which benefits from combined power of technological facilities and achievements and modern media in the contemporary times (Arjomand 26). Such societies hold the opinion that the only way to attain progress and modernity is to follow the paradigm of predominant art and culture, and to ignore and leave aside their own artistic and cultural traditions and customs.

Cinema is one of the arts playing a fundamental and important role in the cultural influence in today's world and especially in countries with legacies of the ancient civilizations (e.g., Iran here). Cinema was invented in late 19th and early 20th century as a scientific phenomenon and also as a means of entertainment after the emergence and evolution of a set of inventions and technologies of previous centuries. Cinema succeeded in attracting the attention of many people in a short time, manifesting its peerless strength worldwide. Although initially considered merely an amusement and invention, cinema shortly exhibited its numerous capacities as a very influential art and medium that proposed a new form of idea expression. Thanks to extensive capabilities of cinema in creative use of other arts such as literature, drama and music for example, cinema managed to bear the impressiveness of all arts and hence to enjoy great strength and influence.

The first motion pictures were displayed on December 28, 1895 in Paris, costing some amount of money for those who were eager to watch these first picture films (Gregor and Patalas 11). What this suggests is that cinema could already prove its profitability and economic power from the very beginning. Cinema requires equipment and skilled experts, highly dependent on technology, and therefore regarded as an industry.

Rapid and profound influences of cinema enabling people to realize their dreams and ideals soon attracted and fascinated not only the artists and public masses

but also various politicians as well. Great contemporary politicians and dictators such as Hitler and Stalin via their paying attention to cinema can be considered a robust reason for the profound influence of this art to such an extent that politicians and political leaders interpreted cinema as the most important art and ideological tool (e.g.,Vladimir lenin). Cinema can be thought of as a transcendental art, a profitable industry, an ideological and a political weapon, and a powerful and versatile medium. However, not all of these attributes but only one suffices to spur all countries to employ this art-industry-medium for achieving cultural, artistic, political and even religious goals and ambitions.

Cinematography[1] was imported to Iran as a souvenir at the order of Mozaffareddin Shah[2] in 1900. Primarily, cinematography was exclusively used by Iranian royalty while the public did not have access to this entertainment (Mehrabi 15). In 1904 the first cinema hall was inaugurated by an Iranian merchant and libertarian enabling the public to get familiar with cinematography. Unlike the royal palace which normally showed films shot about a King's life or his favorite subjects (prepared by his special photographer), this first cinema hall for the Iranian people and the numerous subsequent halls displayed foreign movies. Iranians recognized cinema as foreign films. Although Iranian film-makers produced some native works (e.g., <u>Haji Agha Actor-e Cinema</u>, <u>Dokhter-e Lor</u>) with domestic topics and themes in the following years, foreign film producers and importers took any opportunity to monopolize the film market in Iran effectively asserting their dominance in this realm. Due to the presence of foreign movies from countries such as India, Egypt, France and the USA, Iranian viewers became accustomed to themes and storytelling styles and patterns of foreign films. In an attempt to attract Iranian viewers who became accustomed to foreign movies, domestic

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[1] . Cinematography, the art and technology of motion-picture photography. It involves such techniques as the general composition of a scene; the lighting of the set or location; the choice of cameras, lenses, filters, and film stock; the camera angle and movements; and the integration of any special effects.
20 Nov 2010 <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/118048/cin ematography >.

[2] . Mozaffaredin Shah was a Qajar king "who ascended to the throne in June 1896" (Basmenji 97).

producers and film-makers deliberately or unconsciously were compelled to imitate film-making styles and methods of imported movies so as to maintain a competitive place in the market.

Yet, Iran's cinema history suggests that not only did Iranian film-makers fail to attract viewers' attention but that Iran's cinema, despite numerous national and international successes, has not been able to provide a national or native cinema style so far. Taking a meticulous look at other countries that possess their own national and native cinemas, it can be understood that other countries have succeeded in achieving a specific cinema commensurate with their culture, art, and national identity through the paradigm of their own storytelling and dramatic traditions as well as their own cultures and ideologies. In other words, other countries have established their own national cinemas. Examples include cinema in Japan, India and China (Akbarpour 10).

Iran's cinema was hastily forced and influenced toward imitating foreign movies from the very beginning due to Iranian viewers' habits and preferences created via the narrative styles of foreign films. Iranian cinema failed to benefit from the country's rich cultural and artistic capacities and traditions and even fell short of making its own contribution to generations of this great art and invention. According to available documents and evidences, the "dark room" as the basis for the function of camera photography and cinematography was invented by a 10th century Iranian scientist named "İbn-i Heysem". In Deep Time of the Media, author Siegfried Zielinski states the significance of İbn-i Heysem's work: "İbn-i Heysem, as an originally Iranian imminent polymath of natural sciences, is the first person in the current millennium that depicted fundamentals of dark room in a methodological and clear way" (qtd. in Tabatabaie and Byanlo 87).

In this regard, the authors of Negahi Noo be Dirineh Shenasi-e Cinema dar Iran mentions: "İbn-i Heysem had methodologically and scientifically discovered and

expressed procedure of using dark room and the mechanism of picture formation in it, far long before prominent optic scientists in renaissance like Della Porta, Bacon, Vetilo, and Leonardo da Vinci. This achievement is specifically significant in technical evolution trend of cinema" (Tabatabai and Byanlo 162).

Additionally, the imaginary and entertaining tool called *Fanos-e Khial* [imaginary lantern] which had been used by Iranians as an amusement at least eight centuries ago is believed to be among the devices influencing the innovation of instruments leading to the invention of cinema. Tabatabaie and Bayanlou mention: "Henri Langlois, founder of Cinematheque Française, recalls the colorful imaginary lanterns with pity and remorse based on one of Khayyam's poetries. These lanterns served as entertaining and joyful devices in Iranian bazaars during 11th century. Today, no sample is remaining to decorate the cinema museum of Paris" (168).

Furthermore, thought and ideology in Iran's cultural and artistic traditions specifically the presence of the traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* [storytelling with pictures] is very analogous to modern cinema art. *Pardeh-khani* played a considerable role in quickly and effectively connecting Iranian viewers to cinema in the initial years. These Iranian traditions and innovations can provide us ways for taking steps to create a cinema based on Iranian society's requirements, commensurate with artistic and cultural achievements of Iran through analyzing the country's available traditional, cultural, and artistic potentials.

The current research intends to introduce the traditional art of *Pardeh-khani*, a pictorial storytelling art with many similarities to modern art of cinema. *Pardeh-khani* played a function in the past analogous to the modern art of cinema, and is a suitable and applicable model for achieving "national cinema" in Iran. This research proposes a theoretical and practical framework for reaching the goal of "national cinema" through

analyzing different aspects of *Pardeh-khani,* a traditional storytelling art which used to enjoy the remarkable attention of Iranian people up until a recent past.

1.1. The Concept of National Cinema

Various and sometimes ambiguous definitions of "national cinema" have been proposed by cinema researchers and critics. But this term seems to be a reaction to Hollywood cinema that aims to endorse domestic and native cinemas of different countries influenced by the American film industry. Despite apparent and understandable meanings, different and at times obscure definitions and comments about "national cinema" are encountered due to lexicological complexities of the two words, "cinema" and "national" or "nationality." In this respect, various experts and researchers such as Andrew Higson, JeoffreyNowell-Smith, Stephen Crofts, Michael Walsh, and Thomas Elsaesser have postulated their opinions about national cinema for example he says: " national cinema" makes sense only as a relation, not as an essence, being dependent on other kinds of film-making, to which it supplies the other side of the coin…A national cinema' functions as a subordinate term'. (qtd. in O' Regan 44) or as Tom O' Regan proposes that:

> National cinema is made of the films and film production industry of particular nations. National cinemas involve relations between, on the one hand, the national film texts and the national and international film industries and, on the other hand, their various social, political and cultural contexts. These supply a means of differentiating cinema product in domestic and international circulation. (O' Regan 1)

The result of these opinions can be roughly obtained via the writings of Jinhee Choi on "National Cinema." In this author's opinion, the most comprehensive definition is offered in"National Cinema in Very Idea." Choi presents three definitions or interpretations based on three different approaches to "national cinema."

I. Definition of national cinema with "regional approach"

Choi believes that considering the nation in which the cinema evolves or originates is the simplest way to identify the national cinema. In other words, national cinema represents the set of movies produced in aparticular country or nation-state. Choi states in this regard:

> Determining a national cinema according to its national origin seems to require at the very least one minimum condition: "territorial" boundaries. A national cinema is the product of activities and institutions within a nation-state. "National Cinema" construed in this way is used as an indexical term, referring to the totality of films that are produced within a nation-state. I call this approach the "territorial account." (Choi 311)

II. Definition of "national cinema" with applied (functional) approach

Choi introduced an applied or functional approach as the second option for defining national cinema: "A functional approach identifies instances of 'national cinema' based on what a film embodies at the level of text and how it functions within a nation-state" (311).This approach in the interpretation of "national cinema"indicates a response made by the cinema of a country via programs and intentional efforts of a government for preserving the domestic and native industry and art of cinema. Taking this approach, a cinema is actually formed if it almost stands against Hollywood as a global threat to cinemas of other countries. This definition of "national cinema" represents a cinema which is different from Hollywood and follows a specific function as deliberately planned and dictated by the governments.

III. Definition of "national cinema" with relational approach

Choialso advances a definition of "national cinema" with a relational approach as follows: "Relational approach to 'national cinema' does not conceive of national cinema as a means to an end: i.e., a vehicle to embody national identity or cultural heritage. A

national cinema's association with its national history or heritage is only one of the many ways in which a national cinema can assert itself" (314).Choi also holds the opinion that: "In order for a body of films to form a category of "national cinema" they should manifest common characteristics −narratively and/ or stylistically− that significantly depart from those of Hollywood and other national cinemas" (315).This concept of relational approach indicates a linkage of a country's cinema to its cultural and traditional heritage and achievements. If heritage and achievementsare used in film-making, movies can be created leading to distinctions of a "relational approach" cinema from other cinemas.

Choi believes that this "relational approach" to national cinema is more precise, more comprehensive, and more acceptable than two others mentioned above as"regional" and "functional." In Choi's view, the relational approach is the most effective option for analyzing national cinema. National cinema does not necessarily entail domestic productions of a country but instead is formed with the application of, for example, cultural heritage in the making of movies. The relationship of national cinema shall not be necessarily analyzed based on a causal relation, but should be viewed in terms of cultural heritage items used by filmmakers.

1.2. National Cinemas of Other Countries

After the invention of the cinema in 1895 in France it was very soon introduced to other countries of the world. In fact, the very showing of real life and everyday happenings in animated and live form on canvas was an unlikely and unexpected matter then that greatly appealed to the French audience. And owing to the welcoming reception by people and for economic reasons, the Lumière brothers sent out different groups to various cities and countries of the world in order to film and produce more movies on documentary happenings and diverse landscapes in the world (Vasey 53). The presence of Lumière shot groups in other countries actually made them and their culture familiar

with the phenomenon of cinema, which was introduced and spread out globally much earlier than thought. Ruth Vasey says:

> By the end of July 1896 they had carried the invention to London, Vienna, Madrid, Belgrade, New York, St Petersburg, and Bucharest, creating widespread interest with their cinematic revelations of both the exotic and the familiar. By the end of the year they had been around the world, introducing the phenomenon of cinema to Egypt, India, Japan, and Australia. (Vasey 53)

The rapid development of the cinema besides its many capabilities in attracting large audiences and its astonishing impact caused other countries to seek using this invention and powerful media. Since the invention of the cinema, some companies, especially French ones such as Pathe´, Gaumont, and E´clair produced technical equipment related to the cinema, therefore the grounds for movie productions and cinema formation in terms of techniques and facilities was prepared in other countries (Abel 112). For example, the first feature film in the world of more than an hour was produced not in France or the United States but in Australia, and the production of a feature film was made possible in 1912 in other countries including Austria, Hungary, Denmark, Germany, Japan, etc. (Vasey 53). But around 1910, a number of movie-making companies in the U.S. started their work in a small area of Hollywood in the suburbs of Los Angeles, and with careful planning in the field of production, distribution and circulation, they were able to establish a system through cooperation with each other that came to dominate not only the American cinema but also cinema around the world (Gomery 43). Hollywood very soon became a powerful center of film production and left behind its competitors, especially France, and brought the world market of movies and cinema under its influence and control (Vasey 54). Mass production, careful planning in distribution and broadcasting, and other factors

including the U.S. government's support of the cinema industry, particularly in the foreign section, as well as the outbreak of a world war caused Hollywood to control the film market and be regarded as a symbol in other countries. The dominance of Hollywood over the world cinema marginalized national cinemas of other countries, so the national cinemas of other countries took up a defensive stand against Hollywood. Therefore, the image of the national cinema has always meant non-Hollywood cinema and/or a cinema in opposition to it. This kind of cinema came into being especially in renowned countries whose cinemas had lost their cultural and economic impact in the face of Hollywood, and made the critics of these countries react against the dominance of the Hollywood cinema over their home cinemas and attempt to keep alive their internal cinemas. Ian Jarvie says:

> Yet early and vociferous calls for national cinema came from countries that were not emerging from a colonial past: Britain, Germany, France, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries…Yet these countries have fair claim to be creators and exporters of the modern world. (Jarvie 76)

But very soon Hollywood managed to impose its own filmmaking standards not only on the American and domestic audience, but also on a much broader scale, i.e. the international audience and many filmmakers and producers around the world. The success and fortune of Hollywood in attracting audiences all over the world resulted in the acceptance of professional and aesthetic standards and practices of this cinema as models and methods of success by numerous filmmakers and cinematographers worldwide. Higson says:

> By Hollywood, I mean the international institutionalization of certain standards and values of cinema, in terms of both audience expectation, professional ideologies and practices and the establishment of infrastructures of production, distribution, exhibition, and marketing, to

accommodate, regulate and reproduce these standards and values…Hollywood is not only the most internationally powerful cinema- it has also, of course, for many years been an integral and naturalized part of the national culture, or the popular imagination, of most countries in which cinema is an established entertainment form. In other words, Hollywood has become one of those cultural traditions which feed into the so-called national cinema of, for instance, the Western European nations. (Higson 38-39)

The presence of Hollywood in most places of the world has had cultural consequences in addition to economic impacts. This issue has brought about opposition and anti-American tendencies among cultural elites and various opposing governments. Higson says: "The concept of a national cinema has almost invariably been mobilized as a strategy of culture (and economic) resistance; a means of asserting national autonomy in the face of (usually) Hollywood's international domination" (Higson 37). This could be well seen in a comment made by Rosha, a Brazilian filmmaker, who says:

As far as cinema is concerned, it is very difficult to fight with the Americans because this country is controlling our cinema markets and colonizing our intellectual sensitivities. For this reason, we have to definitely fight against the influence of Hollywood -- we have to found a national cinema and improve it so that it can fight with the colonial cinema of Hollywood. (Shafa 91)

In fact, many of the world's cultural elites and especially the world's filmmakers were interested in seeing a picture of their own cultures and countries in the cinema, and viewing the cinema as a reflection of their own lives. In this respect, Dhundiraj Govind (Dadasaheb) Phalke, Indian filmmaker, introduced as pioneer of the Indian cinema industry, says:

While the *Life of Christ* was rolling fast before my eyes I was mentally visualizing the gods, Shri Krishna, Shri Ramchandra, their Gokul and Ayodhya… Could we, the sons of India, ever be able to see Indian images on the screen?' (qtd. in Rajadhyakshasha 402)

Phalke stressed that: "My films are Swadeshi in the sense that the capital, ownership, employees and stories are Swadeshi" (qtd. in Rajadhyakshasha 402). In these situations, a lot of filmmakers came to the conclusion that the only way to maintain and introduce their own national cinemas in the face of the power and domination of Hollywood, was to underline the differences between their country's cinema and that of Hollywood. In this respect, Susan Hayward says: "Traditionally the 'national' of a cinema is defined in terms of its difference from other cinemas of other nations, primarily in terms of its difference from the cinema of the United States (i.e., Hollywood)" (Hayward 8). As a result, one of the prominent indicators of the national cinemas of various countries is the use of topics and styles that differ from the practices and standards common in the classic Hollywood cinema (not only from the cultural and aesthetic, but especially from a commercial point of view). Erich Pommer's remarks, the producer of most German expressionist movies, are worth mentioning. When asked why the film industry of Germany turned to expressionist film making, he replied:

The German film industry made stylized films to make money … Germany was defeated; how could she make films that would compete with the others? It would have been impossible to try to imitate Hollywood or the French. So we tried something new: the expressionist or stylized films. (qtd. in Choi 315)

As mentioned earlier, Susan Hayward believes that one of the important features of national cinemas is the stylistic and thematic difference from the Hollywood cinema, however limited. In her book French National Cinema the first of a series of

national cinemas of several countries (Australia, UK, Germany, etc.) under her own supervision, she proposed seven types of signs of the national cinema for the first time. She says:

> Notionally, but without being exhaustive, there are seven discernible typologies that will assist in the enunciation of the 'national' of a cinema… It is, however, important to make the point that, while these typologies will work, by and large, for some national cinemas, they will not for others. The seven typologies are as follows:
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> I. Narratives;
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> II. Genres;
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> III. Codes and conventions;
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> IV. Gesturality and morphology;
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> V. The star as a sign;
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> VI. Cinema of the centre and cinema of the periphery;
>
> VII. Cinema as the mobiliser of a nation's myths. (Hayward, *French* 8)

Susan Hayward explains each of these signs in any national cinema, which could be the basis of recognizing a national cinema in a country.

I. Narrative

Perhaps the first signs of the national cinema of a country are local and national subjects and narratives selected and used by filmmakers. In fact, if the national narratives arising from the written or oral literature of a nation are continually and intelligently used in a cinema, they can be one of the defining factors of that particular country's national cinema. Each nation introduces and expressed itself by the narratives and myths of its native culture (Hayward, *French* 9). Therefore, since each nation has its own culture and worldview which are reflected in its narratives, one of the features of a country's national cinema is the kind of narratives reflected. For example, the national cinemas of

India, China, and Japan are good examples in this regard. Susan Hayward considers the kind of narratives as the first sign of a national cinema and mentions:

> It is in its specificity, therefore, that a filmic narrative can be perceived as a reflection of the nation. This reflexivity can occur in two ways (at least), neither one of which excludes the other. First, the filmic narrative can be based on a literary adaptation of an indigenous text. In this respect, reflexivity operates by virtue of a reinscription of one existing cultural artefact into a filmic text. In this mode, the film, in transposing an indigenous text, offers up a double nation-narration, the text it refers to and its own filmic text. Literature (narration one) is on screen (narration two) confirming the natural heritage (the nation). Implicit films are closer to the myth construction of a nation (as opposed to myth-reinforcement) since their narratives function on a more connotative level. The nation is implicitly present and in this respect this category of films can be either propagandist in their narrative or subversive. (Hayward, *French* 9)

II. Genre

Another sign and way of recognizing the national cinemas, as pointed out by Heyward, is genre. Usually in any national cinema, according to the needs as well as cultural grounds in a territory, a specific genre is more appealed to. Rick Altman considers three main functions for genre indicating the central role of genre in any national cinema. He says:

> A. Production: the generic concept provides a template for production decisions. As a form of tacit knowledge, it presents a privileged mode of communication among members of the production team.

B. Distribution: the generic concept offers a fundamental method of product differentiation, thus constituting a shorthand mode of communication between producer and distributor or between distributor and exhibitor.

C. Consumption: the generic concept describes standard patterns of spectator involvement. As such, it facilitates communication between the exhibitor and the audience, or among audience members. (Altman 276)

From Altman's point of view, the movies in a genre are produced by evolved film industries or large industries which had a national or regional audience in the first place and had founded a national cinema in their countries, such as the film industries of China and India (Altman 277). Therefore, the dominant genre in a country can represent the national cinema, for example, the melodrama genre in India, westerns in Italy, anime in Japan, or comedy in the national cinema of France. In this respect, Susan Hayward says:

There are filmic modalities which are specific to particular nation and in France's case the first dominant generic mode in the history of its cinema … is the comedy film which goes back to its earliest cinema and often makes up half of the industry's output. (Hayward, *French* 10)

 III. Codes and Conventions

Codes and Conventions of production are two important factors in every national cinema. In fact, production practices, guidelines and rules in every country have a great impact on the national cinema industry determining the orientation of that cinema. The laws of domestic investment and foreign partnerships, position of the national cinema in the nation's cinema industry and the percentage of presence of other cinemas and competition with the domestic cinema, the government's support policies of domestic products, national iconography, etc. are among the items that affect the growth and

expansion of a national cinema. For example, Tom O'Regan explains the formation of Australia's national cinema as follows:

> Film-making and film industry policy sustains both kinds of national definitions. The agitators for the Australian cinema in the 1960s and early 1970s sought national political support for the Australian cinema as a national cultural institution concerned with identity and self-expression-'dreaming our own dreams, telling our own stories.' A measure of a self-respecting mature nation was the possession of a national cinema. (O' Regan 63)

Many of the national cinemas around the world enjoy the cultural support of their governments for productions, especially high cost productions, and this support, is actually due to supporting the national cinema against Hollywood. Such governmental assistance is usually provided for the production of movies based on a number of rules and conditions, and is usually awarded by the cultural and cinematic sectors of a government to support the domestic cinema industry. O' Regan says:

> In Australia's case, the project of a national cinema in the multifaceted sense advanced so far did not emerge until 1969, well after Hollywood had consolidated its international reach and control over the Australian market. At that point, formative government assistance was put into place and an Australian national cinema became a project capable of enlisting a large array of local and international actors—politicians, arts bureaucrats, voters, critics, audiences, film-makers. (O' Regan 46)

Also, for instance in Iran, after the Islamic revolution, movies with religious content or meaning-oriented or that defend the country against enemies would enjoy banking facilities and government grant-in-aids. Other times, different topics are

supported too. But the problem arising in terms of production practices has to do with making foreign-funded or joint movies. In this respect, Susan Hayward says:

> Then there is the thorny problem of co-productions, which raises, more fulsomely than any other type of production, questions of ownership (if it is more than 50 per cent financed by the French, if the film-maker is French, if the cast is mostly French, etc., is it a French product?). However, because co-productions have figured heavily at times in France's output (the 1920s, mid to late 1950s and early 1970s especially) and because nowadays co-productions are not just limited to the international field but can receive direct investment from television channels (French and otherwise), it is unlikely that the issue of how to address them will be resolved. (Hayward, *French* 11)

But the rules and guidelines still remain problematic issues in the national cinema. For example, the question of how to make a picture of the nation by the national cinema of a country is witnessing a great deal of unsolvable debates. Susan Hayward too says:

> With regard to the iconography of the image, there are two questions to be addressed. How does the representation of the nation (through the image) carve up and/or construct the nation? And what problems does this representation engender? In other words, what is represented and what is left out? Who or what remains un-visible? As can be seen, the iconography of the image generates a series of binary paradigms of which the very first is absence/presence. The effect of this precise duopoly is to make possible a homogenized and conciliatory myth of the national context… All national cinemas, therefore, are affected by this same problematic of hegemonic transparence, but in each instance the

iconographic codes and conventions remain specific to the cultural patrimony. (Hayward, *French* 11)

IV. Gesturality and morphology

Another sign of the national cinema can be found in the type of acting and gestures of actors of that cinema. In fact, any national cinema, in line with its own culture, presents certain types of acting ways, representing the particular cinema of that country. Susan Hayward in this regard says:

> The gesturality and morphology of the body, gestures, words, intonations, attitudes, postures – all of these separate and thus affirm the plurality of cultures. Indeed, it could be argued that the gestural codes, even more so than the narrative codes, are deeply rooted in a nation's culture. Thus, when analysing the nation's cinema, traditions of performance must also be brought into consideration as a further marker of this differentiation and specificity. (Hayward, *French* 12)

For instance in Hong Kong's cinema, Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung's acting style is influenced by their training in the Beijing opera; their performance is perceived from a Western perspective as a distinctly Chinese Kung Fu (Chu 74).

V. The star as sign

The stars are one of the most important landmarks and way of recognizing the national cinema of a country. Still a lot of spectators around the world recognize movies based on the stars (like Iran) and in fact, it is the famous stars that attract audiences to the cinema. However, this issue is actually the result of the star-making system, and Hollywood's advertising strategies, yet today, the cinema stars of each country are commonly referred to as heroes and saviors of that country and sometimes embody the its social issues too. In this respect, even their physical attributes become significant (King 172). In addition, cinema stars represent a country's cinema, and function as a

symbol of the country's culture. For example, Bruce Lee represents the national cinema of Hong Kong, or the famous film comedian Max Linder, the French national cinema, or Amitabh Bachchan and Shahrukh Khan, the Indian cinema. Actually, national cinema stars are deemed national and cultural signifiers of that country. In this respect, Chu says: "Like star images in other national cinemas, Hong Kong film stars represent the local community in two major ways: their images on screen, and their 'life dramas' being produced by other popular media "(Chu 74).

VI. Cinema of the centre and cinema of the periphery

Susan Hayward believes there is a marginal cinema beside the central or main cinema of a country and no single cinema can be introduced for each country, but there are peripheral cinemas alongside the central cinema. In this regard, she says:

> However, cinema does not just standardize. Cinema also particularizes. The technology may be uniform, but national specificities will emerge, through editing style for example, or in the way a narrative is narrated. The peripheral production practices therefore operate outside of technology. (Hayward, *French* 13)

Hayward also believes that different cinemas in a country are one way of understanding the country's National Theater and in fact the variety of cinemas in a country can represent the characteristics of the National Theater of that country. It indicates that the National Theater is not confined to one practice or specific characteristics. In this regard, she says:

> This typology helps to make the point that there is no single cinema that is the national cinema, but several. It thereby puts an end to the dangers of historicism that identify a national cinema with specific movements or directors and suggests, rather, that there is flux, slippage even, between the various cinemas which constitute the nation's cinema. This typology

also suggests that discourses around a national cinema no longer need address cinema in an exclusive way such as, for example, defining it as the work of pioneers alone or as an ideological institution.These are some of the discourses, but they are just some among others. (*French* 14)

VII. Cinema as the mobiliser of the nation's myths

The cinema, as a powerful art and media is able to rebuild and represent the national myths of any country. It also has the power to depict a historical and mythical image of the nation and create a national identity among people. Therefore, many countries at different times have taken advantage of the cinema to express their history, culture, and national identity (a classic example of this is the movie *The Birth of a Nation* by D. W. Griffith). As a result, addressing the national myths as well as providing historical and idealistic image of a nation is one of the most important tasks and functions of the national cinema. Hayward believes that:

> Filmic narration calls upon the available discourses and myths of its own culture. It is evident that these cultural, nationalistic myths are not pure and simple reflections of history, but a transformation of history. Thus, they work to construct a specific way of perceiving the nation. (Haywar, *French* 15)

1.3. Problem Statement

Iran's cinema, despite producing prominent works and eye-catching successes in global festivals during its 110-year history, has been unable to gain a recognized and established position of its own in the world cinema. Iran's cinema has failed to become a "national cinema" with its own unique identity. Despite all the cultural and artistic potentials and capabilities of ancient Iranian civilization and the presence of creative artists, Iran's cinema has not attained a national style with an identity commensurate

with culture and identity of Iranian civilization. Domestic and international successes primarily originate via the individual cinema skills and genius of Iranian directors, and are not created by a perpetual and structurally deep-seated and organized trend. Jalali, comments in this regard:

> The prospect of our cinema is devoid of components of Iranian-Islamic culture and native, regional, and rational traditions of Iranian identity. Paucity of Iranian components is obvious, especially [weakness] in knowledge and rationality. Iranian mythology, cosmology, mysticism, moralities, and literature are seldom observed. Our filmmakers are not generally concerned with these apprehensions and their serious knowledge is limited to theatrical scopes and proficiency of cinema as a medium; they do not follow certain ontological objectives. (Jalali 233)

Evidently, the failure in creating a national cinema results from applying non-domestic and foreign storytelling and aesthetic patterns. Although Iran cinema has produced brilliant and gorgeous films in recent decades but it has failed to construct narrative patterns and relevant theories that are indicative of the identity and ideology of Iranian people. Theories and patterns of Iran cinema are not founded on domestic philosophy and ideology but are interpretations of methods and narrations of western movies and, in particular, an imitation of Hollywood films. Iranian films were also influenced by Indian cinema due to an abundance of cultural commonalities and similarities (Arjomand 22). No efforts have been made to build a cinema commensurate with domestic philosophical, cultural, and intellectual capacities. It must be said that Iran's cinema has worked in a close loop not effectively and mutually interacting with the sciences of humanities such as sociology, philosophy, literature, religion, nor with native and national arts. Iran cinema has benefitted from these cultural and artistic

sciences and knowledge only superficially and temporarily. This disjuncture seems to separate Iran's cinema from the core of society leading to its recession.

On the other hand, Hollywood cinema has extensively influenced people around the world attracting many audiences thanks to its technical and technological facilities, media and advertising power, and most importantly, financial ability to produce costly movies on a large scale. Hollywood has greatly impressed not only Iranian viewers and cinema-fanciers but also film-makers, particularly the new generation due to unfamiliarity with their own Iranian traditions and artistic-cultural background (Arjomand 23). For these reasons, Iran's cinema production and industry has been immensely affected by Hollywood leading to the evolution of a culturally inefficient and economically bankrupt cinema because the cultural themes or paradigms of Hollywood as well as Indian Bollywood movies also observed in Iranian cinema, are not acceptable for captivating Iranian audiences. In other words, because financial support of Iran's cinema in terms of facilities and film-producing strength is not comparable to that of Hollywood, Indian or Chinese cinemas. The film-making and storytelling styles impressed by the aforementioned cinemas turn out to be poor and valueless for Iranian society. Furthermore, such films have not been publicly welcomed since a majority of the Iranian population are Muslims loyal to their religious beliefs and rites. In a way or the other, this confronts Iran's public cinema and results in a crisis where Iranian cinema does not enjoy the audience favor, in turn threatening the domestic cinema industry with the likelihood of its recession, and even demise.

1.4. Theory

The present research is based on the "cinema adaptation" theory of Bela Balazs, one of the theorists of cinema's history. Balazs states in his book <u>Theory of the Film</u> that: "If a filmmaker, who resorts to another artistic work for finding the theme, transforms that

theme through 'form-language', s/he has made no mistake in his/her career" (qtd. in Andrew 152). Bela Balazs believes that this cinema adaptation is possible via what he terms "raw material" or the type of styling. Regarding the adaptation of theme or content, Balazs holds the opinion that: "It is an accepted practice that we adapt novels and plays for the film; sometimes because we think their stories 'filmic'. Sometimes because the popularity they have gained as novels or plays is to be exploited in the film market" (Balazs 258). He Balazs adds: "Hence, if there is a 'dramatic' theme or subject which appears specific because it already shows the peculiar characteristics of the dramatic art form, then it is already content (which really determines the form it can take) and no longer mere "material" (Balazs 261). Concerning the use of artworks: "If an artist can live and express in his works, as his own subjective experience, this historical tradition transformed into objective phenomena, the result will be that happiest of coincidence" (Balazs 273).

Balazs also believes that ethnic and traditional artistic styles provide suitable context and paradigms to be used in cinema. "If, however, the artist is a true artist and not a botcher, the dramatist dramatizing a novel or a film-script writer adapting a play may use the existing work of art merely as raw material, regard it from the specific angle of his own art form as if it were raw reality, and pay no attention to the form once already given to the material" (Balazs 263). In the same respect, Balazs mentions an example of using and benefiting from ancient and ethnic styles in the modern era:

> And yet such strange things are happening now among the national minorities in the Soviet Union. The most surprising and striking evidence of this are the products of Central Asia folk poetry. But the same can be observed in the films made by the people of Soviet Asia, in the interesting productions of the Kazakhstan, Tashkent, Uzbek, Turkmen film studios… something that is almost a miracle has happened in our

days in Soviet Asia, something that in the future may have a decisive influence on western art. Modern life has been presented in the style of a folk art which has an ancient tradition and is nevertheless still alive today. (Balazs 247)

1.5. Significance of Research

The idea of achieving a "national cinema" and a specific cinema identity in Iran was initiated a decade ago. The necessity and significance of Iran cinema have been taken under consideration in recent years. Iran's cinema experts and analysts (e.g. Farassati and Jaeferey-e Jelveh) have made different commentaries and film-makers have produced various films with this intention. However, none of these attempts have managed to place Iranian cinema in its proper position with suitable theoretical and practical basis because these attempts were based on styles and paradigms of western films, those imported from Hollywood, Bollywood, and cinemas of other countries.

If Iranian film-makers and experts had paid attention to their own cultural possessions and achievements, i.e. national and traditional arts instead of relying on imported styles, they would have undoubtedly attained more valuable and applicable accomplishments. Among Iran's ancient and traditional arts, *Pardeh-khani* is the only pictorial storytelling art in Iran and even in the Islamic, Shiite world. *Pardeh-khani* largely resembles the cinema with an analogous function and performance to cinema, in Iran's past. However, *Pardeh-khani* has lost its historical status among Iranian people as a traditional art and is deteriorating consigned to oblivion due to the dominance of cinema halls. Thus, it is vitally important to study and investigate this Iranian art with an artistic life for several centuries tightly linked to the identity of its audiences. Visual, narrative features and capacities as well as principles and basis of this art can be explained through its application to cinema. Furthermore, these features and capacities

can be discovered and utilized for creating a "national cinema" in Iran. Consequently, the significance of this research is as follows:

I. The current research introduces the Iranian people's pictorial (visual) and narrative patterns along with favorite themes tested and crystallized over the centuries toward achieving a national cinema in Iran. The present research contends that due to structural and functional similarities between *Pardeh-khani* and cinema arts, the achievements and experiences of this traditional art can be used as a basis for producing structural and productive theories and fundamentals toward constructing Iran's national cinema.

II. The significance and necessity of the research lays in the idea that artistic achievements of a traditional art as cultural heritage are not forgotten but transferred and revived into a novel and modern framework.

III. Through the current research, Iran's traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* is historically and structurally investigated with the introduction of a new image and presentation of its structural features. This is crucial because *Pardeh-khani* has not been rigorously analyzed so far. This research vitalizes *Pardeh-khani* so as not to be forgotten.

V. The current study and its achievements will serve as a model research for other researchers in bringing their attention to similar and convergent themes. This research can be used as a suitable model for achieving Iranian national and native cinema, and as a model for other countries that have analogous traditional arts.

1.6. Objectives of Research

The major objective of this study is to analyze and outline the narrative, visual, and dramatic features and patterns of the Iranian traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* as a unique and peerless cultural heritage. This study intends to highlight the point that the tradition, capacities and potentials of *Pardeh-Khani* (i.e., themes and style) can be selected, adapted and utilized by Iranian filmmakers as a model and paradigm in a set of cinema

works. This study also attempts to show that this set of cinema works will be different from Hollywood movies and those of other "national cinemas," and will represent Iran's "national cinema" in terms of its own structure and content. The current research follows along these objectives:

I.To introduce Pardeh-khani as a traditional art in Iran

II.To Justify the terms by which Pardeh-khani can be an appropriate model for national cinema

III.To characterize the nature of Pardeh-khani as a cinema

IV. To set new ways of looking at the traditional arts that may help researchers to linke it to modern arts

V. To provide context and circumstance that may help to boost the growth of cinema industry in Iran

1.7. Research Questions

I. Why does Iran need "national cinema?"

II. Why can traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* be used as a model for "national cinema" in Iran?

III. How can the traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* serve as a model for "national cinema" in Iran?

1.8. Hypothesis

I. National cinema in Iran can be realized only when Iranian filmmakers refer to native and national cultural heritage and achievements therefore benefitting from their own artistic and cultural traditions.

II. The ancient and traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* is a suitable model for "national cinema" in Iran due to abundant structural and functional similarities with cinema and because of its unique and peerless cultural and artistic characteristics and achievements.

III. Deep-rooted familiarity of Iranians with *Pardeh-khani* and numerous similarities of this traditional and sacred art with the modern art of cinema will cause the Iranian audience to respect cinema as a sacred art, whereby Iranians can consider the act of going to cinema as a kind of religious practice. This will guarantee cultural, economic and a religious survival of Iranian "national cinema."

IV. Cultural and artistic backgrounds can serve as an important source of inspiration for artful creations. Accordingly, making use of artistic achievements and cultural heritage via film-making will be influential and applicable for configuring a specific and "national cinema."

V. The numerous similarities between *Pardeh-khani* and cinema can suggest the art of cinema as "technological *Pardeh-khani*" by employing cultural, artistic, and functional achievements of this traditional art in the modern art of cinema. *Pardeh-khani* is the suitable model for Iran's native and "national cinema."

1.9. Scope of Research

Since the present research intends to introduce Iran's art of *Pardeh-khani* as a model and pattern for Iranian "national cinema", the scope of this study is limited to analyzing and depicting narrative, visual and dramatic achievements and patterns of Iran's traditional art of *Pardeh-khani*. The present research is commensurate with Bela Balazs's theory of "cinema adaptation" along with the "relational" interpretation approach proposed by Jinhee Choi's conceptualization of national cinema.

The research will study the traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* as an artistic phenomenon and will introduce the cultural and identity heritage of this uniquely featured art as a model and paradigm that can be utilized by Iranian filmmakers. The accomplishments of this art have been gained over many centuries and welcomed by Iranian people across the country. As long as these elements and features are applied in a collection of cinema

works, a specific cinema will be achieved that is different and distinguishable from Hollywood and other national cinemas. The current research focuses on *Pardeh-khani* as a model for national cinema in Iran.

1.10. Research Methodology

This researcher brings two decades of filmmaking experience and achievements in Iran. Including having earned B.A and M.A degrees in cinema studies, great appreciation of Iran's traditional arts orients this researcher to the notion that identity, artistic, and cultural potentials of *Pardeh-khani* can be introduced as a suitable model and paradigm for Iran's national cinema through the research. Thus, taking into account the kinds of questions and objectives of this research, the researcher utilizes Case Study (itemized research) method, a qualitative research approach as the most appropriate for the current work because the Case Study method enables the researcher to collect the required information from different sources and to acquire a comprehensive and further insight into an understudied subject. Regarding the characteristic of this type of research, Yin (as qtd. in Groat) states that "the case study strategy implies much more than studying a phenomenon 'in the field'. Rather, it involves studying a case in relation to the complex dynamics with which it intersects" (Groat 347).

Since Iran's *Pardeh-khani* has not been yet researched properly, the itemized research method responds to all requirements of the present study while taking into account the hypotheses and objectives of the research and its explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory nature. The Case Study method is able to meet requirements of a descriptive and exploratory study in addition to being depictive like experimental research (Yin 10).

As mentioned before, one of the characteristics of this method is the possibility of taking advantage of various data collection tools that can enhance and validate

research results manifesting all capacities of the subject. The current research has collected the needed research information using conventional tools and techniques of data collection in case study research procedures. The data resources include the following:

I. Document or Library Study

Document studies is one of the data collection methods used in the current research. Taking notes from texts and references this research is a type of "library study." Iran's *Pardeh-khani* has not been precisely and thoroughly studied with scattered and incoherent information available via different sources such as historical and arts books, papers, and academic dissertations. The author first identified all relevant references and specified their accessible locations with meticulous note taking and dissection of texts related to *Pardeh-khani*. Historical and artistic references and books related to *Pardeh-khani* were the primary sources of study which led to a rigorous historical insight and impression of *Pardeh-khani* art. The researcher charted the chronological trend of this art throughout Iran's history, yielding a clear image of the respective art based on library references and documents. The next step involved looking through technical books and journals related to Iran's traditional and dramatic arts. After collecting data from available resources, notes that were under-investigated were studied again and categorized. Based on these re-arranged data, conclusions were than made.

II. Direct Observation

The method of direct observation is another data collection technique used in the present study. Through this method, the researcher investigates *Pardeh-khani* by personally attending *Pardeh-khani* sessions. Taking into account that *Pardeh-khani* is a hybrid art composed of drama, painting, and narrative, the researcher developed four major indices of this technique for data collection:

A. **Spatial Parameter** investigation of the characteristics of performance locations of *Pardeh-khani*.

B. **Gestural Parameter** as the investigation of theatrical and motional styles of the story-teller called *Pardeh-khan* during the action of narrating the story and introducing himself.

C. **Linguistic Parameter** which analyzing and focusing on content and narrative style selected by the story-teller for his performance.

D. **Extra- Linguistic Parameter** which is the analysis of expressive and verbal styles of the storyteller.

This method is significant in providing opportunities for the researcher to closely and directly observe and study this art. New information acquired by this method will create a clearer image and insight of *Pardeh-khani*, resulting in a better understanding of the subject and confirmation of information gained through document and library study.

III. Participant Observation

Since *Pardeh-khani* is realized by the presence of an audience, the attendance of viewers at performances is an inseparable part of *Pardeh-khani*. Thus, the researcher's attendance at *Pardeh-khani* sessions is regarded as a kind of collaborative observation as well as a direct observation. In participant observation, the researcher as an audience, like other audiences, takes part in the performance of this art. Involvement in this collective participation also provides audiences of *Pardeh-khani* with an opportunity for collecting new information for more precise assessments of this art.

IV. Interview

Interviewing is another technique used in the current research. Parts of the information gathered on *Pardeh-khani* and *Pardeh-khans* are acquired through interviews with

Pardeh-khans, experts and viewers of Iranian traditional and ritual dramas. Informal (open) and phone interviews were used in the current research. Most of interviews were conducted done by phone due to the lack of access to experts and the *Pardeh-khans*. Participating in interviews was performed voluntarily, i.e., the interviewed persons agreed to answer the researcher's questions. This data collection tool provides the researcher with additional information complementing other data gathered via document or library study and participant observation methods.

V. Content Analysis

The major crux of information needed for the research was obtained through structural and content analysis and investigation of *Pardeh-khani* art based on qualitative assessment. Accordingly, since *Pardeh-khani* consists of three main arts namely painting, narrative, and acting, all these three elements are individually analyzed in the context of and in connection to the major art (*Pardeh-khani*). The procedures are as follows:

A. Analysis of painting in *Pardeh-khani*: For the analysis of painting, *Pardehs* (canvases) of *Pardeh-khani* that are public and famous, were selected and analyzed in for structure and content. Understudied cases include "Battle of Rostam and Sohrab" from <u>Shahnameh</u>[3] and "Battle of Mared Ibn Sadif and Abolfazl," along with "Karbal Desert Event."[4] The investigation is qualitative and incorporates analysis of composition, color combination, design style, and content.

B. Analysis of story and narration in *Pardeh-khani*: three methods are used for analyzing and investigating story and narration in *Pardeh-khani* art:

 1. Analyzing *Tomar* [scrolls] of *Pardeh-khans*

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[3] .The Shahnameh (book of kings) of Ferdowsi (940-ca.1020) overshadows all works in this category…The Shahnameh begins with a Zoroastrian cosmogony and ignores the Quranic account of the creation of the world and man. The earliest myths treated clearly go back to prehistory; they have parallels with Indo-European myths in other traditions, and they must in origin predate the arrival from central Asia of the Iranian in Iran toward the end of second millennium, BCE (Meri 232).
[4] .Husayn Ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet [Muhammad] was killed in the desert of Karbala in IRAQ by the Umayyad caliph Yazid's (r. 680-683) forces. This event has come to symbolize in sacred history and ritual (Campo 67).

2. Analysis of the books <u>Meshkin-nameh</u> and <u>Shenakht-e Asatir-e Iran Bar Asas-e Tomar-e Naghalan</u>. These are the only books in which narration and *Pardeh-khani* scrolls have been collected and published, considered invaluable resources for this research.

3. Analysis of video documentations of *Pardeh-khani* sessions. Understudied videos pertain to available selected works in the archive of Iran's traditional drama arts center.

C. Analysis of acting styles and dramatic movements of *Pardeh-khans*, carried out through analysis of movies produced from *Pardeh-khani* sessions and based on information acquired from interviews and papers.

1.11. Literature Review

Taking into account the theory and objective of this research toward using patterns and achievements of the traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* in the modern art of cinema in Iran, the literature review is divided in two main parts;

I. Historical research background about Iran's *Pardeh-khani* as a traditional art.

II. Iran's cinema as a modern art.

The following literature references were selected based on each source's relevance to the theoretical framework and objectives of the current research.

I. Pardeh-khani

Although *Pardeh-khani* is an ancient and deep-rooted art in Iran, no thorough and independent research has been carried out in this regard. The main reason for this oversight is that foreign and domestic researchers paid too much attention to *Tazieh*[5] and because *Pardeh-khani* as a popular and folklore art received less government

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[5] .The Tazieh was a cycle of Shiite passion plays recounting the martyrdom of Hussein Karbala. The play came out of a mourning ritual conducted in special building called *takieh khanas* (Ansary 187).

attention and review as opposed to *Tazieh* supported by monarchy systems. There is only scattered information in a few books and papers that are somewhat related to this research and its theoretical framework. The major and relevant points from selected references are presented in the following literature review:

▪ Beyzai, Bahram. <u>Namayesh dar Iran</u>. Tehran: Roshangaran Va Motaleat-e Zanan,

     2007.

<u>Namayesh dar Iran</u> authored by prominent Iranian researcher and playwright, Bahram Beyzai, is one of the most credible references about dramatic arts. As a study and historical review of Iran's drama art in 1969, this book is considered one among the most important reference books for drama art in Iran. Rather precise information on *Pardeh-khani* art was presented for the first time. Beyzai explains *Pardeh-khani* in the section on "Naghali," introducing this art as a traditional drama form in Iran. Since *Pardeh-khani* art and practices were still commonplace at the time of Beyzai's research and book publishing, the book's information seems accurate and precise. This information focused especially on the performance manner and style of holding the sessions, and performing methods of this art that will be more deeply investigated and analyzed in chapter two of this thesis.

▪ Chelkowski, Peter. "Narrative Painting and Painting Recitation in Qajar Iran."

     <u>Muqarnas</u> 6 (1989).

The only English language reference about *Pardeh-khani* is the paper titled "Narrative Painting and Painting Recitation in Qajar Iran." In this work the author attributes the origin of *Pardeh-khani* art to Iranian *Tazieh* art and custom, and that the provenance of this art dates back to the Qajar dynasty era and after the advent of *Tazieh*. Advancing the views of other researchers particularly foreign scholars, author Chelkowski refutes theoretical claims that the religious mural paintings remained from the Safavid era

having been influenced by *Pardeh-khani* paintings. Chelkowski holds the view that religious paintings and some epic mural, specifically *Pardeh-khani* paintings, were created under the influence and after the emergence of the dramatic tradition of *Tazieh*. This work is mentioned because it is the first English language resource that deals with *Pardeh-khani* particularly the drawing and pictorial features, proposing new functions for this type of Iranian painting. However, the Chelkowski work suffers from a number of weak points regarding the historical background and origination theory of *Pardeh-khani* art from *Tazieh* rituals. These pitfalls need to be resolved with more rigorous investigation of available documents and references. This investigation intends to alleviate certain weaknesses and problematic theories in Chelkowski's article.

▪ Ashrafi, Nesrye J. <u>Namayesh va Moshighi dar Iran</u>. 3 vols. Tehran: Aaron, 2004.

<u>Namayesh va Moshighi dar Iran</u> has to a large extent dealt with Iran's *Pardeh-khani* art and tradition. In the chapter "dramatic aspect in Iran's visual arts," the author describes his quest to find the dramatic aspect of visual arts in the Iran plateau. This quest stretches from the Paleolithic period through later centuries describing dramatic aspects of pictures, embossed patterns and other visual arts in the Iran plateau. The author introduces primitive men as artful hunters referring to pictures in caves. Ashrafi considers the images remaining on cave walls as bearing magical, symbolic and even sacred aspects by including the views of sociologists and art critics. Additionally, Ashrafi believes that these cave images assumed dramatic and ritual functions.

Mentioning the historical references and documents, Ashrafi asserts that artists whose works comprised painting, sculpting and creation of embossed patterns were at the disposal of priests and temples. Such arts were originally associated with religious priests and leaders. After a while, priest-kings, which formerly undertook responsibility for social order and a ritual system, were divided in two groups of kings and priests

(clerics). The king was in charge of the social system and protecting people's lives and possessions. The cleric or priest had the duty to supervise ritual practices and a variety of issues related to customs and traditions. Although artists were attracted by kings as their power grew the ritual system of priests never became devoid of artists. Artists worked for temples because of their belief in customs and for the gods worshiped in the tradition of their faiths. Under these circumstances, templar paintings mainly illustrated different dimensions of traditional narrations and in particular ritual ceremonies. These paintings were traditional and anecdotal with mandated teachings followers of the respective faith were required to know, observe and apply. Some of these images were regarded sacred and spiritual because they contained themes and descriptions of religious narratives. These kinds of images were commonplace in different temples of the Iran plateau in the periods when Mithraism prevailed all over the country.

People of various ethnicities residing in the Iran plateau were generally not willing to illustrate and visualize their gods except in specific cases using certain images that demonstrated different religious rites and beliefs. Iranian artists did not exhibit the willingness to imitate natural appearances. Ashrafi refers to the *monarch ring* or the nebula around the king's head in embossed patterns of the Achaemenid Empire era (ca. 550- 336 BCE). This ring symbolized the divine power and heavenly glory of Iranian kings, the same manner of the holy nebula that later emerged in visual appearances among different depictions of a "divine" ring in Christian art and in Iranian miniature and religious painting arts.

Mentioning narrative embossed patterns in ancient and pre-Islamic (the era before 650 AD) Iranian pottery and metallic dishes, Ashrafi concludes that these patterns are indicative of holding traditional and dramatic rites. Emphasizing the pictorial method and style of Mani[6] [Iran's painter-prophet known as Manichaeus],

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[6].Mani, the founder of the religion of Manicheism in the 3rd century CE.
21 Nov. 2011<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mani-founder-manicheism>.

Ashrafi theorizes that Mani's method of preaching was by means of paintings, which had fundamental impressions and influences on Iran's culture and art in subsequent centuries. Ashrafi describes the use of pictures for religion-preaching as the main characteristic of Mani's pictorial art and tradition. Mani realized that pictorial language was the best way to preach religion among the masses especially in ancient Iran when literacy was generally not accessible for ordinary people: reading and writing skills were the exclusive domain of royalty. Ashrafi also highlights the profound and substantial impact of Mani's pictures: the main significance of Mani's work lies with granting a moral principle to painting using an Iranian artistic style particularly *Pardeh-khani* custom in subsequent centuries. Quoting one of Mani's writings mentioned in Ostoreh-ye Afarinesh dar Aein-e Mani, Ashrafi states that the *Pardeh-khani* tradition in popular culture [which continued in the following eras in Iran and parts of Central Asia] originates from Manichean art. Ashrafi situates Mani's followers and their restrictions during the Sasanid era (AD 224-Ad 651) and in following periods when Islam was introduced to the country during the reign of Islamic caliphs. Ashrafi mentions that the Islamologist and researcher of Islamic paintings, Thomas Arnold, theorizes that Manichaeans painters pretended to change their religion in converting to Islam (Ashrafi 548). Arnold infers that religious pictorial traditions of Mani followers continue to exist in Iran's post-Islamic *Pardeh-khani* and painting (Ashrafi 556).

Based on historical indications and documents, Ashrafi states that the artistic tradition completed by Manichaeans in central Asia and eastern Iran was founded on the native artistic customs of these respective regions. Samarghand and Bokhara regions as the meeting place of Sogdian merchants in pre-Islamic times served as the main commercial transit between Persia and China and other countries along the Silk Road trade route (Ashrafi 573). Relations via trade was followed by cultural and artistic exchanges leading to magnificent artistic flourishing in these areas. Ashrafi believes that

the practice of mural painting on the walls of temples and palaces as well as in people's homes prevailed in these regions. These murals in this geographical region assumed different content spanning religious, heroic and epic, historical, daily and public issues. Due to narrative sequences in these paintings, these mural works presented several episodes of a drama or story (Ashrafi 580). The majority of great artists of these regions and eastern Iran − Great Khorasan − were in charge of narrating these stories. These artists were called *Gusan* [Bard]. Referencing Mary Boyce's comment regarding Gusan, the author writes: "Gusan had privileges in royal palace and enjoyed popularity among masses as the entertainer of kings and ordinary people. It was present in both mourning ceremonies and celebrations as dirge-singer, comedian, storyteller, music player, etc."(qtd. in Ashrafi 581). Ashrafi believes that Gusans and narrators used to perform many dramatic acts while relating epic anecdotes, sagas and in the retelling of poetries and other narrations. These dramatic acts undoubtedly provoked a sensation in viewer and listener making the stories more fascinating for them (Ashrafi 585). These dramatic acts and states were subsequently illustrated by painters or sketchers as stories and sagas. Thus, many religious ceremonies, national and native customs and practices of mourning and other rites related in Gusan narrations were also incorporated in mural paintings. The painters of such pictures insisted on the illustration of dramatic modes that had been expressed in the poetry and narratives of various stories by singers. Such an illustration of the dramatic modes further revealed the dramatic modes of stories, either epic or religious (Ashrafi 590).

Ashrafi devotes more rigor and consideration to Iran's *Pardeh-khani* art. In particular, one of the characteristics of the author's work is its concentration on the background of *Pardeh-khani* and features of painting, regarded as one of the essential elements in *Pardeh-khani.* The analysis in <u>Namayesh va Moshighi dar Iran</u> shows that *Pardeh-khani* has deep-rooted origins and rises from an ancient pictorial and anecdotal

tradition in which religious subjects have always been among its major components. This art is the continuation of a tradition and stands out as a social need.

▪ Gharibpour, Behrooz. "Honer Moghedes *Pardeh-khani*." Faslnameh Honer 40 (1999).

A more meticulous and detailed study of *Pardeh-khani* was carried out by Behrooz Gharibpour in a paper titled "Honer Moghedes *Pardeh-khani*." This paper is the first research work making further efforts to introduce Iran's *Pardeh-khani*. Gharibpour listed three essential elements: story (content), dramatic painting (dramatic picturing) and narrating (acting) (Gharibpour 56). Gharibpour introduced two elements of story and dramatic painting (dramatic picturing) as having content and ideological dimensions, with a third element that Gharibpour believes as "acting" or narrating bearing the same qualities due to alignment with the first two elements. Gharibpour introduces these triple elements of *Pardeh-khani* as characteristics of sacred arts mentioning a list of common features between spiritual arts and *Pardeh-khani,* suggesting *Pardeh-khani* as a sacred and spiritual art. The author lists the main features of sacred art of *Pardeh-khani* and spiritual art as follows: (They are at the disposal of religion and its lofty goals.)

I. They make use of sacred frameworks and avoid other forms when applying subjects, content, expression of the icons and digressions (either in story or painting).

II. Elements and instruments of performance are considered sacred from beginning to end.

III. Painters and portrayers do not work for fun but instead do so out of religious obligation. Their primary objective is not to earn money as the economic aspect is overshadowed by religious motives.

IV. The audience of the play, either the storyteller or any other person, orders the performance only for religious beliefs and God's satisfaction.

V. The audiences gather to watch the play for invocation, spiritual aspiration and to ask for God's forgiveness.

VI. This kind of art is never used for non-religious ceremonies (Gharibpour 56).

The aforementioned items confirm the sacred and religious aspects of the respective art in Islam particularly the Shiite branch. This is suggestive that Iranian Muslim artists have extended the religious teachings by means of art in the continuation of ancient Iran's artistic tradition so that *Pardeh-khani* had in the past been highly progressive and notable in terms of style and method. The author explains *Pardeh-khani* art based on the three components:

I. Painting

The author attributes the history of preaching religious thought via painting to a very distant past and to the time of the prophet Mani (Gharibpour 60). Gharibpour refers to *Pardeh-khani* paintings as dramatic pictures and believes it is the best title that can differentiate between religious portraits and *Pardeh-khani* paintings. Gharibpour claims that *Pardeh-khani* paintings have a dramatic function with pictures serving as turning points in the stories with introductions and endings explained by the narrator (Gharibpour 60). Scenes are not stationary and stagnant but depend on rules and principles of abstract and imaginary Iranian painting. The author also describes characteristics of *Pardeh-khani* painting and discusses pictorial features of the *Pardeh* upon which pictures were painted, that turns a *Pardeh* into a sacred object. These features include:

A. Particular persons and kinds of events are indicative of religious happenings.

B. *Karbala* events are among the most popular subjects of *Pardeh-khani* performances.

Gharibpour mentions that poetry verses are normally written above the pictures to showing the difference between religious paintings and other sorts of pictures: "This

painting, until the resurrection day will last as the honor for all pictures of the whole world" (Gharibpour 60).

II. Acting

Gharibpour introduces *Pardeh-khan* as the axial and major factor of *Pardeh-khani*, a sagacious, knowledgeable person masterly proficient in anecdotes and narratives. For the same reasons, audiences respected him as the person who plays a significant role in this sacred art (61). Gharibpour lists the features of narrators based on the only available reference <u>Fotovatnameh Soltani</u> written in 9th century of the lunar Islamic calendar by Vaeze Kashefi[7].

III. Story and Text

Last but not least, Gharibpour holds that stories of sacred and religious *Pardeh-khani* requires a long evolutionary trend so that through enthusiasm for and learning about *Pardeh-khani*, Iranian people can construct their own stories with the aid of Islamic resources. Therefore, among these components only new stories and content is not related to Iranian pre-Islamic culture because before the arrival of Islam, narration and painting arts were used for other purposes and had different subjects. However, prior to the advent of Islamic texts, epic resources such as Ferdowsi's <u>Shahnameh</u> were considered among the main sources in Iran's *Pardeh-khani* art. Gharibpour briefly describes the evolution of religious and Islamic texts in *Pardeh-khani* according to available documents since the sixth century of the lunar Islamic calendar (57).

Gharibpour introduces the book titled <u>Rozetol shoheda</u> by Vaeze Kashefi written in the 9th century of the lunar Islamic calendar, as the leading resource from which *Pardeh-khani* and *Tazieh* originated. Gharibpour describes Vaeze Kashefi as a skilled dramaturg and attributes the dramatic features of <u>Rozetol shoheda</u> to his capability in writing and performing dramatic texts (Gharibpour 58).

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[7] . Prolific prose-stylist of the Timurid era, religious scholar, Sufi figure, and influential preacher (b. Sabzavār, ca. 1436-37; d. Herat, 1504-5). 24 Nov. 2011 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kasefi_kamal>.

As mentioned before, Gharibpour expresses the main components of *Pardeh-khani* together with religious and sacred subjects. The elements included story, painting and narration or acting. Although, the author's explanations are not complete and sufficient they are enough to acquaint ordinary audiences to *Pardeh-khani*.

▪ Ardelan, Hamid. Morshedan Perdeh-khan Iran.Tehran: Ferhangestan Honer, 2010.

The most recent and important reference about *Pardeh-khani* art is the book titled Morshedan Perdeh-khan Iran. This resource introduces 30 *Pardeh-khans* [30 storytellers] as mentors in various cities of Iran. Published in thirteen independent volumes, features and characteristics of *Pardeh-khani* are briefly mentioned in each volume. This reference is regarded as the most important and perfect resource related to pictorial storytellers and *Pardeh-khani* art. In this case-study work, Ardelan introduces *Pardeh-khani* narrators of Iran's different regions and their performing styles. This resource has successfully presented remarkable information in this regard. However, except for some minor implications, it fails to discuss the other *Pardeh-khani* elements such as painting style and characteristics of narrative texts. Nevertheless, this reference is used for the current research as a reliable and voluminous resource, especially with its findings describing the extent and presence of *Pardeh-khani* activity with numerous *Pardeh-khani* masters in different regions of Iran. This work signals the popularity of this art as an entertaining and teaching art and as a national and religious custom among Iranian people.

II. Cinema

The second part of this literature review is dedicated to investigating cinematic references related to this research.

•King, Jeff**.** <u>New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction</u>**.** New York: I.B. Tauris & Co

Ltd, 2002.

Although the Hollywood studio system ended in the 1950s and it was expected it would lose its previous position as a world cinema, not only did its dominance and influence over the world cinema not finish, but it continued to gain new dimensions. The book <u>New Hollywood Cinema</u> studies the reasons for the success and continuation of the dominance of Hollywood cinema over the world cinema. It indicates how Hollywood has turned threats into opportunity and continued its superiority and position throughout the world by adopting a successful strategy tailored to the needs of the spectators, political and economic conditions as well as technological advances, and hence used television, video, the Internet and video games. Jeoff King, the author of the book stresses that movies are a cultural product, yet are very dependent on commercial needs and Hollywood is ultimately a kind of business. Jeoff King believes that in this new era, to keep the audience and maintain trade, Hollywood has made use of cinematic traditions and schools of national cinemas of other countries in an attempt to update its production practices and style of work. Jeoff King says:

> Hollywood demonstrated its ability to absorb stylistic elements from
>
> other cinemas without being significantly transformed. It had done this
>
> before. Aspects of styles as radically different from classical Hollywood
>
> as Soviet montage and German expressionism were taken on board
>
> during the studio era. (King 44)

What is certain is that in this new age, Hollywood has made changes in the style of its works under the influence of the cinematic styles and traditions of other national cinemas. In this regard, Jeoff King says:

> Some films of the Hollywood Renaissance are characterized partly by
>
> breaches of the continuity editing regime of classical Hollywood, inspired
>
> largely by the films of the French New Wave (*Nouvelle Vague*) of the late

1950s and early 1960s. Some also undermine aspects of classical narrative such as the clear motivation of the actions of the hero. (King 4)

This point very well shows how Hollywood, which has been influencing the world cinema for a long time making numerous cinemagoers of other countries follow it, it has itself been influenced by film-making practices of other national cinemas and used their styles and practices for its own survival. For example, some of Truffaut's movies have inspired new Hollywood movies, or the works of Akira Kurosawa, especially *the Seven Samurai* has been a source of inspiration for the new Hollywood (King 37). In this regard, King says:

> One off-shoot of the break-up of the old studio system in the 1950s was that many subsequent-run cinemas closed, deprived of films to show by cutbacks in studio production. Some survived by converting into 'art' theatres screening films that had few outlets previously in the United States. Against this background, the writings of Sarris were an important influence on film students such as the young Scorsese. They suggested that popular Hollywood filmmakers such as Howard Hawks could be taken as seriously as Ingmar Bergman or other figures from the European art cinema, opening up the possibility of some kind of combination of Hollywood and more esoteric influences. (King 89)

In fact, regard for the national cinemas and moviemakers of other countries caused a new evolution in Hollywood cinema. By combining genres, aesthetics and content elements of national cinemas of other countries, Hollywood also created a new age in its cinema, indicating the importance and value of the national cinemas of other countries.

▪Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, ed. The Oxford History of World Cinema. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Since the cinema is a modern and global art, the book History of World Cinema provides the researcher with basic information needed in this research. The historical and analytical outlook in this book provides a clear picture of the reasons why and how national cinemas were formed as well as a variety of cinematic theories as a basis for the analysis and proof of the hypotheses in this research. This book specifies that although the invention of the cinema was first registered by the Lumière brothers in France, at the same time and maybe ahead of them, Edison had also discovered the phenomenon. This is why what today we call the cinema is not the product of a specific person or country, but it is a phenomenon welcomed by everyone. Many countries very soon took measures to produce films in their geographic district in order to achieve different objectives including economic, ideological, and political purposes. In this respect Ruth Vasey says:

> The world's first feature film of over an hour's duration was made not in France or America but in Australia, where *The Story of the Kelly Gang* was produced in1906 ; the theatrical company J. & N. Tait made the film without the benefit of any industrial infrastructure whatsoever. By 1912 Australia had produced thirty features, and feature-length productions had also been made in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary (with fourteen features in 1912 alone), Italy, Japan, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, the United States, and Yugoslavia. (Vasey 53)

The formation of Hollywood in Los Angeles, the US, around 1910 and the integration of film production companies in the area brought about an integrated movie-making system in later years which came to be known as the Hollywood studio system (Douglas Gomery43), and this system very soon dominated the world cinema in cultural and economic terms. The appeal of audiences around the world to Hollywood movies turned Hollywood and its studio system into a model for the national cinemas of other

countries. Vasey says: "The world-wide spread of cinema has been dominated by the distribution and exhibition of Hollywood movies, despite the fact that film production has taken place around the world since the turn of the century" (Vesey 53). The power of cinema to attract plenty of audiences made the U.S. government back up this influential and money-maker industry. About this, Ruth Vasey says:

> Throughout the silent period the American industry received assistance in its foreign operations from the Departments of State and Commerce. US consular offices co-operated in gathering a wealth of information relevant to motion picture trade, including audience preferences, conditions affecting exhibition, and activities of competitors. In 1927 Will Hays, president of the industry's trade association (the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America), successfully lobbied Congress for the establishment of a Motion Picture Department within the Department of Commerce, on the grounds that movies acted as 'silent salesmen' of American goods to audiences worldwide. Rewriting the nineteenth-century imperialist slogan that trade followed the flag, Hays proclaimed that now 'Trade Follows the Films.' Indeed, it seems likely that Hollywood's conspicuous display of material affluence was itself a factor attractive to audiences, both at home and abroad. (Vasey 57)

This contradicts the idea that the Central Government of the US has never helped Hollywood and that Hollywood is an independent industry. However, the US government counts Hollywood as a powerful arm both economically and politically. Hollywood has also been considered in terms of culture, and what worries and terrifies many of the world's governments and elites is the negative cultural impact of Hollywood through the movies produced. Various governments have shown reaction to it in this respect.

Arguments about the cultural influence of Hollywood were part of a pervasive discourse of anti-Americanism among the European cultural elite. Bourgeois cultural nationalists feared the homogenizing influence of American mass culture, in which previously clear representations of class and nationality, such as costume and gesture, became increasingly undifferentiated. (Vasey 58)

What Hollywood has done in cinema in the past decades is to establish a popular cinematic style, and thanks to its economic and political power as well as correct and smart management, it has created a large global market for its film industry. In fact, Hollywood has been able to maintain its superiority since the beginning of cinema history by utilizing three basic, important factors in the cinema industry, namely:

I. Production

II. Distribution

III. Circulation

And among these, the factor of global distribution is particularly Hollywood's secret to success in the cinema industry in such a way that national cinemas of other countries are under its influence. By mass producing films in various genres, it has provided cinemas of the world with popular and appropriate feed, hence holding the internal markets of other countries in its monopoly. However, despite the fact that Hollywood has exerted its mastery over the main part of the world's cinema industry, it can be said that important cinematic theories emerged in other countries, particularly Germany, the former Soviet Union, France, etc. In fact, it can be asserted that the artistic and aesthetic aspect of cinema is to be traced to the national cinemas of other countries, such as the school of German Expressionism. This formed after the First World War in Germany and displayed a new vision of cinema as an effective art.

Regarded as an indicator of the national cinema in the 1920s, this school displayed a cinema different from that of Hollywood in terms of content and style, and this way, it attracted many spectators -- especially cinema buffs -- and as such competing with Hollywood and even influencing it later on. Many famous movies of this school including The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Robert Wiene, 1919), The Golem (Paul Wegener, 1920), Destiny (Fritz Lang, 1921), Nosferatu (F. W .Murnau, 1921), Dr Mabuse (Lang, 1922) are among the important cinema movies and a part of its sacred heritage (Elsaesser 137). Thomas Elsaesser says: "Even more surprisingly, they have also entered popular movie mythology and now live on, parodied, pastiched, and recycled, in very different guises, from pulp movies to post-modern videoclips" (137). Or, the editing style which was formed in the National Cinema of the Soviet and had great impact on the artistic aspects of other national cinemas (Nussinova 172), hence still continues to be effective. The achievements of national cinemas of other countries have continuously affected Hollywood cinema, not only in the early decades, but even after the advent of sound in cinema in 1927 and the change in expressive form based on images and image expression before the arrival of sound. This influence still persists, even since Hollywood was at the peak of power and dominance, it was the national cinemas of other countries which introduced new styles and theories into the realm of the cinema. As an example, the Italian school of neorealism was, in fact, a proper and adorable reaction to the classic Hollywood cinema and its studio system, and especially the fascist cinema of the Mussolini era. This school also had great impact on future filmmaking procedures of the national theaters of other countries. Susan Hayward says:

> Despite its demise, neo-realism had a huge impact on future film-making
>
> practices in Europe, the United States and India. The **French New Wave**
>
> widely acknowledged its debt to this movement, and resonances of its

style are clearly in evidence in the **British New Wave**. (Hayward, *Key*

Concept 204)

The Oxford History of World Cinema very well shows the important and fundamental role of national cinemas of other countries in advancing the language of cinema. In spite of Hollywood's dominance over the world movie market, it is other countries and cultures have which contributed to the growth and excellence of the art of cinema. Also, each country has had a part in the development of cinema although the Hollywood film industry has restricted other countries and cultures, making competition impossible. A review of the history of cinema also shows that addressing the cultural and national heritage of different countries has had an important and fundamental impact on the excellence and manifestation of the cinema. The national cinemas of India and Japan in Asia are exemplary cases in this respect.

▪Bordwell, David. <u>Narration in the Fiction Film</u>. USA: the University of Wisconsin

Press, 1985.

David Bordwell considers four methods of narration for cinema in his book: classic, artistic, historical, materialistic and parametric, among which classic and artistic narrative are the main subjects of this book, hence in keeping with the purposes of this research. In fact, a review of the classic and artistic approaches and their differences confirm the hypothesis of this research. By presenting his opinions, Bordwell very well shows how the Hollywood cinema, by using the characteristics of the classic narrative style, has been able to produce straightforward, popular narratives understandable for all spectators, and expand and pin down its influence in many countries -- even in countries that have a national cinema. Bordwell says:

In fictional filmmaking, one mode of narration has achieved

predominance. Whether we call it main stream, dominant, or classical

cinema, we intuitively recognize an ordinary, easily comprehensible

movie when we see it. (Bordwell, *Narration* 156)

The use of the classic narrative as an understandable and straightforward narrative by Hollywood caused this type of narrative to become the dominant narrative in cinema, especially in Hollywood, and since Hollywood considers cinema as an industry of modern entertainment and lucrative business, the classic style was the best method whereby it could have the audience engaged with a comprehensible and entertaining story. This narrative method very soon attracted many fans around the world. In this regard, Jeff King says:

The overriding aim of the studio system was not to produce 'classically' balanced and harmonious compositions, but to make money. The industry was, and remains, governed by what Richard Maltby terms a 'commercial aesthetic, essentially opportunistic in its economic motivation', in which a variety of ingredients are used to increase the potential profitability of a film. (King 180)

The Hollywood style presents a narrative with certain features which distinguish it from other national cinemas. Unity of time (time consistency or regular and fixed time rhythm), unity of place (presenting a recognizable place of action) and unity of action (a distinct stage in the cause and effect chain) are some of the marks of Hollywood narratives. In fact, Hollywood cinema moves forward the actions of a given movie on a linear and steady path (Bordwell, Narration 158). What is certain is that Hollywood has institutionalized its narrative style as an efficient and successful method in the world of cinema because of the plentiful attraction of an audience. Also, owing to its commercial success, many national cinemas have imitated and copied this method in their works. Bordwell describes the features of the classic style in this way:

In classical narration, style typically encourages the spectator to construct a coherent, consistent time and space for the *fabula* action…only classical narration favors a style which strives for utmost denotative clarity from moment to moment. Each scene's temporal relation to its predecessor will be signaled early and unequivocally (by intertitles, conventional cues, a line of dialogue). Lighting must pitchout figure from around; color must define planes in each shot, the center of story interest will be near the center of the frame. Sound recording is perfected so as to allow for maximum clarity of dialogue. (Bordwell, *Narration* 163)

In contra to the classic cinema of Hollywood which practices the classic narrative, especially in the golden period of the studio and continuing to do so up to date while being imitated by many of the filmmakers in other countries, there is another cinema in other countries that has dealt with themes and styles different from those of classic cinema. It can be a manifestation of the national cinema of each country. Bordwell, in this regard, says: "The predominance of classical Hollywood films and consequently classical narration is a historical fact, but film history is not a monolith. Under various circumstances, there have appeared alternative modes of narration" (Bordwell, Narration 205). Bordwell, in his book, calls this cinema an artistic cinema. He explains that: "Within a machinery of production, distribution and consumption -- the "international art cinema," as it is generally known -- there exists a body of films which appeal to norms of syuzhet and style which I shall call art-cinema narration" (Bordwell, *Narration* 205).

Bordwell elaborates on this method of narrative in artistic cinema and considers some features which largely differ from the classic Hollywood style. These features seem to be tailored to the cultural, historical and political conditions of the countries in which this type of narrative has emerged. For example, the plot of this kind

of cinema, in contrast to the classic cinema that has redundant and duplicated events, has no redundancy and repetition. Unlike the Hollywood cinema, it has no strong causal structure and the cause-and-effect is loose in artistic narrative. In addition, the element of chance propels the actions in this type of narrative, which is less or never seen in Hollywood cinema. In fact, the artistic cinema has a more realistic look at life and in most cases is associated with ambiguity. Bordwell says:

> Within some traditional aesthetic positions, ambiguity is what philosophers call a "good-making property." Therefore, Hollywood films would be judged as bad because they are denotatively unequivocal, while art films become good because they ask to be puzzled over. (Bordwell, Narration 212)

The examples provided by Bordwell about the artistic cinema refer to the cinemas of the former Soviet Union, Germany, Italy and France, which, in fact, in some periods could be regarded as characteristics of national cinemas of these countries. But as mentioned, what sets artistic cinema apart from classic cinema are the narrative style and mise-en-scène. The theme, subject, and narrative style in artistic cinema may originate from the cultural, historical and social conditions of a country and are directly in line with the national characteristics and identity of the people of that country. Thus, the difference in the style and method of narration can be a distinguishing mark of various cinemas. This is what this research aims to explore about the artistic capacities of the art of *Parde-khani* (traditional Persian art of story-telling) in Iran's national cinema.

▪ Arjomand, Mehdi. <u>Olgoha-ye Ravayet dar Cinema-ye Iran.</u> Tehran: Bonyade Cinema-ye Farabi, 1998.

This book is the only resource that studied storytelling styles in Iran's cinema. In this researcher's opinion although this study is not versatile and thorough, it is noteworthy

as the only work produced on the subject thus far. Defining narration and its generalities, the author, Arjomand, associates the position of narration in any cinema to two important factors in perceptions of reality: rational agent and intuitive attitude. In Arjomand's view, story patterns repeated in narrations, the good and evil characters, predictable events, and daily objective themes are considered as cognitive means for the rationalistic human (Arjomand 18). According to this view of rational agent characters, events and themes lead to expressive, specific and pre-determined forms similar to classical literature and the Aristotelian method in drama and naturalistic painting which have remained consistent with their behavioral styles since the starting time (Beginning of Creation) until the present (Arjomand 20). Yet, there are other forms of art whose main features are formlessness and flexibility in conveying general and profound human thoughts and ideas. In this class of art, narration is not a fixed mechanism or a firm dramatic construction but instead a collection of apparently separate thoughts which mutually and dynamically influence each other, manifested in specific forms instantaneously. These thoughts are derived from intuitive attitude which in turn is supplied with the endless source of imagination (Arjomand 25). The author implies to Eslimi patterns of mosque tiling and walls having an Iranian origin as an example of a visual narration which somehow blends both rational and intuitive attitudes (Arjomand 34). Arjomand states the concentration seen in rotating figures and these pictures is the very "centrality" which is also observed in other coherent and dramatic stories. Arjomand believes:

> In this system of thought, creation is like a huge cycle of forces reborn at every moment in zeniths and nadirs of life. But, even this systematic and chain-like attitude also features an astonishing artistic analysis. The eternity, seen in the circular rotation of these abstract figures, is not aligned with the logical and rational criteria of human mind; there is

always a start and an end in classic anecdotes; ordinary stories are always supposed to have a certain and ultimate ending. However, these evidences do not satisfy our imaginary acquisition from the cosmos; death cannot justify our spiritual life. Accordingly, while our existences are limited in the closed boundaries of human drama but our idealistic though denies this deterministic structure. (Arjomand 35-36)

Referring to anecdotes in Molana[8]'s <u>Masnavi Manavi</u>, Arjomand emphasizes that the anecdotes in Molana's book fail to have dramatic structure but merely include indications to ordinary story forms (Arjomand 40). They are shadows of a story, that is, a story is not formed in <u>Masnavi Manavi</u> but profound thoughts are conveyed through a moral story. Therefore, a dialogue is always established between poet's world and audience's world, which connects story actualities to personal and temporary life of listeners. Here and for Molavi, anecdotes are tools for expressing thoughts and intentions. There is no reason to create too complicated relations for these small tools in such a manner that they might deviate from their main objective i.e. conveying "moral teachings." Arjomand believes the narrative patterns in Iran's cinema are mainly affected by western dramatic literature, novels and formats rather than alternative literary forms such as ancient national poems and legends which enjoy stronger root, basis and capacity (Arjomand 65). Furthermore, Arjomand asserts that descriptive patterns and styles of western films in dramatic scripts is the cause of disassociation of Iranian scriptwriters from metaphoric expression of ancient Iran's literature. In Arjomand's view, the relationship between Iranian cinema and the World cinema is not established on the basis of deep ideological and ontological native and national beliefs but instead on the foundation of western patterns. The influence of these narrative

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[8] .Molana Jalal-ud-din Mohammad Balkhi, also known as Molavi or Rumi, was one of the greatest thinkers and Sufi poet, of the Islamic. He was born in Balkh in 604/1207. When Jalal-ud-din was about six years old, his father, Baha Valad, together with his family moved from the East of Iran toward the West… and settled in Konya Turkey (Saberi 152).

patterns on Iran's cinema is obvious, most notably in stabilization of story structure as the desirable ideal of filmmakers (Arjomand 70). While narration is metaphoric in ancient Iran's literature such as in <u>Kelileh va Demneh</u>, <u>Shahnameh</u>, <u>Masnavi</u>, among other examples, this feature is rarely observed in narrations of Iran's contemporary arts such as the novel, and film. Arjomand holds the notion that western cinema and specifically Hollywood stabilized the foundation of its dramatic and consumptive cinema using formulas based on "Aristotle's dramatization of theatre." Since its introduction into Iran in 1900, this type of cinema was used by different cultures as a successful narrative form without considering any sort of creativity and innovation in cliché adaptations and interpretations from it (Arjomand 75).

According to Arjomand, the major problem of Iran's commercial cinema is the absence of a "distinctive" (different) and novel style for conveying concepts either in social and dramatic contexts or within the scope of mystical and literary aspects (Arjomand 80). For Arjomand, Iranian cinema is involved with classical story-building and its related styles before dealing with the subject of faith and sacred ritual anecdotes. Hence, a typical approach in telling stories in film is not via a mythical view toward human and universal issues but, on the contrary, originates from weak characterization and depiction of modern human relations with the aid of Iranian social, ecological and mental factors (Arjomand 85).

Arjomand proposes that less critical superficial thinking and simplistic views in storytelling as the principal problem of Iran's cinema linking this pitfall neither to origins of Iranian philosophical and eastern attitude nor to sturdy structures of story-telling in western culture. In this regard Arjomand says: "Despite the fact that Iran possesses a brilliant mythological history and a treasure of pictorial and narrative traditions its cinema has been captivated and defeated by entertaining narrations of the

west without making any attempt to rationally comprehend the structure of these stories" (Arjomand 95).

Arjomand provides example such as, before the production of the film Gav, Iran's cinema had been copying the melodramatic narrative styles of Turkish and Indian cinemas as well as Hitchcock thrillers, Italian comedies and famous historical narrations of the Eastern Bloc. Arjomand concludes that the influence from the west and the lack of attention to national artistic and cultural possessions as the major bottlenecks of Iran's cinema thereby informing the theoretical framing of the current research (Arjomand 109).

▪ Marsh, Clive. Cinema and Sentiment: Film's Challenge to Theology. Paternoster

   Press, 2004.

In the first part of this book, Marsh considers the act of going to cinema as a religious practice. This activity is not merely intended to watch a movie, but is a regular habit like working, eating and sleeping for most cinema-goers. According to Marsh going to the cinema is as a religious rite, an obligatory habit in the life of cinema-goers. The second dimension of going to cinema appears as a potential religious habit and as a need for relaxation and recreation. Benefits of cinema are not just limited to instruction, improvement of morality and/or psychological reinforcement. The need for recreation and spending enjoyable times at the cinema can be classified in the same category of reason as other purposes such as wanting to experience horror, excitement, provocation, or just to accompany friends. Most people seem to go to cinema for enjoyment. Marsh quotes filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese: "… I can… see great similarities between a church and a movie- house. Both are places for people to come together and share a common experience" (Marsh 7). The author believes that going to cinema is regarded as a substitute or alternative for religious activities. Marsh quotes Linden as saying: "Films

are already functioning religiously, i.e. are offering inspiring and though-provoking images and worldviews are exploring and constructing in relation to which film-goers are exploring and constructing their approaches" (qtd. in Marsh 7).

In another part of Marsh's book, Italian journalist Walsh offers a view about cinema's religious aspect:

> My civilized involvement with books, my light illustrations with theater, my patronizing kiss on the forehead of Television. Watching film in the dark never seemed to me a passive activity, it was more like visiting a shrine, going to great dark church for prolonged communion and prayer, even if the only prayers were that Clint Eastwood should waste the bad man in *A Fistful of Dollars,* or Julie Christie that should find the true love with Alan Bates in *far from the Madding crowd*, or that Kim Novak should, at some point, take her clothes off in Vertigo. (qtd. in Marsh 8)

In other parts of the book, through discussing the argument that how theology as a prevailing tool in movies can encourage seemingly laic societies to act according to theological teachings, Marsh attempts to prove that religious and theological themes in films might help spreading and fostering spiritual and theological aspects of a non-religious society (Marsh 113). In this reading of Marsh, what is proposed is analogous to the functions of Iran's religious art of *Pardeh-khani*, suggesting that these functions can be performed and exploited in cinema, affirming the theory and hypotheses of the present research.

▪ Mededpour, Mohammed. <u>Cinema va Din</u>. Tehran: Soreh Mehr, 2010.

Mededpour studies the relationship between cinema and religion taking into account the traditional, cultural and ideological teachings of Iranian and eastern mankind, asserting that current global cinema is influenced by teachings of western culture and devoid of

supernatural and religious attitudes. The author considers the cinema as domination of human desires far from ideological and spiritual values. In Mededpour point of view, today's cinema world is a reality corresponding to the filmmaker's idea and technical view. The filmmaker would present anything s/he wishes and would induce a certain concept from any dimension and direction s/he can. S/he shoots film from an objective reality but induces an apparently real but actually non-real world by means of sound and music (Mededpour 35). For Mededpour, cinema mirrors to the humans their inside being and character and it crystallizes for them their dreams and ambitions (Mededpour 45).

Mededpour categorized religious western cinema into three classes: Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox cinemas (Mededpour 58). From his standpoint, third-world countries in fact have cinematic movements imitated from Catholic and Protestant cinemas. Mededpour does not recognize a specific and independent identity for third world's cinema. Mededpour also classifies Iran's cinema as passive imitation of Catholic and Protestant cinemas, having nothing to do with the past or present cultural and original identity, whose native Iranian and Islamic elements have been, eliminated (Mededpour 136). Mededpour suggests that the major reason for this imitation and negligence is technological domination and modern technical culture of the west and the lack of awareness by many Iranian cinema artists of Iranian cultural and artistic capacities that can be utilized in the modern art of cinema. Although the author does not specifically mention any valuable and remarkable instance of Iran's ancient cultural and artistic achievements in certain arts, his criticism of the lack of awareness and negligence of Iranian filmmakers and artists seems to pertain to some arts like *Pardeh-khani*, which in turn can confirm the theory of the current research.

For Mededpour, a religious film does not signify stories only about prophets and apostles. In so much the same way, films which contain traces of spirituality can

also be presumed as religious works. However, the most perfect works and more authentic class of religious cinema belong to lofty world of prophets and Imams (Mededpour 138). These subjects constitute major part of Iran's religious *Pardeh-khani* themes.

The author states that religious cinema can be divided into cinemas of nature, cinema of wisdom and cinema of knowledge or into cinemas of religion [*Shariate*], approach [*Tarieghate*], and reality (Mededpour 145). Mededpour then explains the three divisions separately.

The cinema of nature or religion is defined as the cinema of ordinary decrees and moralities, in which goodness and badness of humankind are illustrated. Mededpour believes this sort of cinema has a sublunary view and experiences, and innovates lives of ordinary people but never differentiates from spirituality and metaphysics. On the contrary, the stories of Prophets and religious sages are the subject of innovation in cinema of *Tarighat* [mysticism] (Mededpour 150).

Mededpour recognizes cinema of reality as that of spiritual states also called "cinema of knowledge." Mededpour considers these three groups as the cinema of *Haghighat* [truth], not the cinema of fantasy, mendacity and profitability that currently dominates the world (151). Mededpour also mentions examples of prominent Iranian poets for these triple cinemas:

I. Onsori and Farrokhi's poems as poetry of nature

II. Khaghani and Nezami's poems as poetry of wisdom

III. Hafez, Bidel and Molana's poems as poetry of reality

These examples are exactly those used in Iran's religious and epic *Pardeh-khani*. The patterns proposed by Mededpour for religious and knowledge-based cinema can be found in the styles applied in Iran's *Pardeh-khani* art over the centuries. This suggests that Mededpour confirms the theory and objective of the current research.

▪ Thamynzhad, Mohammad. <u>Filmnamehe-ye Tarikh Cinema-ye Iran</u>. Tehran:

     Antesharat-e Cinema, 1996.

This book is the published version of a dramatic-documentary film about Iran's cinema

history. In a section of Scenario, Thamynzhad mentions apparent similarities of cinema

and *Pardeh-khani* including the existence of screen, presence of narrator alongside the

screen as the storyteller, and a space required for displaying and for spectators.

Thamynzhad introduces the idea that the emergence of cinema was the cause for

recession and extinction of *Pardeh-khani* (Thamynzhad 24). So this documentary

indicates that *Pardeh-khani* had played the role of cinema before the latter's emergence

in Iran. And that due to numerous similarities between *Pardeh-khani* and cinema,

Iranian audiences welcomed and adjusted to the art of cinema easily and quickly

(Thamynzhad 26). This dramatic-documentary film actually corroborates the abundant

similarities of *Pardeh-khani* and cinema arts and is an evidence for the possibility of

establishing a relationship between these two arts.

▪ Moazezynya, Hussein. <u>Cinema-Jashnvareh: Cinema-ye Irani, Jashnvareh ha-ye Jahani</u>.

     Tehran: Sorosh: 2010.

<u>Cinema-Jashnvareh: Cinema-ye Irani, Jashnvareh ha-ye Jahani</u> is a collection of

conversations of Iranian critics, reviewers, and filmmakers who have debated and

expressed their opinions on television programs about Iran's cinema. Two programs

from this twenty-part collection are independently allocated to the subject of national

cinema. Other contents from this television series compiled in the book indirectly imply

the absence of a native and national cinema without a theoretical framework as a

predominant pattern of Iran's cinema. Most experts and critics consider this pitfall as

one of the major weak points of Iran's cinema. Although this collection does not

directly pertain to subject of the current research its contents point to the importance and

necessity of conducting a study of Iranian cinema in the manner that this thesis proposes.

▪ Danesh, Maherzade. "Parvandeh Mozoei: Cinema-ye Melli." Majaleh-ye Film 383 (2008): 4-41.

Another reference that can be useful for a historical background of the current research and its objectives is a set of papers, interviews and summits published in 2008 in edition 383 of Film Monthly titled "Parvandeh Mozoei: Cinema-ye Melli." in one of the oldest cinema monthly magazines in Iran. Though this collection is suggestive of personal tastes and attitudes of the interviewed individuals or writers of papers, it assists in orientating the approach of this study while accentuating the significance and necessity of conducting the research. In other words, this collection makes this researcher carry out the research more determinedly and confidently. A feature of this thematic dossier is the incorporation of a wide range of attitudes of Iran's cinema experts, filmmakers and governmental managers enhancing a comprehensiveness of this study, via for example:

I. The first interview hosted an accredited expert of historical works and Iranian painter Aydin Aghdashlo who believes that the failure to achieve a national cinema in Iran is caused by a disassociation of Iran's modern art from its former traditional arts (Danesh 6).

Aydin Aghdashlo considered the modernism starting at late Qajar period and peaking in Pahlavi dynasty when Reza Shah was governing as the cause for the hiatus of natural trends in Iran's art in contemporary times. Aydin Aghdashlo holds the opinion that attaining a national cinema will be possible only when Iranians preserve their immediate historical memory (Danesh 8). Furthermore, Aydin Aghdashlo believes that in order to attain a national cinema, Iranians should take into account artistic and

cultural traditions and achievements of the immediate past which confirms the theory of the current research as well.

II. The paper "Cinema-ye Melli: Tarif-ha, Vizhegi-ha, Ebham-ha." is among the most noteworthy works of this collection. In this paper, Maherzade Danesh speculates about the existing definitions of national cinema. However, after presenting each conjecture, the author criticizes his own statements and does not approve them as comprehensive and total definitions. Definitions of national cinema include:

A. "National cinema expresses the identity, history and memoirs of a nation" (Danesh 9). Danesh does not think of this statement as an accurate and perfect definition of national cinema and classifies this type of cinema as "historical genre."

B. "National cinema seeks for to demonstrate and reflect folkloric, local and ethnic customs and traditions of a country" (Danesh 9). Danesh does not believe that this view is a correct definition of national cinema and prefers the term "ethnological cinema" for this genre.

C. "National cinema is mainly manifested in speech and words and intends to demonstrate the enormous capacity of eloquent Persian language in the context of dialogues" (Danesh 10). He also refuses this definition of national explaining that any film, no matter what, whose characters speak poetically shall be regarded in the category of national cinema; even if the characters are villains.

D. "National cinema aims at illustrating Iran's traditional atmosphere; the traditional atmosphere signifies something different from historical atmosphere" (Danesh 10). Danesh does not recognize this notion as a real and comprehensive definition because in his opinion, characters and depictions of characters' lives in this sort of cinema have to be strongly traditional. This type of cinema does not comprise films dealing with people and living conditions of modern times.

E. "Geographical image of a certain territory is highlighted in national cinema" (Danesh 10). Danesh rejects this notion and definition of national cinema as well, believing that this notion of national cinema is incorrect due to wide geographical diversity in Iran.

F. "National cinema focuses on hand crafts and unique fine arts of the respective country" (Danesh 11). He does not accept this conjecture as a comprehensive definition because the scope of subjects in such cinema is restricted to handcraft works.

G. "National cinema concentrates more on belief and ideology rather than outer manifestations" (Danesh 11). Danesh considers this notion of national cinema as a vividly one-sided and political orientation and therefore unacceptable. He believes that this kind of orientation determines the status of positive and negative characters of the story that impair the cultural and artistic value of the work.

H. "National cinema is meant based on structure not subject" (Danesh 11). Danesh finds such approach in this type of cinema very profound but does not recognize it as a complete and applicable definition too because no proper theory has been proposed in this regard and no specific example can be determined for it.

Danesh's last definition of national cinema is a combination of all the above mentioned definitions. Yet, the author himself refuses this definition owing to its too broad of extent and ambiguity. At the end of paper, Danesh expresses his disagreement with the concept of national cinema and prefers to talk about the "presence of national elements in cinema" (Danesh 13).

Nonetheless this last definition is closer to the objectives and theory of the current research, making the research goal more precise.

III. This thematic dossier also includes a summit discussion between three prominent Iranian filmmakers about the concept of "national cinema." In this roundtable, each participant offers a different interpretation of national cinema.

Kamal Tabrizi, states:

The general and simple form of national cinema is that any theme which somehow depicts national history and Iranian identity in any time period and whose emphasis, focus and intention is dealing with Iranian nationality can be regarded as a film in the domain of "national cinema". However, in my opinion, the reality is different from what the cinema officials are seeking for. They propose a definition of this concept that is more linked to scope of film themes. (Danesh 17)

Tabrizi seems to say that national cinema is not limited to a certain subject or content. But instead takes into consideration different subjects with a specific narrative structure and form. Tabrizi's view is that national cinema signifies the works of Iranian filmmakers. In other words, national cinema is constructed of some components which then represents all films, that national cinema should have Iranian and national design, signifying the tastes and requirements of the Iranian audience and consumer. Tabrizi holds the notion that in considering "national," national cinema should be at the disposal of people's thoughts and tastes, ignoring the demands of government while fulfilling society's requirements and expectations.

Asghare Farhadi, whose movies have gained global fame in different international film festivals, such as winning the Oscar prize for the best foreign film in 2012, views "national cinema as an ambiguous and manager-preferred combination." Farhadi suggests that since Iran has a young artistic cinema, no specific and tangible configuration can be determined at present time. Farhadi adds that Iranian architecture attained a form called "Iranian Architecture" over two thousand years; this happened over centuries, e.g., painting evolved into miniature over hundreds of years. Farhadi, however, believes that "It is still too early to propose such definitions and categorizations in our cinema…" (Danesh 23).

Farhadi holds the opinion that " Under the condition that there is not sufficient number of films produced for investigating and finding suitable patterns for 'national cinema' in Iran, we are not able to extract a cinema pattern commensurate with Iranian people's culture, art and demands and it is not possible to achieve the real national cinema" (Danesh 23).

Farhadi's views are similar to the views of other Iranian filmmakers and cinema experts who believe that a sufficient number of movies have not been yet produced for the theorization of national cinema and that adequate experiences has not been obtained in different genres. This group of filmmakers and cinema experts believes in a deductive trend whose common features with fixed and specific components are identified based on available samples and formerly produced films. This trend serves as the foundation and basis of national cinema. This research intends to reply to the challenges arising from this group's views. Farhadi also believes that "Iran's cinema should reach towards constructing a structure of its own and opt for a better position in the world cinema, so that foreign audiences can distinguish Iranian characteristics of its films when displayed in any point worldwide, signifying a 'national cinema' as such" (Danesh 26).

Feryedon Jeyrani, the third filmmaker in this roundtable, is one of the most experienced and well-known Iranian filmmakers whose works have been among the best-selling and most popular films in Iran. Jeyrani believes that "The term 'national' is an obscure concept in the combination 'national cinema'" (Danesh 26). From Jeyrani's point of view, the word "national" actually represents dependency or possession of something, a concept or of people. In other words "national" can refer to a private sector run by civilians not government bureaucrats (Danesh 26). Jeyrani thinks that national cinema ought to originate from the heart of the people and from the requirements of a nation, rather than from the demands and requirements of a government that determines

and defines the word "national" according to its own will and circumstances. "National" cannot suggest a suitable concept. Thus, national cinema is realized when it considers and pays attention to people's demands and requirements without any governmental intervention, supportive and supervisory. For Jeyrani national cinema ought to rely upon people's needs and expectations. Jeyrani believes that "National cinema cannot be governmental. National cinema will be possible only when it depends on and is based on the requirements, affairs, dreams and ambitions of Iranian society and people" (Danesh 27).

Another interviewee in this collection Muhammad-Reza Jaeferey-e Jelveh, the participant who in 2008 held the highest executive position of Iran's government in the field of cinema. This interview was indicative of the views of a government manager via a specific, codified plan entitled "<u>Dar Masier-e Cinema-ye Melli: Tarhie bra-ye Aknon</u>." Jaeferey-e Jelveh discussed topics with regard to national cinema in Iran, topics that are to a large extent in alignment with the theory of the current research. The main points of this interview include:

Jaeferey-e Jelveh's view that since cinema experts and analysts in Iran believe cinema as originally a western phenomenon with coordinates far from Iranian culture, it is very difficult to adapt cinema's recognized grammars and rules to Iranian thought and culture and to construct a novel structure commensurate with Iranian culture (Jaeferey-e Jelveh 30). This view is even recognizable in the question of an interviewer who asked: "Taking into account that cinema is fundamentally a western phenomenon and an industrial and technological issue, to what extent can its recognized rules and structures be changed or reconstructed into a national cinematic form or as you said 'western form'? " (Jaeferey-e Jelveh 30).

In response, Jaeferey-e Jelveh doubts the assertion that "Cinema is merely a western phenomenon and eastern people have had no role in its formation and destiny"

(Jaeferey-e Jelveh 31). Jaeferey-e Jelveh actually believes that cinema is a product of the efforts of all people, a common legacy (Jaeferey-e Jelveh 31). He considers that "Cinema an achievement which originated from the east and moved to other places where new things were added to this achievement. Its resultant outcome emerged in the shape of 'cinema' in the west in the late 19th century" (Jaeferey-e Jelveh 31). With a view that considers cinema as a joint human product, unlike others who do not consider the possibility of a national cinema in Iran due to its western identity, Jaeferey-e Jelveh believes that "Achieving a national cinema is possible not only in content and subject but also in form and structure" (Jaeferey-e Jelveh 31). Contrary to views of various experts who think of cinema as a technological and western phenomenon, Jaeferey-e Jelveh refuses to assign this art to the west only, but instead attributes cinema to all humanity and different civilizations. He recognizes this technology and art as a blend of poetry, painting, literature, and music among other arts (Jaeferey-e Jelveh 32). He poses the question "Whether all these arts originated from the west so that their combinations and extracts become a purely western phenomenon?" (Jaeferey-e Jelveh 32). Jaeferey-e Jelveh believes that cinema can meet the needs of all cultures Jaeferey-e Jelveh (33).

Jaeferey-e Jelveh also presumes Iranian filmmakers as "doctors"or "teachers" who can make efforts to cure the sufferings of society. He believes that a global cinema demands an Iranian cinema, not a translational and imitative cinema nor a cinema isolated from global society. Because there are various films from different societies in the global cinema Iranians can create their own manifestation in the global cinema collection and attract audiences. National cinema could bring novel and innovative ideas to cinema art in content and narration. Jaeferey-e Jelveh believes that "National view means both form and content, both narration and language and storytelling style and contents which flow in this narrative pattern" (Jaeferey-e Jelveh 34).

The views of experts, critics and reviewers representative of their careers were incorporated in this research. These views and ideas are in agreement with the significance, necessity, approach and objective of the current research.

CHAPTER 2

PARDEH-KHANI

2.0. Introduction

Pardeh-khani or *Pardeh-dari* is a storytelling art with painted canvases depicting scenes from epic and mythic stories with moral and religious themes. The combination of speech and images in *Pardeh-khani* led to this kind of storytelling as the most popular and dramatic of Iranian ancient arts. A review of literature shows that *Pardeh-khani*, which had established itself as the most common art for Iranian people with similar applications as in cinema, lost its eminence in the mid-twentieth century (Thamynzhad 23). But in spite of its former popularity in comparison with other Iranian arts, *Pardeh-khani* has received rare to no attention among domestic and foreign art experts. Although *Pardeh-khani* is mentioned in a number of books, no single comprehensive study into the nature of this art which can also serve as the historiography of *Pardeh-khani* has ever been done. Different and even opposite ideas about the background and root of *Pardeh-khani* has led to its being considered an art with no background, nor affected by religious and political trends of the last two centuries. Although the works of some Iranian researchers have suggested the age of this art, they consider *Pardeh-khani* a religious art with a background of several hundred years. However, no documents and analysis are presented for this claim. Other views from foreign researchers consider *Pardeh-khani* as a contemporary art based on *Tazieh*. It seems that particular researchers are more interested in *Tazieh* than *Pardeh-khani* so that they wrongly consider *Pardeh-khani* as coming immediately after *Tazieh*. For example, in his "Narrative Painting and Painting Recitation in Qajar Iran." Peter Chelkowski says: "The large-scale paintings on wall and on canvas that depict mainly religious Shiite martyrology and are now referred to as naïve, primitive, folk, or coffeehouse paintings

were first produced in Qajar times, and not, as is often argued by Iranian and Western scholars at the end of the Safavid period" (Chelkowski 98).

Chelkowski's work is the only direct statement about *Pardeh-khani* from a foreign researcher that relates *Pardeh-khani* formation to the Qajar period (1779-1924). Chelkowski suggests painting in *Pardeh-khani* is a result of Shiite thought development within the past 1100 years and considers Shiite thought as a main factor in *Pardeh-khani* formation. "They are, however the result of some eleven hundred years of gradual evolution and development in Shiite mourning rituals" (Chelkowski 98). Chelkowski points to the background and age of the text from the time of formation and growth of Shiite thought in Islam but do not address *Pardeh-khani* specifications directly. Chelkowski realizes *Pardeh-khani* as a unique one yet says: "While our artistic sensitivity may be offended by often crude and clumsy brush strokes of the *Taziya* painters, their work should still be studied because it struck out against Islamic taboos and restrictions concerning figural representation of the holy personalities and brought Iran into a very interesting pan-Asiatic painting recitation tradition" (Chelkowski 98).

Regarding illustrations and methods of visual expression in Iran many documents and other works and studies are in the hands of western researchers. The style of painting on *Pardeh* [canvas] in *Pardeh-khani* is not crude and clumsy as Chelkowski describes. Compared to the religious content of *Pardeh*, the style of paining and the art of *Pardeh-khani* have a longer history. Perhaps due to the attention of foreign researchers to *Tazieh*, the art of *Pardeh-khani* is neglected. More attention is paid to the religious ceremonies of *Tazieh* because foreign researchers (e.g., Chelkowski) know it and its different aspects. Other researchers especially Iranian ones relied on foreign reports and statements, neglecting the art of *Pardeh-khani* in spite of its artistry and consider it a contemporary art. It should be said that perhaps the main reason for this lack of attention to *Pardeh-khani* is due to the absence of reliable and

accessible documents. However, the artistic and expressive potential of this art is addressed in this research despite this absence.

2.1. Roots and Changes

The oldest and most reliable document pertaining to *Pardeh-khani* is available in Manichaean handwriting. In <u>Ostoreh-ye Afarinesh dar Aein-e Mani,</u> Esmailpour argues that "*Pardeh-khani* tradition in public that is continued up to the ages after Islam in Iran and central Asia is rooted in Manichaean art. This point obviously is in one Manichaean writhing (text M219)" (Esmailpour 41). In this regard Bahram Beyzai says:

> Sometimes ago, I worked on the history of Iranian theater and drama with the assistance of Mehrdad Bahar, the distinguished scholar of Iranian Mythology. While I was engaged in this project, I located evidence of *pardeh-khani* within the rites of Manichaeism. When we read phrases such as "look, here is a sinful woman" or "look at that…" this type of *pardeh-khani* persisted throughout the Sassanian period and then disappeared temporarily until it again resurfaced in remote villages and began to be used in the service of Islamic propaganda. (qtd. in Dabashi 79)

Mani, a painter and prophet, was born in AD 216 in Iran during the Sassanid era. Mani found divine inspiration in AD 228 and made his new religion public in AD 240-241, a mixture of Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Mithraism and Buddhism. Using painted images, Mani attempted to promote his religion considering it the most complete and that he was its latest prophet (Esmailpour 4). Klimkeit suggests that "Mani benefitted from the arts especially painting, for the promotion of religion to other areas" (Klimkeit 14). Using painting as an advantage Mani recognized images as an international language and the best instrument for influencing peoples within the Sassanid Empire (AD 224 to AD 651). And especially when the people were not literate

as opposed to the priests, courtiers and Sassanid noblesse who were literate. Mani's doctrines were shared via painting images to all (Esmailpour 44). Various documents demonstrate the special attention to image and its respectful place in Manichaean ceremonies. These images as visual narrations with religious and divine content had an important role in ceremonies. In this regard Bahar says: "One of the most important Manichean ceremonies that were held at the end of the year was *Bems*. In the *Bems* or *Takhte* ceremony a seat was placed in front of audiences holding an image of Prophet Mani showing his divine ascension to heaven" (Bahar 93).

The thoughts and traditions of Mani were expanded and continued by his followers after his death in AD 277 by the order of Bahram, Sassanid king. One way to expand this religion was by displaying in the public the images and paintings of moral and religious narrations via *Mosions,* Manichean missionaries (Esmailpour 46); this, in turn, was making sacred religious images and narrations. Therefore, image and visual narrations had religious aspects in Iranian art and culture but there is no exact information if Mani and his followers initiated the *Pardeh-khani* tradition or borrowed it from a neighboring people. However, before Mani or during his time and East of the Sassanid Empire, in what is now known as India, *Pardeh-khani* was used with images for narrating stories. Anne Pellowski in The world of storytelling suggests the oldest application of image in storytelling:

> A very early mention of the public exhibition of pictures, combined with the recitation of a narrative, appears to be in a work called *Mahabhasya* (c. 140 B.C.) by Patanjali. In it, he refers to dramatic representation of the Krishna legend in pictures, pantomime, and words, as performed by *saubhikas,* or actors. There is quite a bit of disagreement among scholars about whether narration was involved. The Indian scholar Coomaraswamy believes that it probably was. There are slightly later

references to picture showmen, called Yamapattaka, who showed scrolls

on which there were series of pictures representing legends. Some

Brahmanical teachers were known to use a portable frame on which they

would have pictures drawn; showing what would happen if one did this

good deed or that evil one. (Pellowski 140)

Pellowski suggests curtains that Indian narrators used contained images and

that these curtains could be folded. Pellowski also names various kinds of storytelling

canvases: "Among the types of storytelling cloths to be found today are the Kalamkari,

bard cloths of Madras and Andhra Pradesh; *pabuji kaapat*, cloths from Rajasthan;

Saurashtra temple cloths from Gujarat; and badd cloths used by the *dakkalwars* of

Maharashtra" (Pellowski 141).
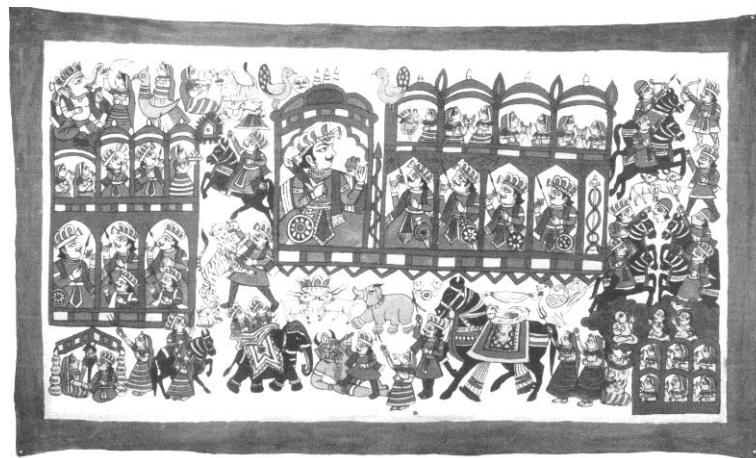
Figure 2.1. A storytelling cloth from Rajasthan in India, from Anne Pellowski, <u>The World of</u>

<u>storytelling</u> (London: R. R. Bowker Company, 1977) 143**.**

Pellowski narrates the report of the Fergusons brothers who saw Kalamkari

production methods in Andhra in southern India:

Essentially, the design is created by a master of the art who draws it on

handspun-handloomed cotton cloth which has been bleached. Some of

his design may be printed with clumsy- looking wooden printing blocks,

and this is usually the case these days with the border designs. The

details of process are complex. Suffice it to say that the students of the

master are responsible for filling his design with color… But the heart of the *Kalamkari* is the fresh design on each… Thus, while to the untutored eye *Kalamkaris* may seem to be alike, a few moments of study will show the individuality of each piece done by a single artist and his school. Different artists and schools create substantially different pieces. Yet all the themes and symbols are stylized and… the stories depicted are limited in number and quite familiar to all. (Pellowski 141)

Apparently, the production of color schemes and designs on cloth by stamps or frame was created in India in the fourth century BC. In Chinese scrolls, printed cloths were brought from India to China in 140 BC. Surely, these clothes with the name of calico entered into Iran too. Regarding the most valuable painted clothes from the Sassanid era, some experts believe that calico clothes were formed during this period in Iran (Pakbaz 48). Nowadays, this painted cloth is produced in Esfahan in Iran via a traditional method. Current paintings have rare imaging and narratives since after the arrival of Islam in Iran, prohibitions against illustrations with animals and humans resulted in Iranian painters and artists tending toward abstract and plant designs. According to Pellowski's work, there might be some similarities between the canvas of *Parde-khani* in Iran and India such as:

I. Canvas [*Pardeh*]'s dimensions

Canvas's dimension of *Pardeh-khani* in India and Iran are similar. For example, Pellowski reports: "There are two standard sizes for the *mata ni pachedi*: a 6- foot square used for a ceiling over a small temple or area of worship; and a rectangular cloth $3\frac{1}{2}$ or $4\ \frac{1}{2}$feet high and 6 feet long" (Pellowski 144). These dimensions are close to Iranian canvas dimensions of *Pardeh-khani* with a 5-foot width and 10-foot length although dimensions for Iranian canvas may vary depending on the subject of narration with shorter or longer stories.

II. Application and subject

Storytelling canvases in India were used for describing the religious stories, narrations and epics especially in Buddhist and Hindu painting (Pellowski 64). In Iran, Mani used *Pardeh-khani* in order to teach and pass on his new religion. Additionally, the early existence of narration and storytelling has been documented in the Achaemenid era (550-331BC). In other words, paintings were used to describe events and epic stories, religious thought and victories of Iranian kings in their battles, and this bears the burden of proof that there are traces of similarity in the application and contexts of *Pardeh-khani* in Iran and India (Gharibpour 55). However, it can be suggested that due to the very large expanse of the Sassanid Empire, its power is the main factor in affecting and transforming culture and arts of people who were its subjects and taxpayers. Clearly, Iranian storytellers with their own inventions and influenced by neighboring cultures and civilizations especially India – with common tribal and historical issues − used painting in their epic and religious narrations (Safa 34).

Another document showing *Pardeh-khani* during the Sassanid era is the rock carvings in Taq-e Bostan[9] relief, in Kermanshah, showing the Sassanid emperor, Khosrow Parviz, hunting in Taq-e Bostan. If we pay attention to the style of composition and kind of visual narration in this rock motif, we can find a lot of similarities between this and canvases of *Pardeh-khani*. Moreover, some available signs model after painting canvases in *Pardeh-khani*. One of the important and reliable signs is the existence of carving ropes around this rock motif. Mehdi Chavari's dissertation about the paintings of Tekye-ye Moaven-ol Molk in Kermanshah, the place where this historical rock motif is found, mentions:

> If we pay attention to the image frame and margin of hunting ground, we
>
> see some ropes were carved on the rock in completely naturalism shape

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[9] . Tagh-e Bostan, Sassanid Reliefs (224-651 BCE): The Sassanid kings chose a sensational setting for their rock reliefs Taghe-e-Bostan, four miles north-East of Kermanshah.
21 Nov. 2011 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/search/keywords:Tagh-e%20Bostan>.

and how careful was the artist in creating these parts. It seems that some

canvases in large size were available for painting the narrations and

events of the court on it and used ropes for keeping it up and tightening

that passed in zigzag shapes from the hole of fabric's margin and had

been installed to a wall or frame that made it flat.(Chavari, Diss. 21)

Regarding the rope shaped object carved out of the rock which frames the

relief in Taq-e Bostan, Chavari continues: "Although in many resources these ropes are

just Tahir [a fence around the hunting ground] or fence around hunting ground, but it

seems unlikely that ropes uses as a fence for hunting ground" (Chavari, Diss.22). If we

survey this rock motif carefully, we find the idea of Chavari true. In this rock motif, the

sculptor of this rock motif showed the rope and the way it passed from available holes

on the margins of the motif so carefully, that it seems that the sculptor transferred this

image exactly from a canvas with its specifications and details to the rock. This sculptor

carefully made a small rectangular piece that seems to have been a hard material such as

metal to avoid damaging canvas holes by the use of rope. The sculptor did not want to

show the model and pattern of painting screen that was placed in a large frame so there

was no reason for curving ropes or to retain parts of a canvas hole or rope.

Figure 2.2. Khosrow Parviz, huntingin relief in Taq-e Bostan-Kermanshah.

Photo: Majid Fadaei

Figure 2.2.1   Figure 2.2.2

Details of the relief show the rope. Photo: Majid Fadaei

On the other hand, these retaining parts and holes deny the assumption of fence. Therefore, these parts or holes are a strong reason for the existence of a rope that was drawn around large painting canvases to make them flat. The creators of this rock motif could have duplicated the ropes which had been used to frame the canvases on which images and portraits were drawn. These documents satisfy the claim that a painting tradition on large canvas was available in the Sassanid era. Even with the attempt of the government for the revival of an empire like the Achaemenid Empire, we can suppose that this large and expanded empire was applying a variety of means to propagate its imperial agenda for greater expansion and preservation of its territorial possessions. One of the most effective styles of adverting was to create rock motifs as well as large painting canvases that showed the divine greatness and power of the king as well as his prowess in battle against his enemies. It can be suggested that large painting canvases could be installed on frames or special walls to display in public so that perhaps a narrator or canvas reader narrated the painting images on these surfaces. This is just an assumption. However, the lack of documents is not a strong enough reason for the absence of this kind of event. Moreover, wars due to political and religious reasons caused the loss of many historical documents. For example, the use of *Pardeh-khani* was attributed to Mani the artist and prophet. One can draw the inference that painting canvases used for *Pardeh-khani* with Manichaean religious subjects were

destroyed during the persecution of Mani's followers and burning of their books. The subject of burning Manichaean books and other works are referred to in various historical resources the work of Sharifzadeh: "In one Chinese text (Hasin Tang Cho) about destroying Manichaean and their works in the year of AD 231/843, it was discussed about their persecution; rulers forced their officers and agents to gather Manichaean sacred divine illustrated paintings and books and burn them in passages and squares" (Sharifzadeh 53).

In another narration about book burnings Sharifzadeh says, "in the year of 311 AH in Baghdad they just burnt four bags including these valuable and illustrated books and could find a large amount of gold and silver" (Sharifzadeh 53). According to these kinds of sources, it can be assumed that because *Pardeh-khani* used images for describing narrations and teachings during the Manichaean era, religious advertisers and storytellers who were not Manichaean used *Pardeh-khani* less or did publicly display *Pardeh-khani* due to fears of persecution. It can be inferred that at a time of danger for the *Pardeh-khan* and his audiences *Pardeh-khani* was performed in limited places. Therefore, we have very little documentation except a few limited reports.

When Muslim Arabs conquered Iran it was a hard blow upon Iranian national pride as well as Iran's art and culture. Iranians were tired of corruption and the oppression of Sassanid kings, and Zoroastrian priests that used religion to rule people toward a class society (Pernia and Aghbal 40). Therefore, the people accepted the new religion of Islam with its slogan of equality and justice. However, the behavior of Arabs conquerors offended Iranians. Although Iranians welcomed Islam as a new religion, Arab troops brought violence and destruction. In his book Do Gharn Sokot, Zerinkob argues:

> In front of huge attacks of Arabs, many towns and castles as well as
> families and tribes were destroyed. They looted the possessions of rich

persons and named them spoils and *Anfal*. They bought Iranian girls and women in Medina bazaar and called them *Sbayaand* prisoners… Arabs did all of these with sword and lash and nobody protested obviously against these works. (Zerinkob 2)

After the invasion of Iran and the introduction of a new religion to Iran, Arabs could access the legendary treasures and wealth of the great Sassanid Empire a previously unattainable dream and desire of Arabs for centuries. Therefore, Arabs' conquerors decided to destroy Iranian identity, language and past because of the fear of not attaining these dreams and desires (Zerinkob 22). There are a many sources referring to the burning of Iranian large libraries and books during the time of Arabs invasion. For example, Ibn Khaldun reports:

When the Muslims conquered Persia and came upon an indescribably large number of books and scientific papers, Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas wrote to 'Umar b. al-Khattab, asking him for permission to take them and distribute them as booty among the Muslims. On that occasion, 'Umar wrote him: 'Threw them into the water. If what they contain is right guidance, God has given us better guidance. If it is error, God has protected us against it. 'Thus, the (Muslims) threw them into the water or into the fire, and the science of the Persians were lost and did not reach us. (Khaldun 373)

Zarinkob in his book Do Gharn Sokot mentions:

What comes from thinking about history is that from the first Arabs wanted to be safe from Iranian language's harm and not seeing it as a sharp weapon at the hands of recessives; therefore destroyed the current languages and accents in Iran since they afraid these languages rose

people against them and they lost their possessions and government in faraway cities of Iran. (Zarinkob 115)

As with other Iranian artistic and cultural traditions, painting art and canvas making from live creatures was unlawful. The first and second AH centuries are notable for the silence of Iranian culture and art. No artistic activities are recorded from this time period. Arab violence led to Iranian hatred of Arabs. Arabs had no knowledge and experience about many issues allowing the possibility for Iranian people to criticize Arabs. National groups protested against Arabs such as the Shu'ubiyya[10] movement in Iran and in other conquered countries (Zerinkob 23). Members of this movement tried to preserve national art and culture. Arab rulers did not pay attention to nor were aware of the ancient arts and customs. Therefore this movement could act covertly, invisible in society. They kept no records because of the fear of persecution. But despite all difficulties and through unnoticed action, the result of this movement's activities and the activities of others groups became obvious in the following centuries. Many strict rules imposed by Arab rulers on Iranians led to more hatred of Arabs. In the year 23AH Omar, the Muslim Caliph was killed by a captured Iranian painter and carpenter named Abululu Firouz living in Medina at the time. Zerinkob mentioned: "It is written when Nahavand captives were moved to Medina; Abululu Firouz stood aside and looked at the captives. He hugged a child among the captives and cherished its head; while crying, Firuz said Omar ate my heart" (Zarinkob 30).

Abululu Firouz and his family along with innocent people were killed to avenge Omar's killing. The only person that protested the killing of innocent ones was Ali. The Arabs' strict rules and violence including the Iranian war with Arabs continued in the Osman era up to the five-year of Ali's Caliphate, because Ali respected Iranians and Iranians respected Ali, they did not battle. Ali's relatives were sympathetic to

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[10] . Shuubiyya came to mean the 'foreign' peoples who had embraced Islam and who, themselves invoking Muslim principles, protested against the contempt shown to them by the Arabs (Holt 584).

Iranians so that Iranians did not consider Ali and his relatives Arabs. These relatives lived for a long time with Ali in Mesopotamia and therefore knew a little Farsi language (Zerinkob 35). After the Arab invasion that resulted in defeat of the Iranian army, the daughters of Sassanid king Yazdgerd III, Shahrbanu and Jahanbanu, along with other captives were brought to Medina. Ali selected Shahrbanu in Bazar to be his second son's, Hussein. After the killing of Ali, the government of Bani Umayyad (41-137 AH) resumed its rule and began increasing pressure over the Iranians. In this regard Zerinkob believes:

> Bani Umayyad did not forget Arabic nervousness and founded its government on the principle of Arab lordship. Bani Umayyad with childlike selfishness that is available in every conqueror, named other Muslims as their own servants. The aristocracy and Bani Umayyad system bought Iran's free persons like slaves and deprived them from social and civil rights and criticized and oppressed them under the name of *Mavali*. *Mavali* could not do any respectful work, build weapon or ride a horse. (Zarinkob 122)

More Iranians hated the Umayyad dynasty that created an aristocracy government that was against Islam's teachings and the prophet, so Iranian sentiment for Ali and his family increased. Christen Bartolome the famous East expert believes "Iranian in the year of sixtieth AH prepared to help Hussein to come to Iran to become Iran's king for two purposes: firstly, independence [self-rule of their own and independent from the Arab rule], and secondly, defeating Bani Umayyad as the symbol of Arab power. Iranians support of Hussein was not merely in words; Iranians sacrificed their lives and properties" (qtd. in Frischler 6).

After Hussein was killed by the Yazid army, Iranians hated Bani Umayyad more. The Iranian opposition and resistance against Arab rulers were used by Bani

Umayyad to govern more forcefully. However, the Bani Umayyad government very soon became shaky and the Abbasids came to power with Iranian assistance. During the Abbasid Caliph, local governments like Taherian (259-206 AH), an ancient and aristocratic family of Samanid (204-324 AH), the known and popular line of Saffarian (253-324 AH) along with the Ghaznavian line (328-431 AH) ruled a vast part of Iran and created a space and paid attention to past Iranian art and culture especially from the Sassanid era (Bahnam 258-61). It was in this time of the Abbasid that the creation of Iran literature and cultural masterpiece, Ferdowsi's <u>Shahnameh</u>, during the Ghaznavid period became famous national epic work in the world, helping Iranian identity. Basel Gary says in his book <u>Persian Painting</u>: "It is narrated that Ferdowsi wrote his poets in a room that was decorated with a lot of painting" (Gary 61). During this period painting was possible despite religious prohibitions. Paintings with epic and myth subjects were effective in the creation of eternal works such as <u>Shahnameh</u>. Despite Arab dominance, Iranians would always find ways to free themselves from domination. The emergence of resistance movements and Iranian sects who were enemies of the Umayyad and Abbasid were results of attempts to be free from domination. But the most important occurrence during this era was Shiite religion. One reason for the creation and expansion of Shiite in Iran was the behavior of Arabs rulers especially the Umayyad, in contravening Islamic teachings. The non-Islamic behavior of Umayyad rulers pushed Iranians closer to the prophet and his family. About Islam's arrival in Iran, Nasr says: "Islamic civilization penetrated to Iran because this land needed it. If Islam religion could not meet Iranian deep spiritual need, they did not become Muslim" (Nasr, "Vizhegiha" 10). Undoubtedly, Islam generated much spiritual interest for Iranians despite the behavior of Arab rulers especially the Umayyad. Shiite religion created independence and identity for Iranian against Arabs and therefore Islam expanded in Iran and became the root and source of artistic and cultural changes in Iran and the Islamic world. In the

fourth AH century, the Buyid dynasty (AD 934-1055) that were among the most adherent Iranian Shiite dynasties mourned and performed *Tazieh* for Imam Hussein in the year 342 AH, and Shiites could mourn freely for Imam Hussein and his family for the first time (Beyzai 64). Since most Iranians were Shiite followers and admired the Prophet and his Family, this admiration created the opportunity to revive past religious rituals and practices according to historical custom and Islamic teachings. There are some theories for the existence of *Pardeh-khani* that expanded with epic and moral narrations of the new religion according to the old traditions before Islam. For example, when Arab rulers governed again in later years, holding these ceremonies were prohibited so that ceremonies were revived in villages and areas far away from government observation. Unfortunately, no documents and report is available so this is just a guess. During this period, painting was shown in the decorations of pottery and textile in Iran after the arrival of Islam. During the Abbasid era a process of language translation ensued. Iranians in the Abbasid ruler's court translated Iranian, Indian and Greek scientific works to Arabic (Pakbaz 60). Some of these scientific works had images. Illustrations and paintings in scientific books were customary that led to illustrations in other works as literary books. Illustration became further developed in the following eras. But painting and illustration was limited to the court such as painting on clay and abstract displays on cloth. It seems painting and the enjoyment of it was allowed only in the courts and not for ordinary people. This is the reason for the absence of reports about painting among ordinary people. If painting occurred in villages located in areas far from the court, those who could record activities did not observe it or were maybe afraid of persecution if they did report it and so did not report it. Indeed, up to the Safavid era when the Shiite religion was declared a formal one, no report or document about *Pardeh-khani* has been found. However, after the Safavid period, some reports about *Pardeh-khani* were presented. The best and clearest report about *Pardeh-*

khani is from Milkeh Mamire, the ambassador from Venice, Italy in the year 945 AH in Tabriz. The ambassador reported:

> Sufis imaged an icon like Ali and respected it. A number of magicians sat on a carpet at the square. They had long paperboards with the images of icons in their hand and pointed out to the icons with one stick and said stories about each one. Each person paid them as afford. There are others who had a book in hand and read Ali, ancient kings as well as Ismail Shah's battle, for people and receive money from audience. (qtd. in Azhand 137)

Azhand referenced this report in his book <u>Namayesh dar Doreh Safavee</u> saying: "It seems that after this, painting uses for advertising court in public and a number of illustrators drew the icons of Imams on the board and paperboard, and that after the Safavid era when oil paint and canvas became common in painting, *Pardeh-khani* appeared" (Azhand 138). According to what is said and based on Venetian ambassador to Iran, Milkeh Mamire as reported in <u>Namayesh dar Doreh Safavee</u>, it can be suggested that the tradition of *Pardeh-Khani* could not have just appeared suddenly at the beginning of the Safavid era (Azhand 139). Reports shows that *Pardeh-khani* art appeared in hidden or rare circumstances before the Safavid era, but that during the Safavid era *Pardeh-khani* appeared in public due to religious advertising freedom. There was no threat to the founders and artists of this art, the government supported it, and the people welcomed it. Thousand-year old painting traditions especially before Islam of the Safavid era were common in Iran. Images of Imams [icons] especially in the Karbala event were available in Hussainia [a Shiite house] with the support of Safavid courtiers and kings. Azhand mentioned another report in his book: "Shah Ismail

in one of his trips to Qom[11] in the year of 924 AH fasted and made pilgrimage to the tomb of the blessed. For the completion of the Hussainia, Agha Kamal Aldin Hussein Mosayebi ordered extremely simple trim and painting to be done there" (Azhand 39). In this regard, Hassan Mashhun, reminisces that canvases with regional aspects were used at the time of Shah Abbas Safavid:

> At the era of Shah Abbas, some images and canvases were shown followed by suitable narrations and finally saying tragic narratives to cause the audiences to mourn and cry. Such preachers used to show up every day in the mosques. These kinds of preachers were seen all days in all mosques. Meanwhile, at night they read sing in large alleys and squares that were alighted with a lot of lights and covered with black cloths in a tragic way. (Azhand 13)

It is clear that before the Safavid era religious icons depicting Imams and especially the Karbala event were not depicted on the walls of divine places walls especially the Hussainia. But during the Safavid era these images were drawn on canvases or painted on paperboard in divine places and the Hussainia as decoration. Some of these paintings can be seen at the Shah Zeyd Isfahan Shrine attributed to the Safavid era, at the "Hussainia-e Moshir Shiraz" and "Tekiye Moavenolmolk Kermanshah" from the Qajar and Zand (1750-1794) periods.

During the Safavid era, the coffeehouse as a public place for people to gather was formed causing a great change in Iranian leisure time and entertainment. In Ghaveh-e khaneh- ha-ye Iran Ali Blvkbashy says:

> First coffeehouses in Iran were created in Safavid era and mostly at the time of Shah Tahmasb (930-984 AH) in Qazvin, and later at the time of

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[11]. The city of Qom is considered as one of the focal centers of the Shiism both in Iran and round the globe. Its seminary (theological school) and the holy shrine of "Hazrat Ma'soomeh" are prominent features of Qom and its proximity to Tehran has given it an advantage as well.
19 Nov. 2011 <http://www.iranchamber.com/provinces/02_qom/02_qom.php.>.

Shah Abbas I (996-1038 AH) in Isfahan. As the word suggests, they were places to drink coffee in… Coffeehouses introduced huge changes into the form of people's gatherings in Iran and also their way of passing time and entertainment. People from different backgrounds used to gather in coffeehouses after their daily works to spend their leisure time; they used to speak for several hours and discuss about social, economic and political issues. Two important schools of verbal and visual arts mean minstrelsy and rhetoric (verbal art) and painting (visual art) grew and glorified in coffeehouse that each one created huge artists. (Azhand 11)

The presence of *Pardeh-kans* in Coffeehouses caused the expansion and growth of storytelling with religious themes. In the Safavid period and following eras especially the Qajar era, *Pardeh-khani* became a popular art. Some narrators turned to painting canvases and received money. This trend continued up to 1980s. However, from the 1970s, people paid less attention to *Pardeh-khani* as a result of the expansion of cinema salons as well as other visual arts and modern media like radio and television (Mohandespour). Therefore, the number of *Pardhe-khans* in Iran decreased up to the year of 1387 SH (2007) to just thirty according Ardalan's survey in Morshedan Pardeh-khan Iran, and each day decreases more (Ardalan 1:10).

2.2. Pardeh-khani and National Identity

Pardeh-khani can be recognized as the most important traditional Iranian art reflective of the national identity of Iranians. A dissection of this art implies the presence of the constituting elements of Iran's identity elements. It can be stated that *Pardeh-khani* is founded on the basis of these identity elements, elements that many Iranian researchers

unanimously introduce as constituents of national identity in Iran. In this scope, Hamid Ahmadi, comments in <u>Bonyadha-ye Hovyet Melli Irani</u>:

> The robust axle of Iranian national identity discourse is in fact composed of a set of elements and factors which, during the previous centuries either before or after Islamic invasion of Persia, turned into the most notable signs of Iran and definer of Iranian identity i.e. Iranians' knowledge of themselves, differentiation from others, and as a result, a way to introduce this nation to the other world. These constituting elements of national identity which today make up the pivotal and fundamental hypotheses for definition of Iran and Iranian people and discourse of our national identity. The same elements are fortified as the milestone and sturdy pillars of Iran's edifice during dominance of various political, social, and cultural crises in the past; their consistency has been verified as the most important signs of Iranian identity along the process of the various political, social, and cultural crises in the past. (Ahmadi 379)

Ahmadi proposes that these essential and significant factors consist of four elements: territory, history, political heritage, and cultural heritage (Ahmadi 380). These elements and factors are present in *Pardeh-khani* and are either the main theme of the stories and narrations in this art where they are clearly and explicitly portrayed and are part of the *Pardeh-khans'* and audience's interests manifested in sub-stories. The respective elements are explained one by one for their significance.

2.2.1. Territory (Homeland, Patria, Motherland)

Territory is one of the substantial themes in *Pardeh-khani* narrations. *Pardeh-khans* with special passion and attention in their performances express ideas of protection of the motherland and her geographical borders. *Pardeh-khans* always emphasize and

advise defense and protection. It seems that a great part of this emphasis comes from Persian literature, eternalized in *Pardeh-khani* narrations as a principal ambition and demand. Verses of Shahnameh are encountered accentuating the ambition and longing expressed as prayer within many epic narrations as performed by *Pardeh-khans*.

> I won't like living if Iran is not
> existent
> Or
> It would be a pity if Iran is
> destroyed
> Becoming the lair of brutal beasts,
> etc (Naghle Gordafrid)

The *Pardeh-khan* invoke God and recite prayers for the durability and protection of the motherland and defense of ancestral territory against enemies. These invocations occur, depending on the specific epic narration, in the overture or within sub-stories, or at the ending of a saga. Regarding the role of homeland in Iranian national identity, Ahmadi writes: "Concept of border and its protection, which delineates the geographical boundaries of Iran, has been largely focused since the mythological era until the modern times. Hence, Iran's national identity is linked to its geography and territory" (Ahmadi 382).

2.2.2. History

Iran's history is divided into two major parts: mythological and historical. These two parts are well reflected in Iran's historical and literary works. Concerning this important element in Iran's national identity, Ahmadi's reasoning is as follows:

> Iran's history is one of the most substantial constituting elements of
> Iran's national identity because of reflecting early stages of formation of
> collective spirit and antiquity of Iran's national identity. It must be also
> noted that Iran's history is fundamentally composed of two parts namely

mythological and historical. And, these two parts are well manifested in historical works associated with Iran. (Ahmadi 383)

Ahmadi believes that the mythological part of Iran's history plays a crucial role in a political reconstruction and historical and territorial consistency of this nation. Ahmadi recognizes a significant and fundamental function for mythologies regarding the national identity of Iran based nationalism and identity. Ahmadi is of the view that:

It must not be inferred that the mythological part [of Iran's history] is insignificant due to its obscurities and deficient historical documents, and hence, this part shall not be neglected as a constituting element of Iranian national identity. Conversely, Iran's instance shows that Iranians mythologies, later assembled in major parts of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and already visualized in pre-Islamic Khodaei Namakha and Aeyin Namakha and also in religious books of Iranians, have played a profoundly fundamental role and perhaps more important than its historical part in reconstruction of Iranian society and its territorial and historical consistency. (Ahmadi 384)

Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is the main source of Iran's epic *Pardeh-khans*. Shahnameh covers Iran's history in two parts namely mythological and historical starting from the foundation of Iran until the Arab invasion of Persia. Logically this suggests that stories and narrations of *Pardeh-khani* are adaptations of historical and mythological epics of Shahnameh with mythological and heroic themes and content. In addition to Shahnameh, *Pardeh-khans* adapt and narrate stories from other sources especially oral narratives and historical references. Historical references have a great significance and role in these narrations as well.

History is also a highly significant element in religious stories and narratives. Religious stories based on Islamic history and Shia narratives play a substantial role in

Pardeh-khani. And since the Shia branch constitutes a major part of Iranian national identity, religious stories and narratives are understood as religious and historical elements as a discourse of Iran's national identity via this traditional art.

2.2.3. Political Heritage and Government Institution

Political heritage and government institutions together are the third major element in the construction of Iran's national identity. Iran is one of the ancient civilizations of the world that, despite the ebbs and flows of empires, has politically preserved, in a continuum, its national sovereignty throughout history. Despite various invasions and the domination of foreigners including Alexander's carnage followed by Greek sovereignty over Persia for a period of 180 years (330 until 150 BC), Persia recovered its pre-Islamic political life and governmental heritage after the replacement of Seleucid rulers with the Arsacid Empire in 247 BC and particularly through the long-standing reign of the Sassanid dynasty (AD 224 to AD 651). After the arrival of Islam, although Arab rulers attempted to Arabize the country after the territorial conquest, governments were established in Iran until today through the endeavors of Iranian cultural and political elites (Zerinkob 8). In addition, Iranians have never tolerated dominance and governance by foreigners over their country and have always sought for their own political sovereignty. If Iran's history and territory are considered as the two fundamental pillars of Iranian identity, the institution of Iranian government and "Iranian Land" concepts forms the third pillar, which is politically the same as the ideal government or state based on sovereignty and justice.

In Iranian thought, the state (government), i.e. the king or ruler has the duty to guard and protect the territory. The ruler is the one who provides people with security, peace, and progress, and protects the country against its enemies, strengthening the alliances within the nation through establishing justice and equality leading to national progress. The focus on government institution and political thought can be observed in

epic and religious narrations delivered by *Pardeh-khan*. Many *Pardeh-khans* have emphasized the significance of governance such as narrating the Iranian king as guardian and protector of Iranian sovereignty and Iran's territory. Just kings have been accorded respect in *Pardeh-khani* narrations because such rulers have always received the support of Iranian heroes and champions. This support is observed in <u>Shahnameh</u> anecdotes and is mentioned by *Pardeh-khans* within a chronology of changing circumstances.

2.2.4. Cultural Heritage

Ahmadi mentions "cultural heritage" as the fourth element of Iranian national identity (Ahmadi 387). Iran's cultural heritage consists of different components including:

I. Customs and traditions.

II. National language.

III. Traditional arts.

IV. Literature and philosophy.

V. Faith or spiritual heritage

These components are also present in *Pardeh-khani* constituting the essential foundation of this national art.

2.2.5. National Language (Persian)

Persian was the main language in epic and religious *Pardeh-khanis*. Significant reasons for Persian language use was the *Pardeh-khans'* use of Ferdowsi's <u>Shahnameh</u> and Persian oral and folklore tales and anecdotes in the epic performances in addition to the use of Persian religious texts in religious performances including epics like <u>Hamley-e Heidari</u>, <u>Khawaran-nameh</u>, <u>Rowzatol Shohada</u>, and other religious poetry books. Regarding the role of Persian as the national language, Ahmadi asserts: "Persian language can be regarded as one of the essential components of Iran's national identity

and continuity of its historical, political, and territorial memories because of the fact that almost all the literary, historical, mystical, religious and intellectual Iranian heritages and also majority of prose and poetry books related to Iran's history and mythologies have been written in this language" (Ahmadi 380).

Although Iran is composed of diverse ethnicities and *Pardeh-khani* is performed in some regions of the country in the local dialect, Persian has been the major and official language of *Pardeh-khani* art. One of the reasons for Persian language prevalence throughout Iran's spiritual and cultural empire was its vast geographical sphere of influence. In the past Iran encompassed a large part of the Middle East region and Central Asia. Iran was not limited to its current political territory and geographical borders. Iosif Mikhailovich Oranskij, the Russian Iranologist, writes about the influence of the Persian language:

> After the 8th and 9th centuries, Persian was the viable and principal language of people in many regions of south-west Persia, Khorasan, and Central Asia. But, it also prevailed as the literary tongue not only in the aforementioned territories but also in farther regions such as Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Asia Minor, India, and even Chinese Turkistan. Not only Iranians and Tajiks but also Kurds, Afghans, Indians, Azeris and a group of Turk-spoken tribes used to write in Persian. Persian was generally the writing, literary, scientific and official and organizational language of many countries in the near and Middle East regions playing a vital role in the historical and cultural lives of the respective ethnicities and nations. (qtd. in Ahmadi 390)

What is suggested is that an expansive sphere of influence of Persian language has helped traveling and professional *Pardeh-khans* present their narrations and stories

using language comprehensible among diverse peoples living within a vast geographical expanse.

2.2.6. Traditional and Iran's National Arts

Iran's ancient and traditional arts are among the constituents and treasures of Iran's cultural heritage. Many of these arts exclusively belong to Iran and have been created by Iranian artists. These arts include Iranian painting known as "Miniature" in the west, Iranian storytelling, Iranian music, Iranian architecture, calligraphy, Iranian carpet making, traditional and ritual dramas, and more.

Among the different Iranian arts, painting, music (vocal and harmonic systems), acting, and story-telling have major and essential roles in *Pardeh-khani* art. The integration of these native and national arts led to the formation of the art of *Pardeh-khani*, granting a completely national and Iranian identity to *Pardeh-khani*.

2.2.7. Literature and Philosophy

An important part of Iran's cultural heritage are literary, philosophical, mystical, and scientific works. Many books and their writers are not only considered as part of Iran's cultural heritage but in some cases part of world cultural heritage. Examples of such literary and philosophical masterpieces are Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, Masnavi Manavi, Hafiz's Anthology, Khayyam Quatrains, Nezami's romantic poetries among others. Written and oral literature along with Iranian ideology and philosophical thought can be well observed in *Pardeh-khani*. Most of the narrations in *Pardeh-khani* are taken from Shahnameh epics, and from moral and spiritual stories and teachings of Iranian poets and sages. The *Pardeh-khans* consciously selected and benefitted from literary sources and philosophical treasures appropriate to specific situations.

The most important kind of ideology and thought lies in a belief in the eternal battle between good and bad as mythological and epic foundation of Iran's history and

faith. *Pardeh-khani* finely illustrates this belief in its martial and religious stories through narration and painting.

2.2.8. Traditions and Customs

Iranian traditions and customs surviving from the past times up to the present are part of Iranian cultural heritage. These traditions and customs are reflected in different ways in *Pardeh-khani*. For example, one can observe the costumes and clothing style of painted characters, the practices and procedures of performing sessions by *Pardeh-khans* and his rapport with audiences and vice versa. Ethics and religious traditions are taught and transferred to succeeding generations of Iranians by the *Pardeh-khans* through sub-narrations and stories contributing to the survival and expansion of Iran's past traditions.

2.2.9. Religion or Faith (Spiritual Heritage)

Spiritual or religious heritage (faith) is another element of cultural heritage, which carried and continues to play a significant and essential role in Iran. Iran is a territory in which different and important religions emerged. The most well-known of these religions were Zurvanism[12], Mithraism[13], Zoroastrianism[14], and Manichaeanism[15]. In fact, spiritual and religious thought has been an inseparable part of Iranian society. Religion or faith has played a crucial part in the social life of Iranians. Religion has had a determining role in the arts and philosophical thought of Iranian people. Religion

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[12] . "Zurvanism is a now-finished branch of Zoroastrianism that had the deity Zurvan as its First Principle (primordial creator deity)… In Zurvanism, Zurvan is the hypostasis of Time (and space). The Name, as it appears in Middle Persian, comes from Avestan zruvan- 'time', with the same rang of significance as in the English language" (Iyer 213).

[13] . Mithraism, the cult of Mithra as it developed in the West, its origins, its features, and its probable connection with Mithra worship in Iran.   23 Nov.2011 < http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mithraism. >.

[14] . Zoroastrianism is one of the earliest revealed religions and is of enormous importance in the history of religions. It has links with the ancient Vedic beliefs of India and even possibly to a remote Indo-European past. It has - influenced northern Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam and was the state religion in Iran from 6th century BC to 7th century AD.
23Nov. 2011 <http://www.iranchamber.com/religions/articles/zoroaster_zoroastrians_in_iran.php.>.

[15]. Manichaeanism/Manichaeans: (third century onward) Religion founded by the prophet Mani in Ad 240 when he established a religious community in Seleuci-Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia (Smith 151).

plays a significant role in *Pardeh-khani*. Two kinds of religious beliefs are observed in this art, an ancient belief based on Zoroastrianism, and the Islamic view.

Pre-Islamic religious and spiritual beliefs are more noticeable in martial *Pardeh-khani* while Islamic spiritual attitudes are found more present in religious works. At the same time in many instances, *Pardeh-khans* have exquisitely and admirably merged aspects of the pre-Islamic and Islamic, creating a peculiar and metaphysical combination that is representative of a continuity of religious thought from Iranian ancient religion to the new faith. An example of such a combination can be seen in *Siavash's Passing through Fire* Pardeh:

Figure 2.3. The revenge of Keykavoos from Sivavash, from Hadi Saif <u>Naghashi Ghahveh Khaneh</u>. (Tehran: Sorosh Press, 1989) 36.

In this *Pardeh*, Siavash – an Iranian prince successfully passes through fire (incinerated to test his sinfulness or innocence) – holding a "نصرمن الله وفتح القريب" flag in his hand with a Quran verse meaning: "Help is from God and the victory is close." Some critics have criticized this *Pardeh* and painting due to a historical mismatch between the Sivash story which happened before the Islamic invasion of Persia and the "Help is from God and the victory is close" flag which is a famous Islamic verse. In this case, Hussein Ghoullar Aghasi master of *Pardeh-khani* and coffeehouse painter- states:

> Some educated guys, here and there, found fault with us that you spoil
> the authenticity of <u>Shahnameh</u> with your work because of lacking

sufficient literacy and knowledge. Why shall Siavash carry "Help is from God and the victory is close" flag? Siavash's story dates back to a time before Iranians converted to Islam. They were unaware of the fact that if Siavash did not carry this flag, neither people would accept him, nor in my belief he could pass easily through the fire like a bouquet of flower. (qtd. in Saif, *Naghashi* 31)

To summarize, a religious approach and spiritual thoughts cannot be eliminated nor separated from Iranian *Pardeh-khani*. Based on aforementioned discussions above, *Pardeh-khani* must be regarded as the art of "Iranian national identity" via its expression of Iran's national identity elements.

2.3. Pardeh-Khani in Performance

Pardeh-khani is performed in public spaces similar to eastern arts that are created and occur in gatherings. Three main factors necessary for a successful communication are sender, message and receiver. Indeed, the addressee is as necessary as the *Pardeh* and the *Pardeh-khan*. *Pardeh-khani* is often performed in open spaces in front of a gathering of people. Streets, squares and areas near holy places and shrines have been the main performance places. If people request it, the *Pardeh-Khan* can perform in other places like houses and other indoor spaces. Performing while going from a village to a city is also common. *Pardeh-khans* often perform at a special place that people are informed about (Ardalan 6:12). *Pardeh-khans* select public places to perform where people gather since their income is provided by people who watch. Indeed it is a job for *Pardeh-khans*. Therefore, *Pardeh-Khani* had a style and custom that *Pardeh-khan* observed as a professional one and this custom and style has been familiar for the addressees, too. According to this known custom, *Pardeh-khans* do their work in the following way:

2.3.1. Installing the Pardeh on the Wall or Frame

A *Pardeh-khan* usually installs the canvas on a wall or on a frame before people arrive. Most *Pardeh-khans* use a white curtain over the painted canvas to cover images and icons on the canvas (Ardalan 19:18). But some install the canvas without a white curtain. After the canvases installed, the *Pardeh-khan* begins to read aloud poems or prayers. His loud voice attracts a gathering of people. In some cases, people would stand around the performance place waiting for the *Pardeh-khan* to arrive and install the *Pardeh*. Indeed, installing the canvas on a wall or a frame becomes part of the ceremony.

Figure 2.4. Installing the *Pardeh* on the wall by Pardeh-khan. Photo: Majid Fadaei

2.3.2. Introductory Speeches

Some *Pardeh-khans* read introductory speeches such as prayers or epic religious poems to attract people's attention while preparing the space. Other *Pardeh-khans* prepare an introduction ahead of time according to a particular time, location and situation in order to attract more attention (Ardalan 19: 18).
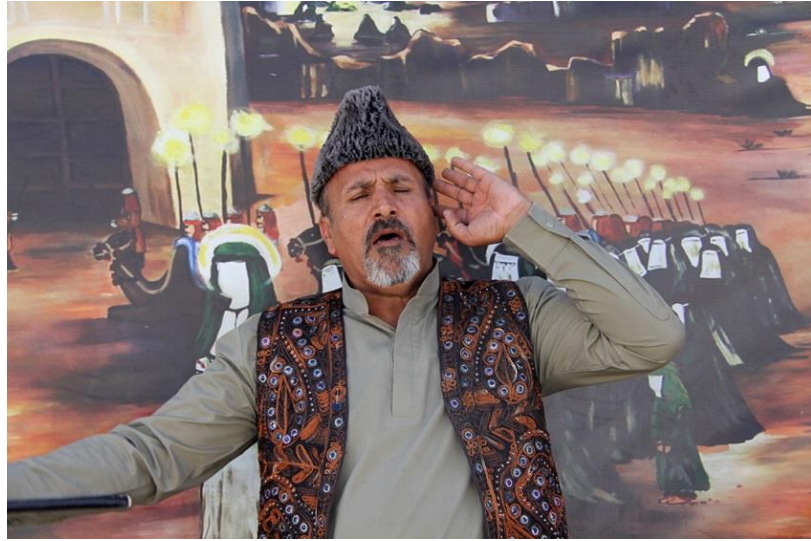
Figure 2.5. Introductory speech by *Pardeh-khan*. Photo: Majid Fadei

2.3.3. Prayer

Usually *Pardeh-khans* read some prayers before starting their narration asking God to forgive their sins and for a good audience. In fact, this corresponds to the idea of motivating the audience and, in a way or the other, prepares the grounds for the story to be told. In other words, the audience is dragged, from the outside world of the story, into the ambience created by the *Pardeh-khans* and prologued by the prayers. Moreover, this part of *Pardeh-khani* is a way for *Pardeh-khan* to ask money from the audience to perform a good work and most especially to encourage the *Pardeh-khan* to begin the performance (Darvishi).

Figure 2.6. Pardeh-khan in praying position. Photo: Majid Fadai

2.3.4. The Opening of Scenes

Before the performance, *Pardeh-khan* begins with the name of God. A *Pardeh-khan* that uses a white curtain to cover the painted canvas gradually rolls the curtain up to show the images. Ahmad Shamloo, in mentioning his memories of a *Pardeh-khani* session recalls: "*Pardeh-khan* opened the *Pardeh* from the beginning and narrated the story roles by pointing with stick, or turned the white screen up gradually, or often opened the canvas itself. Indeed, the main story started with opening the canvas along with secondary stories narrated by the *Pardeh-khan*" (Shamloo 54).

Figure 2.7. The opening of *Pardeh* by *Pardeh-khan*. Photos: From <u>Ghialisazi</u>

2.3.5. Digression

Sometimes the *Pardeh-khan* cuts parts of the main story and reads secondary stories painted on the canvas creating excitement, suspense and audience focus. Sometimes the *Pardeh-khan* narrates relevant stories according to a particular audience using the subject of the main story in a way that members of the audience feel involved in the original story. This is one of the unique specifications of *Pardeh-khani* in Iran. As another method, the *Pardeh-khan* cuts the main story just before its peak. He then asks money from the audience and after gathering donations, he continues. The *Pardeh-khan* completes and repeats the story according to the financial capabilities of the audience.

Additionally, the kind of story and the timing of when a story is performed can be effective in attracting an audience and for receiving a donation bonus. For example, religious stories have more fans especially during Ramadan or Muharram (Ardalan). Usually people make many vows during these months. Epic narrating also generates many customers in coffeehouse during this time too.

2.3.6. The Last Prayer

Usually after ending the story with a conclusion, the *Pardeh-khan* says sermons and prays for the people and asks forgiveness for the departed, good health and blessing for the audience. He especially prays for those who give money and a bonus. Some people go to the *Pardeh-khan* before and after the ceremony and offer money for the *Pardeh-khan* to pray them. Others give money as a vow to guarantee that the *Pardeh-khan* will perform at another place and time.

Figure 2.8. Pardeh-khan in last prayer position. Photo: Majid Fadaei

2.3.7. Collecting the Pardeh

Immediately after *Pardeh-khani* is over, the *Pardeh-khan* rolls up the *Pardeh* (canvases) with reverence especially religious canvases. *Pardeh-khan* does not roll the painted canvases with images containing religious themes, and instead folds them only. It is

because he believes that Imams' icons should not be placed on the images of bad persons.

2.3.8. The Length of Pardeh-khani Performance

The length of time for a *Pardeh-khani* performance depends on people's schedules as well as where the performance will take place. It can be from one to two hours or even longer. But the main issue is the attention span and patience of the audience that determines the performance length.

2.4. Pardeh-khani and Other Arts

If we survey other Iranian arts, we gain better and more exact information from the art of *Pardeh-khani*. Indeed, one other way for knowing the antiquity and functions of this art is a familiarity with *Pardeh-khani*'s effects on other arts. *Pardeh-khani* includes several arts. The main ones are:

2.4.1. Iranian Painting [Miniature]

As mentioned earlier, the oldest available document available associates *Pardeh-khani* directly to Mani the prophet during the Sassanid era. Although it is probable that *Pardeh-khani* has an older background there is no document in hand. According to a survey of painting works from the Manichaean period including paintings that remain and were discovered in Turpan area shows that Iranian painting [miniature] after the arrival of Islam was affected by Manichean painting methods and Sassanid artistic specifications. In <u>Islamic Painting</u>, Servat Akasheh says:

> Manicheans respected painting art very much and created a school for them. These painters served their art to Muslims according to their demands. Specifications of Manichean paintings were unknown up to the year of 1904 that Professor "Foon Lickock" found some illustrated

handwritten. He also found some wall painting within a Manichean obsolete temple in ruins near Turpan. Their mixture and color is similar to recent Iranian artists. (Akasheh 56)

Rare paintings in literary books after the arrival of Islam show frame and partial scene in a story depicting important events of that story. In these partial scenes, the main event was painted larger in the center of the miniature while secondary events were painted around the main event. This way of painting did not occur in all miniatures so that we can conclude that this particular frame style was affected by *Pardeh-khani* paintings along with the way of narrating and division of a story's events are depicted in some miniatures after the arrival of Islam.
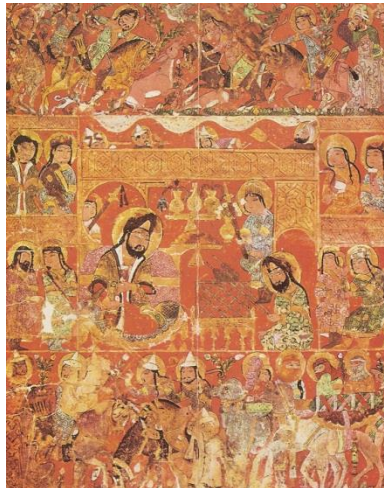
Figure 2.9. The page painting in the Book of Theriac (595 AH), from Roien Pakbaz. Neghashey-e Iran (Tehran: Zerin and Simien, 2006) 64.

After the Seljuk period (1037-1194 AD), the miniature followed its way in Iran and was no more under the influence of the painting styles of *Pardeh-khani*. As a result, miniature created a special style in Iranian painting, with the only exception of Khawaran-nameh, which contents deal with the life of the Ali Ibn Abi Talib and its painting style shows influences from *Pardeh-khani*. This book was written in 830 AH and completed between 854 and 891 AH. Sharifzadeh in commenting about the style of this book says: "Drawn humans in this book have big body with big heads with light

colors and golden flames around the head of holiness" (Sharifzadeh 98). This book was painted in the Shiraz painting school by Farhad and several other painters. According to Shiraz miniature specifications, some consider that this book was affected by old Iran painting customs, considering Shiraz as a direct vital school of ancient Iranian painting customs. The main Iranian character revealed in this school and in following eras came to its peak (Sharifzadeh 98). Additionally, the content of this book is religious and Shiite. It seems that Khawaran- nameh is the first book with Shiite content before the formal institutionalization of Shiite religion in Iran and it was painted in Sunni ruling era in Iran.

Figure 2.10. A painting of the book of Khawaran-nameh, from Basil Gray Persian- painting (New York: Rizzoil, 1977) 106.

Another report from paintings in the book written by Falnameh Shah Tahmasb from Safavid era confirms the effectiveness of Iranian painting (miniature) from *Pardeh-khani*. In this regard Hossini says:

> Shila Canbay in the book of In Search of Ferdows according to the narration of Stuart Gary Welch states unusual dimensions of Falnameh's paintings maybe caused because of poor vision of *Shah Tahmasb* in this period of his reign. But immediately she recognized that the lack of connection between back text, Falnameh paintings and its large

dimensions, it is probable that this part of works held high in front of the court or public and was described via icon reading. (Hossini 34)

This report is another proof for the existence of Shamayel-khani, literally translated as face reading which in fact is the art of storytelling by reading the pictures or the icons reading and *Pardeh-khani*'s custom and art from Safavid era.

2.4.2. Tazieh

Tazieh is the only drama and religious play in the world of Islam that over the centuries about the mourning for Hussein, grandson of the Prophet in Iran. Almost all domestic and foreign researchers in Iran believe that the *Tazieh* is based on the mourning ceremonies of the Siavash dragon in Iran before Islam. During this ceremony, people mourned for Siavash, one of the Iranian kings unjustly killed. Different literary and historical reports such as Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, a wall painting from the third century before BC, is part of ceremony in Panjakent Samarkand in present-day Tajikistan, a discovery published in 1959 by Alexander Mongait in Archeology in the USSR revealing the performance of this ceremony before Islam (Humayuni 24).

Interestingly, after the arrival of Islam the Siavash mourning ceremony contained other content since Iranians became admirers of the Prophet's family and were Shiites. After the tragic event of 61 AH and killing of the Prophet grandson by Yazid, *Tazieh* as a mourning ceremony for Hussein was held according to the mourning ceremony before the arrival of Islam. *Tazieh* and mourning for Hussein was held in Bagdad for the first time during the Buyid government (945-1055AD) including the participation of Iranian Shiite rulers in a formal and public way. In Namayesh dar Iran Beyzai reports:

Ibn Kasir Shami stated in the history that' Mu'izz al Dauleh Ibn Buyid' ordered in the first decade of Muharram in Bagdad that all Bagdad

markets were closed, wore dark cloths and made *Tazieh* for Syed Al-shohada. Because this event was not a custom in Bagdad, therefore Sunni scholars considered it a great novelty and they could not discuss with Mu'izz al Daula so they submitted. After that, each year up to the extinction of Dialamites, Shiites did *Tazieh* in the first ten days of Muharram in all cities till the beginning of the Seljuk era. (Beyzai 115)

According to this document and other historical reports such as <u>*Tazieh* der Iran</u> by Humayuni, Mu'izz al Daula made mourning for the Prophet family a public event. Although this mourning is not a play, over the course of seven centuries with various changes in Iran, *Tazieh* as a play for the mourning of Imam Hussein was formed. From the notes of European travelers and ambassadors we can understand the changes in flow and performance of *Tazieh*. In this regard Bayzai mentions the changes in *Tazieh* as follows:

At first, just some groups passed in front of the audience slowly and did chest beating, chain handling, cymbals flail, etc. as well as carrying signs similar to armament, choir singing and dirge reading for remind people of Karbala event. In the next level, the number of songs was reduced and the number of symbols was increased. One or two event reader narrated Karbala event for spectators with cymbals, drums and dirge. After a while, instead of narrators, they showed some people like martyrs to the people with simulation and similar clothing that described their sorrows. After that they spoke with each other and then players appeared. Maybe in the last years of Safavid, *Tazieh* passed its final changes as became as one we know. (Beyzai 116)

Although no European travelers and ambassadors that traveled to Iran especially during the Safavid era did not report and describe a dramatic display like

what is performed pointed out *Tazieh* as a mourning for Imam Hussein. Therefore, we conclude that *Tazieh* was not transformed into a dramatic play in the Safavid era or was not in the form of a play in the least. But according to available documents, *Tazieh* in its dramatic form was completed during the Zand era (1750 -1796 AD), for example one report about *Tazieh*'s final form in the writing of William Franklin. Azhand mentioned this report in Namayesh der Doreh Safavee: "In the book of Travel Observations of Bengal to Iran in the chapter of Bengal to Shiraz, he [William Franklin] mentioned to the dramatic play in *Tazieh* in Muharram 1166 solar calendar (1206 AH) in Zand era" (Azhand 39). Indeed, he reported a *Tazieh* for the first time that some persons played historical characters' roles in Karbala event like Imam Hussein, his family, Yazid and his soldiers and told dramatic dialogues (Azhand 40). This report shows the actual form of *Tazieh* was created during the Zand era (1750-1796AD) and was fully bloomed in Qajar era (1781-1925AD). *Tazieh* was created in Iran in the centuries after *Pardeh-khani*'s existence in Iran. A number of European researchers believe that *Pardeh-khani* is the product or visual result of *Tazieh*. They deny dramatic acts, and that color and the kind of clothing in *Pardeh-khani* were a copy of or are owed to *Tazieh*. For example, Yedde A. Godard on wall paintings (frescoes) of Imam Zadeh Zeyd Isfahan says: "The frescoes that decorated this little sanctuary form a rare collection of Muslim religious pictures. They illustrate the Shiite passion rather like theatrical representations in showing various episodes in succession" (qtd. in Chelkowski 104).

It seems that researchers have no exact knowledge about *Pardeh-khani* but mistakenly suggest this art as *Tazieh*. However, according to age, visual specifications and dramatic characteristics that was performed as *Pardeh-khani* as along with the narration aspect of this art, it should be said that *Tazieh* is the result and product of dramatic aspects of *Pardeh-khani*. Undoubtedly, color, the kind of clothing, shapes and composition of *Pardeh-khani* painting were patterns for *Tazieh* makers. Therefore, not

also *Pardeh-khani* is the visual forerunner of *Tazieh*, but that *Tazieh* itself was affected by *Pardeh-khani*. Fortunately, this point is mentioned in newer papers written by Iranian researchers. For example, Rahmet Amini discussing the trends of *Tazieh* formation says:

> For several, ceremonies for honor and mourn were held in Iran as a custom and ritual like the Siavash ceremony. It should be said that Siavash mourning was not a play but considered as a religious demonstration meaning that the audience was not apart from performance in Siavash grief… this is the reason why during the Safavid era, *Naghali* became common as a method for a one-person narration via two frames, epic and religious. Therefore, *Pardeh-khani* was created with the painter doing the narration. After about three hundred years *Tazieh* was formed in the Zand era and peaked in the Qajar era. Showing the summarized trend of these changes, we can provide the following axis of mourning narration. (Amini 34-36)

Naghali --------------------------*Pardeh-khani*----------------------------------*Tazieh*
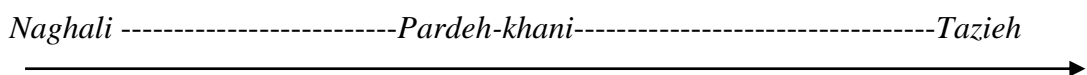
Figure 2.11. Timeline of mourning narration in Iran, from Rehmet Amini, "Baresy-e Tasirat-e Moteghabel-e Namayshah-ye Mezhaby va Theater Moaser Iran." Faslnameh Takhsosiy-e Theater 41(2008): 2-10.

Although Rahmat Amini made a significant mistake in considering the Safavid era as the start of *Naghali* and *Pardeh-khani* as its basis, his proposed axis is significant in placing *Tazieh*'s formation.

Figure 2.12. Tazieh of Karbala. Photo: Mahzadeh Najjar

2.4.3. Wall Painting and Pictorial Tiles

After declaring Shiite religion as Iran's formal religion during the Safavid era, the construction of structures and shrines improved. In decorating these structures, images with religious content especially icons of Shiite elders and the battle of Karbala were used. In the following eras of the Zand (1750-1794) and Qajar (1779-1924), wall paintings and pictorial tiles reached a peak. With similarities between patterns, colors, composition and especially the subjects of religious wall paintings from the Safavid era with *Pardeh-khani* paintings, it can be said that wall paintings and pictorial tiles from the Safavid era were affected by religious icons and *Pardeh-khani* paintings. Narrative wall paintings and image tiles have an old history in Iran with samples was reported from the Achaemenid (BC 330-550), Parthian (224 BC-AD 250) and Sassanid (AD 224-651) palaces before the arrival of Islam as well as in the palaces of Islamic rulers. These paintings and tiles depicted the greatest number of banquet halls and epic narratives as well as Iranian kings' victories against their enemies. After the Safavid era narrative paintings with religious content started in religious places especially shrines. There are reports about orders from Safavid kings mentioned above. Because of its importance a reference is mentioned again: "Shah Ismail in one of his trips to Qom in

the year 924 AH, fasted and made pilgrimage to the tomb of the blessed. For the completion of Hussainia, Agha Kamal Aldin Hussein Mosayebi ordered that extremely simple, trim and painting was done there" (Azhand 39).

This report shows that in religious sites during the Safavid era, various kinds of Imams' images were drawn from the inception of the paintings. While *Tazieh* did not gain its current form during the Safavid era what is now called *Tazieh* did not exist before. The only suitable pattern for wall painters (frescoes) and drawings came from *Pardeh-khani* painting. This rejects Godard's view that wall paintings of Shah Zeyd shrine of Isfahan from the Safavid were affected by *Tazieh* during that era due to the absence of *Tazieh* in the Safavid era. Furthermore what confirms this point is that these wall paintings were influenced by a visual and dramatic art, and did not create themselves, but created via *Pardeh-khani*. Indeed, wall paintings and wall tiles with religious content especially those with Shiite content started in the Safavid era, affected by *Pardeh-khani*. Examples can be found in the beautiful samples in Zeyd shrine Isfahan from the Safavid era as well as in shrines in Gilan province from following eras especially the Qajar (1779-1924). Moreover, in the pictorial tile of Tekiya Moaven Almolk and Hossenieh-e Moshir from the Qajar era, influences of *Pardeh-khani* on pictorial tiles of this era are obvious.

Figure 2.13. The pictorial tile of Tekiya Moaven Almolk in Kermanshah. Photo: Majid Fadaei

Figure 2.14. The wall painting of Emam zadeh Zeyd in Isfahan. Photo:Majid Fadaei

2.4.4. Coffeehouse Painting

Coffeehouse painting is a new method in Iran derived from *Pardeh-khani*. Coffeehouse painting as "folk or fantasy painting" was also created in the Qajar era especially after the drawing up of a Constitution. Coffeehouse painting is considered the most important style and method for Iranian painting. It can be said that Coffeehouse painting is a *Pardeh-khani* painting that separated itself from the multi-dimensional art of *Pardeh-khani* and found an independent identity for itself. Coffeehouse painting for the first time made the use and enjoyment of the painting popular with Iranian common people. Each painting in a coffeehouse painting includes a part that points to a story itself. Coffeehouse painting patrons, unlike miniature paintings, were common people. It can be said that from memories that people recalled images in *Pardeh-khani* and that people felt a need and interest for these kinds of painting for themselves Coffeehouse painting was born. Indeed Coffeehouse painting is named wrongly with "Ghalat Sazi" (Pakbaz 124). Patrons of Coffeehouse painting were the audience of *Pardeh-khani*, their sense of patriotism and love of myths, national heroes as well as religious themes generated work for painters. These artists created paintings that was informal and used slang because the addressee of this kind of painting was common people. As this painting was born in coffeehouses, it was named coffeehouse painting. As mentioned earlier,

coffeehouses expanded after the Safavid era and became a place for different kinds of people to have conversation, debate, including entertainment games and plays, especially to listen to and watch the stories and images of canvas readers. Ali Blvkbashy says:

> Two major schools of verbal and visual arts, narration and rhetoric (verbal arts) and painting (visual art) grew and flourished in the coffeehouse. Narration, rhetoric and painting work prospered in Coffeehouses revealing the artistic and literary abilities of ordinary people. Narrators told stories and read Shahnameh, and Coffeehouse painters created epic and religious roles as well as mythical and historical events. Verbal and visual arts played an important role in familiarizing people with their literary and cultural heritage from ancient and Islamic eras. (Blvkbashy 11)

Figure 2.15. A coffeehouse painting of Joseph thrown in the well by his brothers, from Hadi Saif Naghashi Ghahveh Khaneh. (Tehran: Sorosh Press, 1989) 17.

With the expansion of coffeehouses, people from different societal levels came to coffeehouses. Coffeehouse owners provided interesting programs that boosted their business earning more income by inviting famous narrators and *Pardeh-kan.*

Coffeehouses were the primary places for entertainment and receiving information during the Safavid era through other eras until the creation of radio, cinema and TV. In the Qajar era, painters and tile makers were active in tile decoration, and created works at the request of coffeehouse owners. These works were affected by *Pardeh-kani* paintings. Hassan Ismaeilzadeh, a famous coffeehouse painter discusses the history of Coffeehouse painting: "This painting grew from Shah Ismail Safavid and Shah Abbas Safavid that were Sadat and ordered Imam Hussein icon. During the Qajar era, parallel to Qajar paintings that belonged to the court, coffeehouse paintings and icon drawings were created with the donation of people as vows and were installed at coffeehouses" (Hasanzadeh 28). Coffeehouses painters and other sources remembered Hussein Ghollar Aghasi as a protagonist and mentor of all Coffeehouse painters and founder of Coffeehouse painting. Saif in Naghashiy-e Ghahveh Khaneh writes that Hussein Ghollar Aghasi lived at the end of Qajar era and as the innovator of the coffeehouse painting school via the words of Hussein Ghollar Aghasi:

> I am indebted to Mashhadi Safar Eskandari, if his masculinity was not we never continued the painting way like now. I do not forget that the last night at the time of going out of Coffeehouse, he got my hand and said I had an important work with you… he said I wanted several scenes from Karbala narration and some stories of Shahnameh. I bring bread and sugar as well as tea and food and you bring color, tools and art. (qtd. in Safe, *Naghashiy* 45)

Indeed Hussein Ghollar Aghasi with other colleagues and students that initiated the folk painting or the coffeehouse painting at the end of Qajar era, were influenced by visual and narrating customs of *Pardeh-khani*.

2.5. Pardeh-Khani Art's Factors

The art of *Pardeh-khani* is the only Iranian ancient art that includes several arts. *Pardeh-Khani* includes three main arts:

I. Painting (Dramatic Painting).

II. Storytelling (Acting).

III. Story (Narrative).

These three elements each with its own character, instruction and effectiveness when used together, creates a new art. *Pardeh-khani* is a unique and comprehensive art from Iran's past that used the capacities, artistic and expressive functionalities of other arts. Each of these arts is surveyed in separate chapters.

CHAPTER 3

PAINTING IN PARDEH-KHANI

3.0. Introduction

As in cinema, image is a fundamental element in *Pardeh-khani,* distinguishing it from other performing arts in Iran and making it comparable to cinema. Image is portrayed to the audience via painting on large canvases, displaying the characters, story events and storyteller's narrative. The storyteller conveys a story by referring to the images on canvas. The painted canvas in *Pardeh-khani* can actually be considered similar to a cinema screen on which images are displayed and a story is narrated. Painting on canvas is also called narrative painting, or more precisely, reading painting with certain features originated in the traditions and ways employed by Iranians to illustrate narratives and their ethnic and national stories. To understand and recognize these features, it is essential to be familiar with the history and characteristics of narrative illustration in Iran. Understanding the traits of narrative illustration in Iran is not only a way to learn about *Pardeh-khani* painting, but it can also be considered and used as a means of illustration in the national cinema.

3.1. History of Painting in Iran

Painting is one of the main elements in the art of *Pardeh-khani.*This kind of painting, which is called also narrative painting or *Naghashye Khaneshi* [painting reading] has an ancient history in Iran. This chapter explains the history of narrative painting for a better understanding of the history and characteristics of this art in *Pardeh-khani*. This history is divided into four eras:

 I. Pre-historical Era

 II. Historical Era

III. Islamic Era

IV. New Styles of Painting

3.1.1. Pre-historical Era

Illustration is as old as human history. Drawings and rock paintings discovered in caves provide examples of early uses of Picture-Writing on cave walls to express desires, wishes and thoughts. Engraved or painted works on open-air or on the floors, walls and ceiling of caves are the oldest remaining visual work considered as the beginning point of painting in many art history books. It is believed that before leaving the cave and settling on the savanna, people drew on cave walls to express their thoughts and needs (Janson 8). Many of these works are pictograph and some of them are ideographs. Pictograph is considered as the use of symbols to express ideas and concepts (Meggs 5). Cavemen and prehistoric men in Iran like other parts of the world created pictures and paintings on the walls of caves to express their wishes, aspirations and needs. The rock paintings of the Mirmalas cave located in the Koohdasht zone of Lorestan province in western Iran represent scenes of combat and hunting with bow and arrow, and animals such as horses, deer, antelopes and dogs. Pakbaz believes:

> These paintings are considered the oldest visual works found in Iran. Most of these paintings are drawn via a simple and basic manner with dark red, black or yellow colors. Generally, the animals are depicted via side view while people are depicted with a front view. There is an hyperbolic expression that can be seen in the display of bodies and movements. This explicitness, despite the lack of consistency, has led to clear explanations of war and escape topics. It is still not exactly clear that how ancient these rock paintings are. Certainly they do not all belong to the same era. But there may be a relationship between the

mainsprings of the drawings and magical beliefs in the region at the time

these drawings were made. (Pakbaz 14)

Roman Girshman, after discovering these drawings and mapping via photos

and slides, commented:

That Cave paintings discovered in Lorestan are very important.

Investigations done in the caves in your homeland, including my

investigations in Bakhtiari mountains and Professor, "Kern"

investigations in the Alborz, Bisetoon and Khorasan mountains or

investigations of American scientists in Afghanistan, no painting were

observed on the rocky structures. Thus, the importance of this issue

becomes more obvious. I think that mentioned paintings are drawn, by

inhabitants of Luristan in the era they were collecting food that is several

thousand years before the valleys were dried out and the humans could

come down from the mountains to live in the plain. (qtd. in Izadpanah

12)

Cave paintings and rock paintings also included important historical

information. These paintings can provide us an overview of the lives of earlier peoples,

for example, images people riding on the horses in the paintings of Mirmalas cave

makes it clear that people of Iran during that era learned horse taming and horse riding.

In these pictures we also see for the first time hunting, war and conflict with nature

providing states of battle. Mack Bourne, notes the importance of these paintings:

Paintings of historical period including horse rider groups, scenes of war

and battle and hunting animals with bow and arrow date back to BC

12,000 - 1,500. Therefore, horse riding art is introduced for the first time

by Iranians that coincides with the date mentioned in this region. Date of

paintings that mentioned before cannot be related to a more longer period. (qtd. in Sharifzadeh 44)

The importance of these paintings is that they contain a narrative of events and life adventures painted by early artists. The existence of these paintings represent the fact that these paintings contained training, educational and even entertaining applications (Jenson 9). Certainly, early humans were subject to nature, threatened by powers of nature so that people would have to deal with natural threats cooperatively and collectively in order to preserve life. It seems that for early humans there was a needed to have a basic understanding of these factors and his position in the environment given by a more experienced person. Awareness and training was transferred by people with more knowledge by using dramatic gestures and pictures. In this regard narrative pictures and paintings for the training of younger members of group in the tribe had a special function (Meggs 5). Many experts also consider these pictures and paintings as the basis of storytelling. However, William James Durant has another view about the beginning of narrative paintings and pictures. Durant considers the beginning of designing on clay as the starting point of painting art: "When a potter draws colored drawings on his own made dishes actually creates painting art that is why in the early nations the painting art did not consider as an especial art, rather it was considered as pottery and its equipments" (qtd. in Pakbaz 22). In Iran we also find more obvious effects of the ancient visual on pottery after the period of narrative paintings in the Mirmalas cave. These pottery designs are derived from Kashan's Siyalk hills and Hesar Damghan hills located in the center of Iran, and in other researched places. Research has been performed in places where people farmed and had pottery skills. In these locations, people made pink or cream colored potteries decorated with human and animal curved forms with a simplified view and geometric designs using red, brown and black colors (Sharifzadeh 43). During the Stone Age (approximately

3500 BC/CE) this kind of painting on pottery reached its peak of perfection and elegance in Susa in southwest of Iran. At that time lines and shapes were using based on certain principles such as organizing designs in a manner that was completely consistent with the general shape (form) of the pottery. Although the decorative aspect of this design is very important, the meaning of this design was more important for the producer and consumer of the pottery. Arthur Upham Pope believes: "The painted pottery should be considered as the first book of human because design and painting of these dishes represent hopes, fears and symptoms of using natural forces that are always in conflict with life" (qtd. in Pakbaz 24).

Pottery painting was one of the main art activities of Iranian people. In these designs the potter and artist did not remain faithful to nature. They did not represent nature's details rather they just referred to it. Pottery painters tried to show related prominent properties and the essence of shapes and objects. Designers of this period utilized simple and brief lines and at the same time expressed the most expressive art so that Iranians during this period considered their surrounding environment as a sacred ritualistic life. Early Iranians painted the main elements that comprised the universe in order to give their pottery a ritualistic aspect purposes. For example the *Gardooneh Mehr* design (Swastika) is an ancient Iranian design that represents 4 main elements of water, soil, wind and fire, and is considered as the main design on ancient potteries.

Early Iranian potters provided visual narratives, ideas, and epics on their pottery works. It should be remembered that Iran is considered the main homeland of dishes with pottery painting because pottery was an ancient art in the Iranian plateau (Sharifzadeh 28). For example, the Kashan's Siyalk civilization is considered one of the most ancient societies with special traditions with its pottery as the most common sign of civilization. These potteries were usually decorated with animal designs such as

domesticated animals, wild animals and sometimes legendary creatures such as goats with or without wings, horses, and bulls for example (Pakbaz 16).

In some discoveries of ancient Iran pottery works, those with historical narratives that are painted are unique pieces. One of the most ancient works of this kind of pottery were provided by Yousof Majidzadeh during the Iranian calendar decade of 1350 (1970s AD) in the Qazvin Plain. Regarding the ancient history of this pottery Majidzadeh says: "Layers that make these potteries belong to a period that in archaeological terms is called beginning with the letters A and B literature or the Uruk period (ca. 4000 to 3100 Bc). These dishes historically belonged to the second half of the fourth millennium (about BC 3200)" (qtd. in Tabatabai and Byanlo 123). Tabatabai and Byanlo explain the painting of this pottery:

> By putting different parts of potteries together we can see four scenes that narrate a warrior fighting with his dogs or a tiger. The painter has drawn different modes on the pottery for 3 out of four scenes that are the same. In these scenes, a man's picture is repeated three times but they are drawn in 3 different modes of hands and heads. From left to right, first in front view the body of a man with hands in fists can be seen while the head and face is oriented to the right. In the next picture head is in the side, hands and fingers are open and are drawn with an exaggerated fitness to total body. In the last picture the man's head is drawn in the side view in the opposite direction of first scene while a cup and a cylindrical container are in his hand. In the fourth picture the fighting of dogs with a tiger is drawn. (Tabatabai & Byanlo 166)

It can be suggested that this picture is an event that was important for people of the time indicating the application of visual and narrative designs on pottery of that period.

In the Jiroft region of Kerman, southeastern Iran, there have been many discoveries in recent years including possible evidences of a great civilization excavated out of the soil. Which according to Majidzadeh has been contemporary with and related to the Mesopotamian civilization; in the illegal excavation and scientific explorations, unique potteries and especially potteries made of soapstone are obtained. There are designs and pictures of people's beliefs and legends drawn on these potteries (Majidzadeh 24). Observed on the pottery paintings and a soapstone of the Jiroft area is visual-epic narration of Gilgamesh, a Mesopotamian story. Moreover, other visual displays such as giving food to humpback cows are drawn on soapstone found in this region and other animals such as lions, eagles, snakes and other creatures. Each of these designs had a mythic and symbolic meaning for the people of this civilization.

In the Shahre Sookhteh region located in the Sistan Baloochestan province in eastern Iran, a civilization 5000 years ago produced pottery works with visual narrations of legends and beliefs. Among the discoveries we can refer to a pottery cup with a picture of a goat. The goat in the picture moved toward a palm tree in 5 movements to feed on the leaves of a tree. Mansour Seyed Sajjadi, head leader of the exploration team in this region says: "This cup is a kind of unique cup because such pictures have not been seen before in the pre-history period. In many pottery containers we can see some shapes that are repeated just once but there is no movement in them. Our research indicates that this design is the oldest attempt of ancient people for providing motion picture or Animation" (Shafiei).

Figure 3.1. First animation of the world on an earthen goblet from Shahre Sookhteh in Iran, from 24 Oct. 2011 < http://www.nationalmuseumofiran.ir/fa/PictorialReport>.

Figure 3.2. On this goblet, with a diameter of 8 cm and height of 10 cm, five pictures show movement, from 24 Oct. 2011<http://www.iranstb.com/forum/first-animation-in-the-world-t15.html>.

Additionally, it is believed that the picture of goat and palm tree on this pottery represents a visual narrative of the famous legend of the Drakht-i Asurig[16]. In this story there is an argument between a goat, a symbol of Mazdaism Religion also known as Zoroastrianism and the Drakht-i Asurig, symbol of and representating a religion with several gods of the ancient Assyrian (Bahar 211). Assyria or Asorestan is one of the provinces of a Persia during an ancient time, that is today located in Iraq. Civilizations in Mesopotamia that were polytheistic and civilizations that were monotheistic

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[16] . The Babylonian tree; a versified contest over precedence between a goat and a palm tree, composed in the Parthian language, written in Book Pahlavi script, and consisting of about 120 verses.
20 Oct. 2012 < http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/draxti-asurig>.

contested each other. In this myth the Drakht-i Asurig will be defeated by the goat. An Iranian potter artist painted a narration of the fight between two ancient cosmologies with illustrations representing spiritual and religious ideas of that period when the goat and palm tree were painted.

In addition to pottery, stamp and cylinder steals were made with designs similar to pottery paintings. These consist of scenes of hunting and fighting with animals for example, on small cylindrical beads dated to seven thousand years ago with subtle designs on jasper, agate and other stones. We also encounter common visual narrations of myths and epics or symbolic codes. It seems that designs curved on beads in some cases are considered as identity and certificate for businesses and commercial centers (Meggs 8). Meggs has mentioned a report of Herodotus, the Greek historian (500 BC) on the application of this kind of these stamp and steals, she writes: "The Babylonians each wore a cylinder seal on a cord around their wrists like a bracelet. Prized as ornaments, status symbols, and unique personal signature, cylinder seals were even used to mark a damp clay seal on the house door when the occupants were away to indicate whether burglars had entered the premises" (Meggs 9). In this period, a way of telling narrative stories visually had been carving on stone. Carving on rocks and stones had witnessed changes over the years in different periods. It seems that the earliest stone carvings had been made in western Iran and had been a source of inspiration for works in later periods (Sharifzadeh, *Divar* 15).

Roman Girshman introduces two kinds of related relief works that were inspired by the Akkadian government (BC 2334-2154) and Naramsin Victory Slate (BC 2291-2255). One of these paintings was carved on the rocky area of Sarpoleh Zahab in Khosestan province, via an order issued by an Akkadian king called Toman. At least one of these paintings is likely to have been inspired by the Naramsyn inscription. In

this relief work one can see the image of a man who is the leader of a local area, holding an arc in one hand while under his foot are his defeated enemies asking for forgiveness (Ghirshman 41).

In another relief work of Shah Anubanini from the Loloyi tribe, Akkadian inscriptions of the northern region represent the victory of Anubani's god Inana over Loloyi enemies. In this relief work, Anubanini is standing while one of his feet is on the chest of the enemy fallen on the ground as the God of Aminina flies in front of Anubanini and giving the victor the ring of the kingdom into one of his hands while the other hand drags two prisoners. In the lower margin of the inscription there are unclothed poor people stepping toward their fate (Ghirshman 42). This type of composition and method of relief work can be seen in following periods especially the Achaemenid (ca. 550–336 BCE) and Sassanid (AD 224-AD 651). Relief works in these following periods displayed contents influenced by religious traditions as in the earlier mentioned relief work of Shah Anubanini upon which the following text is written: "*Anubani*, mighty king, king of Lulubum, had an image of himself and an image of the goddess Ishtar placed on Mount Badir. Damn of Ano, Anoboom, Blit, Raman, Ishtar, Sini and Shemsh be upon anybody who destroys this curved plate" (Ghirshman 43). With regard to the practice of polytheism in the form of worshipping idols in Mesopotamia, of which some deities are mentioned in the rock relief of Lulubi king *Anubani*, we can infer that the Mesopotamian carvings had born no conceptual influence on the visual carvings in Iran. However, in terms of structure and composition, carving reliefs from different eras in Iran have been influenced by the Mesopotamian carvings. In terms of structure and composition relief works obtained from different eras in Iran were affected by Mesopotamian relief works.

Figure 3.3. Drawing of the relief of Shah Anubanini, from R,W Ferrier. ed. <u>The Arts of- Persia</u> (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989) 18.

However, it is after Elam ear (2700-539 BCE) that metal makers started to decorate their relief works with beautiful narrative designs and paintings. Bronze plates of the twelfth to the eighth century BC Lorestan period are considered the most important ancient Iranian works. In investigations of the visual properties of these bronze works what is found are cases of carved paintings on the quivers, artifacts that are available today. Carved illustrations on these plates consist of several parts that apparently narrate related events. Hill concludes:

> Bronze working [in Iran] was established from very early times and bronze tools and weapons were deposited in stone tombs from the third millennium onwards. But the most elaborate bronzes−those unique to the province and not found elsewhere in western Asia− date to the Iron Age, and in particular to the first few centuries of the first millennium. (Hill 23)

Hill also discussed curved bronze works with decoration showing mythical creatures and their power via traditional beliefs suggesting that these paintings and their

meanings are a kind of anthology of Iranian myths. These traditional beliefs are narrated on metal made by Iranian metal makers.

3.1.2. Historical Period

In the middle of the second millennium BC, a branch of the Aryan people called Indo-Iranians migrated to the Iran Plateau from Siberia. The Medes and Persians were among the people comprising two major tribes. Medians settled in central and northwestern Iran. Later, Persians settled in south and south-western Iran. Aryan ethnic tribes particularly the Medes and Persian arrived for first time in the ninth century BC. The presence of these two tribes and their unity caused the creation of a new chapter in Iranian history.

I. Medes: (c.678 BEC-549 BEC)

The Median kingdom was founded in 708 BC with Hegmataneh (Hamadan) as its capital. Medes is the first Iranian dynasty, one that lasted a century and a half until suffering defeat by the powerful Assyrian government creating one of the four famous civilizations of Mesopotamia in 605 BC extending its empire into Kleinasien (Pernia 68). There are no paintings or other visual works available from Medes era. However, some relief works in shrines are available from this period such as the "Dokan Davood" made within a mountain via reports that Herodotus provided about the decoration on walls of royal palaces and homes of Medes. But there are no other visual art works that can be investigated (Shraifzadeh, *Divar* 16).

II. Achaemenid: (330-550 BC)

Shortly after Medes the Achaemenid kingdom emerged in southern Iran. Persians led by Cyrus defeated the Medes (BC 550) and went on to defeat the former Medes country as well as other lands and ethnic groups. In addition to occupying many territories the

Persians under Cyrus inherited a series of artistic traditions while establishing the great and mythical Achaemenid Empire that lasted two centuries. In this regard Roaf believes: "During this period the Persian kings ruled many different peoples: some of these had been civilized for millennia, while others were still in a state of primitive barbarism; some had well established traditions of art, while others seem to have had no representational art at all" (Roaf 26).

Cyrus's great efforts to unite and integrate various territories and lands led to the formation of a great and legendary empire. Moreover, this formation led to the integration of different ethnic traditions and artistic achievements. The formation of an art that can be called court art began. Thus the Achaemenid art style represents the first formal art style in the Persian world. Although Persians of the Achaemenid period borrowed from artists and artisans of Babylonia, Assyria, Aorator, Egypt and Greece, these artists did not forget the heritage of Elamite art and other indigenous traditions. Achaemenid art was formed based on common practices in the Near East particularly the art from Assyrian royal palaces of Assyrian kings. The Achaemenid style represented the first coherent formal style in Iran (Pakbaz 33).

Achaemenid visual art is probably found in various forms now. Pieces of paintings that were found in the treasure house of Persepolis is a piece of evidence for a tradition of wall painting from this era. Undoubtedly there have been many wall paintings in the palace of Persepolis which destroyed during Alexander's invasion of Iran with no traces of these paintings remaining. Perhaps the only means for identifying the characteristics of visual art and narrative in this era is relief works from the Achaemenid period. These relief works are important because they have a coherent style which show influences from the Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Greek styles. Certainly, these rock relief works had patterns and designs that were used in textiles (Pakbaz 35). Since relief works on walls have enjoyed a longer, more durable life, it

seems that after the Achaemenid period relief rock works become a continuous art and tradition in the following periods. At the same time themes in relief works in different parts of Iran are mainly narrations God granting ruling authority to a ruler via his victories over the enemies. There is a relationship between the ancient religion of Mithra and visual narrative relief works in Iran that Mithra[17] was born within a rock and then became a God. Maarten Jozef Vermaseren says: "Mithra was born out of a rock and according to a relief work in the France Saint-Aubin, Mithra came out of a rock with a light and long steps that was burning and luminescent. It is a traditional belief that the god of Light (Mehr) is born out of a rock" (Vermaseren 67). As mentioned above, characteristics of visual art and visual narrative of the Achaemenid era can be recognized through that period's relief works. Roien Pakbaz asserts:

> A group of relief works are made of glaze bricks in blue, yellow and white and black colors. Icons of these designs mainly include: A guardian with spear, lion and other mixed animals. In these relief works the designs are drawn on the cloths and quivers with simple decorations. Bodies are shown in side view and eyes are shown in front view. Special themes of that era are affected by Mesopotamia but they are compatible with thinking and taste of the Achaemenid. (Pakbaz 19)

A second sample of relief works can be seen on the stone walls of the palace of Persepolis that is considerable in terms of narrative points. Themes within these relief works include a long line of representatives of tributary nations under the Achaemenid Empire, with each of these relief works displaying clothing, tools and animals unique to particular regions separated and framed by a cypress tree, sacred among the Persians of that time.

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[17].Indo-Iranian god, with name based on the common noun *mitrá* "contract" with the connotations of "covenant, agreement, treaty, alliance, promise."
23 Nov. 2011 < http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mithra-i>.
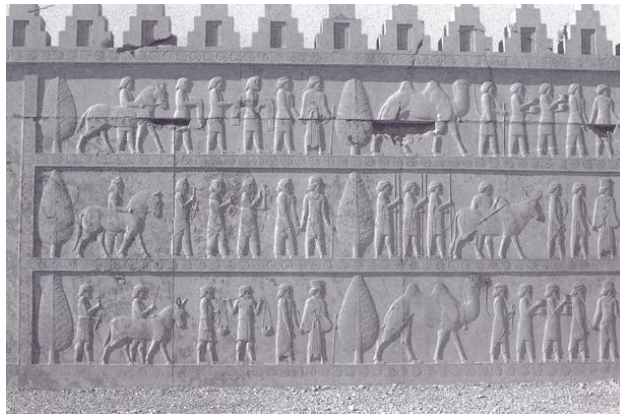
Figure 3.4. Subject peoples on the East side of the Apadana in Persepolis, from R,W Ferrier. ed.

The Arts of Persia (Mapin Pub., 1989) 38.

Other themes included bureaucracy, a king's devotion to his nation and the animals at war or living peacefully. Pakbaz believes: "In this relief work the king is the most important design as a central point with a winged ring or *Khorneh* located above his head that confirms his divine power. In all scenes and in each body there is a kind of calm and unlike Assyrian relief works (though they are affected by Achaemenid relief works) there is no fear or violence" (Pakbaz 18). Undoubtedly the relief works of Persepolis palace can be considered as unique samples of visual illustration over during and even before the Achaemenid period. These relief works are also important in terms of religious concepts, type of composition and theme framework created in a way that a viewer completely understands its religious theme. Themes in these relief works are formed separately but together narrating a single theme. Specific features of these relief works include a religious figure in the relief works with a calm and divine feature, found in other works. These kinds of icons induce a confidence and eternal satisfaction. In other words, Achaemenid visual art with its icons' features do not attempt to represent the psyche of individuals (Pakbaz 34). Although this kind of art is similar to Greek art, nature-oriented rules and principles of the Greeks were never used. Therefore, Achaemenid style is the first to represent a rigorous official [artistic] style in Iran. Pakbaz believes:

Greeks took a step away from worshiping nature understanding nature. They discovered human character and considered it as the main focus of their art and thought. It was unlikely that such artistic and human oriented thought (concerned with nature paintings) to be attractive for creators of divine power symbols. On the other hand the teachings of Zarathustra about polytheism and making idles or shrines for them were denied. (Pakbaz 35)

Achaemenid illustration continued previous traditions of symbolism and stylization with a preference for light colors and a taste for intricacy that are considered the main base of Iranian art.

Iranian artists like most Eastern countries were not looking for imitating nature or making paintings based on nature. Rather these artists wanted to capture the nature and change put it in the format of their requirements, thinking method and desires. Although Iranian art has been influenced by different methods from other countries over centuries, these three properties have been always constant:

I. Preference for light colors.

II. A taste for intricate works.

III. Dealing with nature designs (Sharifzadeh 33).

As mentioned above, some art works from the Achaemenid period in the Pasargadae and other palaces represent a widespread use of wall painting during this era. These paintings narrated different stories. Historical references are mentioned by Sharifzadeh as follows:

I. Khares Mitileni, ceremonial head of Alexander, refers to a story that was common in the Achaemenid period. Its Greek pronunciation is recorded as Zerias – Oramtis. This story is a kind of lyric story that

happens between Zeria and Oda. These two lovers meet each other in the dream and fall in love. According to Khares Mitileni, their love story was so famous at that time and people read it with great interest and painted pictures of the story on the wall of shrines and palaces.

II. Iranian "Tah Alif," pronounced as "Lieh ie" in Chinese, came to the China court from the Iran court during "Che In" monarchy. Lieh ie was a skilled and artist painter whose "Farsak" painting works were unique. According to a Chinese book Lieh ie was the one who for the first time made Chinese people familiar with Iranian paintings in the fourth century BC. According to this source that provides the name of this Iranian painter during the fourth century BC, this Iranian painter traveled from Iran to China during the Achaemenid period.

III. Chinese scientists and researchers believe that art became popular in China when the technology of pottery from Iran entered China. Both "Sir Chi Chi Moumiz" and "Apham Arthur Pope" believed in the fifth century BC, the paintings of hunting scenes and combat of Iranian people entered China. (Sharifzadeh 33-35)

III. Seleucids: (312-64 BC)

Alexander the Macedonian in 330 BC defeated Darius III and dominated all the lands of the Achaemenid government. It is believed that Alexander was thinking of integrating Iranian and Greek civilizations (Pirnia 195). However, Alexander died before he could attempt this action. Alexander's empire was divided between his commanders. Iran and its eastern territories were conquered by Solocos, the head leader of the Seleucids. For approximately 64 years, the Seleucids ruled the Iranian people attempting unify parts of their territory like the Achaemenid Empire. Alexander's defeat of Achaemenid forces

and domination of the Seleucids paved the way for the influence of Greek art, culture and thought to the Achaemenid Empire. During this time Hellenistic culture and art influences were distributed throughout the empire.

While there is no special visual and painting works available the important point is that during the domination of the Seleucids and even after the succession of the Ashkanian also known as the Parthians, the language, literature and art of the Greeks extended throughout west Asia. In this mixture, some of the Greek gods were added to the collection of Iranian deities with an integration of Greek and Iranian characteristic. The Seleucid rulers were forced to pay attention to ethnic the traditions and orientations of various peoples living in conquered lands. Thus, parallel to the in-flow of Hellenistic influences, there occurred a trend of conquerors to become Iranian (Pakbaz 21).

IV. Parthians (Ashkanian): (250 BC to AD 226)

The power of the Seleucids was primarily located in the central and western parts of the empire because the eastern regions were always under threat of attack by various tribes including the Aryan Parthians who were excellent and dexterous in horse riding and combat. Parthians first settled in the northeastern area of Iran and founded the government approximately 250 BC making Ctesiphon their capital after fleeing the west and repelling Seleucids. Parthians ruled Iran for more than four hundred years. Parthians peoples from Aryan tribes of Taska settled in northeastern Iran from Damghan to Herat and Mavara Alnahr (Transoxiana). During the early development of the Parthians government, one cannot talk about Parthians' Art. According to Girshman, there were 3 kinds of art in Iran: Greek oriented art (Hellenistic), Greek-Iranian art, pure Iranian art. Greek and Macedonian immigrants were only interested in art works with Greek characteristics and probably imported these kinds of works from beyond Iranian boundaries. On the other hand there was a minority number of Iranians who loved Greek arts and native artists who were influenced by western in-flows. Meanwhile,

Achaemenid art was still popular. But from the Middle of the first century AD, the inflow of Greek arts stopped and signs of a return to Eastern traditions emerged. In this changing condition some kind of art nationalization was created along with the revival of ancient Persian elements (Pakbaz 56). However, the application of these elements did not similarly occur in the vast Parthian territory from Syria to Central Asia. In other words, Parthian art never achieved an integrated style such as the Achaemenid court style (Pakbaz 57).

Remaining art works from the vast different regions of the Parthian empire indicate that wall paintings and colored tiles were among the common art works of this era. It is probable that styles and methods of wall painting were influenced by the west integrating available local methods of colored tiles painting during that era. Tile painters in addition to making geometrical designs also used visual themes. These themes included pictures of hunting animals along with naked women and covered women. These themes originally derived from Greek – Roman works. Parthian painters covered walls and ceils with religious or material illustrations. Among the special illustration characteristics of this era we can refer to side view and face view icons. Pakbaz believes: "A tradition of representing frontal pose has existed in the older works, such as the bronze works in Luristan. But this style, in terms of [icons] representing the face, becomes significantly important in the Parthian art" (Pakbaz 60). In this regard Kill says: Frontalism is assumed to be a way of presenting a figure in a more imposing way, increasing the subject's bearing by the more immediate face to face contact" (Kill 55).
 Moreover, *Azingary* or decoration, with attention to details of clothing and jewelry are among characteristics of visual arts of the Parthians. Perhaps artists used decorations and particular details on clothes in order to represent a one's status in a picture. Also important in the Parthian method of painting is that its painting traditions have roots after the beginning of the Islamic era. Ernst Emil Herzfeld, German archeologist,

discovered remains of several wall paintings in the Palace of Khajo Mountain and that these paintings belonged to first century AD. Looking at differences between theme and style, Herzfeld focused on the influence of Greco-Bactria art in these paintings. There is an image of three men (maybe three gods) on the Greek cloth. In a half – ruined painting that apparently represents the accession of a king and queen, the Parthian method was detectable in the array of garments (Pakbaz 65). Due to the flexibility of Iranian wall painting there are some Greek elements and styles. The artist used a two-dimensional representation method with flat colors and black peripheral lines around the three gods (Sharifzadeh 45). This method has special importance in the Iranian non-nature aesthetics that remained stable over time. Another important wall painting from the Parthians period indicating properties of Parthian art. A wall painting called *Mithra dar Nakhjirgah* found in the excavations of Dura Europos [Syria] is related to the western areas of the ancient Parthian territory. The type of illustration on this wall painting confirms its Iranian properties. This illustration represents ancient and allegorical scenes of hunting and war and the defeat of worldly and spiritual enemies in the animal body (Pakbaz 69).

Figure 3.5. Mithras hunting; a wall painting at Dura-Europos, from 20 Oct 2011

<http://www.farvardyn.com/mithras1.php.>.

In this way symbolic importance of this painting can be understood when one considers this painting as a tradition of illustration with a stable theme in later periods especially in Persian Islamic painting. In this regard Pakbaz says:

> The Roman world was indifferent to the established arbitrary in the Parthian painting and illustration. But after the breakup of the Roman Empire and the Christian Byzantine Empire (early fifth century AD) the situation changed. The Byzantine world that was shaped by the traditions of Greek and East mainly referred to the eastern patterns especially Parthian patterns. For example another wall painting can be achieved in Dura-Europos that is an evidence of this issue. In this wall painting two servants and a priest can be seen who are doing religious ceremonies. Bodies were located in front of the cave in a formal position. Gestures are calm, serious and ceremonial. Each configuration has a separate and independent from...looks are toward infinite that more focus the religious nature of the scene. This kind of symbolic interpretation shows an aspect of reality inconsistent with the nature oriented Greek – Roman view. But it is compatible with the Christian vision and therefore can also be used in Byzantine Art. The presence of rules of Parthians in the Byzantine Art confirms survival of the ancient Persian traditions and extends them to the West. But signs of continuing this tradition can be seen in an obvious way in Iran and Central Asia. (Pakbaz 70)

According to Pakbaz most of the themes and visual narratives during the Parthian period were religious. It can be said that roots and the foundation of Parthian art, despite the impact of the Western, Greek and Roman traditions, is in Eastern and Achaemenid art.

V. Sassanid: (AD 224–AD 651)

In 224 AD, the Sassanian king, Ardeshir defeated the Parthian king, Ardavan. Ardeshir was coronated as Parthian successor. At this time the throne of a dynasty was given to a series of national kings who introduced themselves as Achaemenian heirs. Ashkanians were deprived of this heirship and considered the monarchy as solely their own. Nevertheless, after long struggles the Sassanids obtained the throne and established a government based on national and religious aspects of Iranian civilization that were unique over the long history of Iran (Ghirshman 345). This victory was preserved by Sassanid kings according to relief works. In one of these relief works Girshman reports:

> Ardeshir has carved a relief work on the top of a rock located toward the Fars city that is biggest and probably the oldest rock work of the Sassanids. This painting must be monument of the decisive war and victory of the founder of a new dynasty over the last Parthian king. In this relief work three pairs of warriors were fighting against each other. Ardeshir with his long spears defeated Arvdan V. After Ardeshir, his eldest son and his successor, Shapur, defeated grand minister of the Parthian king. Finally, Sassanid nobleman defeats another Sassanid nobleman. (qtd. in Sharifzadeh 67)

Girshman, in this regard, believes that the Iranian artist is not familiar with woman portrait. Girshman only considers the details of the decorations on clothes, tools, hair, tools andcharacters. However, Girshman is refused by Iranian researchers. For example, Sharifzadeh says:

> Girshman points out that the Iranian artist is not familiar with face painting while not considering this issue and performing types of roles for humans are among Iranian's art characteristics. Certainly an artist who pays attention to the details can anyway points out the relief

characteristics of the faces in the paintings to create important difference between the faces. But practically artist, based on artistic tradition, makes a fixed face for people and such differenced can be detected in clothing, hats and sometimes their size. (Sharifzadeh 68)

What can be said about the Sassanid relief works is that these rock engravings have been made on a larger scale and in greater numbers. It can be supposed that the content and style of many Sassanid reliefs were inspired by paintings of that era as observed in relief works of Khosrow II at Taq-e Bostan that narrates the hunting of hogs. Theme and narrative style of this relief is consistent with wall paintings received from Shoush that belong to the first half of the fourth century AD and is an evidence of narrative relief work's effect on narrative paintings of the Sassanid era.

Another very important document of narrative illustration in Iran during the Sassanid era is a wall painting of Panjakent in Samarkand, Tajikistan. Although Samarkand is outside of Iran's borders this area was considered a part of Iranian territory during the Sassanid era. The regions of Bukhara and Samarkand were called Sogdiana (or Sogdia) during the Sassanid era. There are unique narrative paintings in the city of Samarkand and in the region of Panj Kendia or PanjKent. These paintings include scenes from ancient stories and ancient Iranian epic figures, mentioned in the Shahnameh. In one of this most effective scenes, the grief of the grim Iranian Prince Siavash, is presented. Siavash's dead body is located on a stud bed and while women are reading a dirge over the Prince's head. In the upper margin building jags similar to that of Persepolis, are presented. The bottom of the painting is filled with mourners (Pakbaz 80). All the elements in this painting have been used to convey a state of sorrow. The artist succeeded in using dynamic surfaces and lines to create excitement for the viewer. This painting and other works in the Panj Kent of the Samarkand that are displayed, are based on stories and narratives that four centuries later appear in the

poems of national Iranian poet Ferdowsi. These works confirm the authenticity of the <u>Shahnameh</u> as well as the ancient tradition of narrative art during this period of Iranian history. In this regard Pakbaz believes:

> Epic and historical themes were most important issues in Sogdian wall paintings and were often drawn in the middle section of the walls. However, folk tales and common scenes with framed compositions were located in the lowest section of the wall and in the margin. The types of colors that were always shiny colors to distinguish large bodies and narrative sequencing of epic paintings from other kinds of paintings. The content of most athletic stories is related to common epic narratives among Sogdians. Probably these narratives have been extended by Chameh-e Goyan called Guosan. He was an artist who have had an important role in the cultural life of the Iranian people at least until the end of the Sassanid era. (Pakbaz 71)

Giti Azarpei who has done research on the Sogdian painting says:

> Like the oral poet of the heroic age, the Sogdian painter of the pictorial epic aimed for a clarity of expression and dramatic action. Again like the oral poet, he achieved these objectives through a selective use of a few compositional devices, and by the establishment of a given mood. Since interest centered on action, he developed a consistent language of gesture and proportion that heightened the drama and eloquence of his message. (Azarpei 182)

Although Sogdian wall painting was independent at the same time because of its location with the route of the Silk Road, Sogdian was influenced by other cultures of China, India, Rome and Greece providing its excellence and strength as a strong

narrative tradition during the Sassanid era (Pakbaz 80). It can be guessed that there have been more images in the homes of the wealthy.

Moreover, books and documents from the Sassanid period indicate the use of painting for storytelling and drawing icon figures of kings. In this regard Masudi in <u>Al-Tanbyh va Al-Aashraf</u> referring to other books says:

> In the 303 AH ... I found a great Iranian book hold by a big Iranian dynasty containing the story of Persian kings, their buildings and art works that none of them could be found in other Iranians books like <u>Khodaynamh</u>, <u>Ayyinnameh</u>, <u>Gahnammeh</u> and etc. In this book pictures of Iranian kings in the Sasan dynasty were drawn. Features of twenty-five male and female person of any kind in the past were drawn with old or young faces, ornaments, crown, beard line and face features. (qtd. in Sharifzadeh 70)

This historical narrative and the tradition of narrative illustration on fabrics, carpets, and also silver and gold utensils indicate the widespread use of narrative in the Sassanid period.

Another event that strongly influenced Iranian painting and illustrative painting in the Sassanid period and subsequent periods was the advent of Iranian prophet Mani (Manichaeus). Mani claimed to be prophet and promoted his religion, a combination of Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Mithraism, and Buddhism represented in paintings. In 29/228 AD, Mani received divine inspiration and in 41/240 AD introduced his new religion to the public. Mani and his religion were not considered a serious threat to the Sassanid kings who were influenced by Zoroastrianism (Esmailpour 4). However the clergymen, *Magi* (mogh), the Zoroastrian religious leaders accused Mani of heresy out of fear of losing their position. They arrested and then killed Mani in 277 AD. Mani considered himself as the last heavenly prophet, of the final prophet who carried divine

secrets but also recognized previous prophets such as Zoroaster, Jesus Christ and the Buddha (Hamby 4). Louis Hamby in <u>Zoroastrian and Manichaean Art</u> says:

> Mani claimed that the word he was teaching and preaching had a global nature attributed to the former regulations with development in restricted region. But he refers to this fact that rituals are based on half-truth and the only thing he [Mani] wishes is to spread to his religion to East and West. According to Mani, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity had been declining because their verbal and oral preaching of their founders was distorted. (Hamby 5)

Mani was interested in fine arts especially music. In this regard, Klimkeit holds that "Mani was also devoted to music as we learn from St. Augustine" (Klimkeit 17). Moreover, for Mani one of the arts in which he had an extraordinary ability was painting. It is said that after the designation of Mani as prophet, he settled in a cave away from people and created pictures and paintings with sacred images that inspired and affected people deeply. This point has been quoted in several sources about Mani. Esmailpour says: "Mani took refuge in a cave for one year in order to create <u>Arjang</u> or <u>Ardahan</u> [Mani's holy book]. He then came out of the mountain gap with a painted scroll in his hands that astonished everyone" (Esmailpour 61). It can be said that Mani was the first prophet that used art, particularly painting, for the promotion of religion. Since Mani aspired to extend his religion all over the world, he considered painting as an international language. Because the Sassanid territory was a vast territory there were various tribes and nations with different languages and cultures. Painting language was considered the most effective and most important means of communication. Mani's religious thought was based on old Iranian traditions of duality and the struggle between brightness and darkness and myths (Esmailpour 16). Mani's painting language,

consciously or unconsciously, contained the elements of this ancient Iranian tradition considered a unique art work of illustration and narrative illustration.

Mani's importance and his special place in literature can be found in reports of Iranian poets and in Persian literature and poetry. Everywhere the skill and beauty of Persian painting is synonymous with the name of Mani. His fame was credited to his spirituality and the sacredness of the paintings. Unconsciously he was called "sacred Mani" Nezami Ganjavi (AD 1141-1209) in his book says :

> I heard that Mani went from Ray to China,
>
> He was an painter and became a prophet,
>
> All people attracted his mysteries culture,
>
> And his painting art called Arjang. (Nezami)

Ferdowsi (AD 940–1020) also talks about Mani repeatedly :

> It seems that a man is coming from China,
>
> His paintings are unique in the world,
>
> He is famous for his skillful painting,
>
> He is famous for his manner,
>
> He said in his paintings that,
>
> I am a prophet and I have superior religion. (Ferdowsi)

The most important feature of Mani's religion was promoting moral teachings via painting language (Ashrafi 547). Through his high intelligence, Mani found that painting language was the best tool for spreading religion among the masses of people, especially at a time when reading and writing skill was not for the public in Iran but limited only to Clergymen, courtiers and the nobility . Esmailpour believes:

> In the religious aspect, Manichean religion appeared in a manner that
>
> was widespread in the third to ninth centuries AD and covered a wide
>
> range of geographical eras from the East to China and from West to

Byzantium and Rome later extended in the medieval era and continued its religious life scattered in Iran, Syria, Egypt, Africa, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and France. But whatever remains today from Manichean religion is not significant, and its importance is more in terms of mythical, artistic and literary effects. (Esmailpour 13)

Mani produced seven books with the most important in terms of visual painting called Arjang or Artang known as a holy book. Mani represents his teachings and worldview in Arjang with illustration and narrative illustrations. In his book Ostoreh-ye Aafrinesh dar Aein-e Mani Esmailpour argues:

Mani's Arjang was a kind of painting that was about creation and development of the universe, the world of light and darkness, and the way light pieces become released and their achieving to the moon ship, sun and the eternal light of heaven… Arjang illustrations were about the teachings of the cosmological picture, creation, development of the world, universe structure, the end of universe and the resurrection that were painted in several scenes in the form of petition or expensive canvases. Probably these paintings were in three parts or three canvases. Because Mani considered three periods for creation as it is depicted in one of his remaining paintings in the Turpan in China. (Ashrafi 40)

This theme is depicted as a tree with three trunks that represents three ritual periods.

I. First era: this refers to the time when the fusion of light and darkness had not happended.

II. Blending era: this refers to the time of the binding of light and darkness, meaning the time that we live now.

III. Future era or golden age: this refers to the separation of light and darkness. It is described as the time when everything joins to the light (Esmailpour 40).

The main point is that Mani's painting and illustration gained widespread use via his use of images for spiritual and mythical teaching. It was a new and public teaching method with universalistic doctrines and religious teachings via paintings for everyone so that sacred and moral aspects of visual narratives found more credibility in Iranian art and culture. Ashrafi in this regard believes:

> The major reason for the importance of Manichean painting is that it gives a kind of "moral principle" to painting. Thus preserving this traditional art alive in a traditional and conventional manner… They followed Mani's style in painting which was, in turn, influenced by the Parthian painting style. Later, when persecuted by the Sassanids, Manichean followers fled to Central Asia. Influenced by the native cultures and traditions in the Central Aisa, such as Buddhism, Chinese traditions, Mani's painting style gradually developed. (Ashrafi 548)

The tradition of Manichaeism continued after his death by his followers. One of the ways to promote Mani's traditions was the use of religious images and narrative paintings via the public tradition of *Pardeh-khani*. As mentioned in chapter 2 there is a report via Mary Boyce's book, <u>A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian</u> mentioning: "Tradition of *Pardeh-Khani* in public that continued in the next the eras of Islam in Iran and Central Asia, was rooted in the art of the Manichaean era. This point is clearly mentioned in one the Manichaean manuscripts (text no. 219M)" (qtd. in Esmailpour 13). After the death of Mani in the year 277 AD, the followers of Mani's religion suffered due at the instigation of Zoroastrian priests. Therefore some of these followers fled to north-eastern Iran, even settling in Turpan state, China and continued the tradition of religious illustrations. Undoubtedly Manicheans followed

Mani's tradition and found opportunities to develop their art in illumination, especially in the Igor's court. Paintings found in Turpan confirm this point although these paintings are fragmented images (Arnold 17). St. Ephrem the Syrian emphasizing the application of visual arts in ritual says: "Manichaeism as language of the Iranian spirit, from the beginning used art to explain and justify the Manichaean theology and its application and also to record and promote the ritual principles" (qtd. in Arnold 21). So long after the disappearance of Manichaean Art, it was considered as a dynamic and stable force in Iranian culture, that beyond the art there was a kind of profound religious faith that led to a relationship of Manichaeism with other global cultures. This lasting impact gave great importance to Manichaean art through Iranian art history (Arnold 18).

3.1.3. Islamic Era

The conquest of Iran in Sassanid era by the Arabs was a shock and stopping point for the arts in Iran. For a long time art was in the service of religion and government in Iran. Government leaders in Iran especially during Sassanid considered their positions as divine positions and that kings were chosen by God. The arts during the Sassanid period were interrupted when faced the arrival of new religion with its own ideology. Islam had with the imposition of its limitations made creativity difficult for artist. Most evident in the painting arts. In <u>Islamic Painting</u> Servet Akasheh says:

> Pre-Islamic Arabic society, did not recognize painting as an art as it was known among the other peoples. Because of this, the Age of Ignorance could not bear achievements in painting. Such alienation with painting in the Age of Ignorance, left such a legacy among the Arabs, that [even] after the advent of Islam, they were attracted to what was prohibiting painting. Probably this inspired the Hadith compilers, historians and commentators decided to leave out Prophet [Muhammad's] (peace be upon him) quotes about paintings. (Akasheh 4)

Although there is no explicit or implicit order in the Quran referring to sanctions on painting, to ensure permissible illustrations there are also reasons for its sanction that Akasheh mentioned them in this way: "As the Prophet says: the worst punishment in the Day of Judgment is for illustrators." Also it is reported that "Angels (of mercy) *do not enter* a *house* wherein there is a *dog* or a picture." Those who draw these images will be punished at Doomsday and they will be told to make them alive if you can" (Akasheh 7).These kinds of narratives and other ways of cautioning people made Muslims proceed cautiously so that artists did not paint in public. Others consider different reasons for the sanctioning of painting. In this regard Akasheh argues:

> Psychologically speaking, some believe that the reason to prohibit painting is related to the belief that a painting is a part of something or somebody that is drawn and has everything but the spirit. And it is a means of bringing harm to someone whose picture is drawn. This is what priests and witches did in the past. Followers of this theory believe that it is one of the beliefs of the Semitic Race. (Akasheh 7)

Certainly after the arrival of Islam, painting and illustration were stopped in Iran due to Arab bias. Painting and its industry that had been changed into a comprehensive art during the pre-Islamic Sassanid era was an art that served courtiers and people who had very strong religious power. There is no document or report on the painting in the early, first and second centuries of Islam. We can observe Iran's visual and narrative art at the beginning of the Islamic Empire not only in Iran but also in the capital of the Islamic government after the Prophet and during the Rashedin caliphs era during the Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus. Titus Burckhardt believes: "The Umayyad period (661-750) produced a frankly profane and worldly art, the like of which was never to be seen again on Islamic soil where there is normally no distinction between the sacred and the secular except in the use to which works of art are put, and not in

their forms" (13). The mundane art of Umayyad can be explained in this way: Islamic art in this period was still in the formative stage. The Umayyad rulers needed an environment of grandeur in order to keep pace with their predecessors. Since they had no experience in architecture, decoration, and other arts, Umayyad rulers took advantage of artists in the countries that they conquered including Iranian artists with their own artistic traditions in architecture, art and other decorations (Pakbaz 85). The ambitions of Umayyad rulers in making Islamic Arabic Empire like the Sassanid Empire of Iran provided artists opportunities to fulfill their rulers' needs despite the prohibition of some arts. Umayyad caliphs mimicked the Sassanid kings in the making of palaces, using precious objects and even mintage. That is why a direct reflection of Iranian-Islamic art can be found, for example, in the wall paintings of West Qasr al Hayr[18] in Damascus. Paintings on the walls of the Umayyad palace and baths represent narratives, motifs and traditions of Iranian painting in Iran during the Sassanid era that are representative of visual traditions as pre-Islamic qualities of art that continued in the early centuries of Islam (Sharifzadeh 61).

After the Umayyad the emergence of the Abbasid was made possible through the help of Iranians. Iranian rulers attained special positions in the Caliphate System and Iranian artists during this period were involved in building and equipping Abbasid palaces. The existence of Iranian elements in wall paintings and illustrations was natural and often showing parts of Iranian lyrical studies. Some cases can be found in the palatial wall paintings of Samaria called Jawsaq Al-Khaqan or Qasr al Khalifa[19]. One of the paintings shows a woman carrying a calf. The subject of this painting is the famous story of Sassanid Bahram Shah and his bondwoman, Fetneh, depicted in different ways

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[18] . The inhabitants of Homs, led by Sulayman ibn 'Ubaid, oversaw the construction of the Greater Palace's "city" area in the year AH 110 / AD 728–9.
20 Oct. 2012<http://www.discoverislamicart.org/database_item.php?id=monument;ISL;;Mon01;35;en>.
[19] . The Abbasid palace of the caliph at Samarra is called Dar Al-Khalifa, Qasr al Khalifa or Jawsaq Al-Khaqan. Built in 221 AH (AD 836), the palace is one of the most famous of Islamic palaces.
20 Oct. 2012 < http://archaeology.about.com/od/qterms/g/qasr_al_khalifa.htm>.

in Iran (Pakbaz 87). Also, during the Abbasid period translations of Pahlavi and Greek philosophical and scientific books into Arabic were begun by the order of Harun al-Rashid and via Iranian attempts. Since some of these scientific books had pictures, illustrations in these books were considered acceptable. Translation efforts during the Abbasid era led to the formation of a book illustration movement and school. Sharifzadeh says: "This school was common at 133-656 AH until the fall of Al-Mutasim in the Abbasid capital. In this method known as Abbasid School or Baghdad, the first examples of illustration in the books after Islam period were created that had a scientific and technical aspect" (Sharifzadeh 63).

As noted before, Manichaeans during Sassanid era suffered due to Zoroastrian Clergymen. After Mani's death, a large number of Manichaeans moved to north-eastern Iran and settled in the Samarkand region. The defeat of the Sassanid and arrival of Islam in Iran altered the situation and temporarily stopped the persecution of Manichaeans (Arnold 15). This led to the return of a group of Manichaeans to Iran. In this period the Manichaean religion was possible and its followers continued promoting their religion. However, during the Abbasid Caliphate the persecution of Manichaeans gradually started again the Abbasid Caliph, Mahdi, (169-159 AD) planned rigid actions to eradicate the Manichaean religion. During this period a large number of Manichaean and others left Iran and continued their traditions (Arnold 15). According to Thomas Arnold, most Manichaean painters who belonged to the Niooshayan group, the listeners or those who could have a normal life in the Manichaean religion. This group preserved their religion secretly at a time when Muslims put maximum pressure on Manichaeans to give up their religion, and continued their art. Undoubtedly Iranian illustration as an art with a new form after the Islamic period was one of the creations of this group (Arnold 16). Arnold mentions :

Dynamic art traditions and contacts over eight centuries of did not disappear overnight, and there are various evidences that indicate a large number of rich people in Islamic society and even the rulers of the Islamic land and their limitations imposed on religious class of society. Therefore, painters who wrote about interests of the religion of Mani put to work during this time in the Islamic courts and they did their best in the art works that today are known as Iranian paintings. (Arnold 17)

It can be supposed that it was Manichaean painters who considered *Pardeh-khani* as their main method of religious promotion in a new form with moral, religious and epic themes that continued until the present day. Iran painting and plaster work on the walls of palaces as well as in illustrations in books with Iranian features started in the Seljuk era (1029-1194) influenced by Christian practices. In this period the tradition of painting of Transoxiana, Panjakent and Manichaean tradition were widespread in the region. Later this tradition again came back to its homeland of Iran and found itself in Iranian illustrations (Arnold 18). Iranian art in the Seljuk period was in the service of Iran literature and formed a new form of art and illustration that was unique during this period. The primary example of this type of illustration books is of the example, Varagh-e va Delgosha. Moghadm in Hamgami-ye Naghashi ba Adabiat-e dar- Iran concludes:

The oldest illustrated copy is Eoghi's Vargheh-e va Delgosha produced in (ca 6th-7th AH). Iranian researcher, Melikian Shirvani who considers the method used in this book related to tradition of Eastern Iranian art, published the pictures of this book for the first time. Shirvani opines that the zooming or magnification used in this book takes its origin from the tradition of the wall painting before the Islamic era. (Moghadm 26)

Indeed, the rich and mystical literature especially Persian poetry and epic and lyrical content provided an opportunity for painting to be developed. Moghadm believes:

> One of the major characteristics of painting in Iran after Islam is its literary connections with Persian literature. The painter is inspired by various literary themes. He depicts the people, scenes and stories and also paints the poet's or writer's words through language of line and colors... Persian literature and Iranian art have had inherent harmony, because the artist (painter) and Muslim writer both created art works based on a common vision and subjectivity. They were seeking the divine through the beautiful things in the world. Their aim was achieving eternal truth. In their art, the realm of beauty was akin to the world of meaning. (Moghadm 11)

Illustrations in books provided opportunities for the Iranian painter to test art taste. Something that makes Iranian illustration unique in the Islamic period is that Iranian painters and illustrators created illustrations and paintings of Iranian literary books that never existed before in the Muslim world (Moghadm 12). It is known that in the Abbasid or Baghdad School the illustration was limited to science books and not part of fiction or literary books (Pakbaz 72). But coinciding with the Seljuk era painters took advantage began illustration of literary and epic books. This method continued for centuries and changed every day. There was always an interaction between Iranian painting and literature. Painting and literature have experienced changes. For example, the illustration of Shahnameh attempted in almost every period and every school followed special features of illustration in each period unique and complete while literary text have remained fixed. Painting has developed along with the evolution of speech productivity so that when classical Persian literature lost its richness and depth

of content, painting art also followed likewise. Painting from the second half of the eleventh century followed the European style of painting due to social conditions of that time. Gradually the art was absorbed with the western style of painting so that a mixed art appeared (Moghedm 13). Something that can be considered as a weakness of Iranian art is its dependency on literature and the court. It seems that Iranian art has had no relationship with common Iranian people so that book illustrations could not influence ordinary people. The majority of the people in Iran could not take advantage of art. But perhaps it can be said that there are other reasons for the lack of popularity of books and visual art among people in Iran, including the prohibition of painting in Islam and that most of the people were illiterate at the time. Therefore, it can be said that literary paintings was a classic painting that served higher classes of people and rulers. This kind of painting along with other kinds of painting used in pottery, carpet making and other arts was useful for upper classes.

Potteries from ancient times, especially pottery and paintings from the Seljuk period express people's attraction to painting. Its popularity among people with an informal, slang, and practical application coincided with formal illustrations and paintings of literature works of the Seljuk period. It seems that paintings and illustrations used in carpets and pottery designs obtained throughout various regions of Iran express the needs of ordinary people. As mentioned earlier Iranian paintings can be divided into two broad classifications, folk and formal. Of these two kinds of paintings the only formal painting investigated and recognized by foreign researchers is known as Miniature or *Negargari*. Some people consider Miniature the basis of Iranian art. But the development of official painting or *Negargari* in Iran throughout history was based on:

I. The abundance and variety of literary works.

II. Acceptance and support by government.

Iran's official painting depended on literature works and a temporary ruling. At first there was a preference for Iranian works that caused rapid growth and representation of specific features that reflected the figurative world of meaning. Perhaps it can be said that painting and illustration of books is the only reason to save ancient Iranian painting traditions. Iran has always been invaded by invading tribes like the Mongols who dominated the culture and changed traditions. At first these changes made an impact on Iranian arts, especially painting, but soon these impacts weakened and transformed into new forms. Because the source of inspiration for Iranian painters was divine and mystical thought from ancient, epic and religious literature of Iran. Persian painters were the heirs of deep visual art traditions rooted in ancient art. For example in the Timurid period (AD 1370-1506) and during the formation of the Herat School of Iranian painting, at first Persian painting encountered Chinese painting. But soon Chinese elements were removed and the illustration of books was performed only with the use of an Iranian approach and style (Shraifzadeh 130). The Iranian painter's worldview has always remained constant throughout history. When a foreign entity entered, native elements of the painting, if present, are accepted first followed by other elements that are removed to become totally Iranian. The Iranian official painter continued his work via support of the court. In each period creations were first compatible with the order of the ruler.Eventually the painter went his own way, protecting old narrative and visual traditions. The dependency of Iranian painters on court rulers caused a recession of the art in following periods. With the decline in production of new literature works official painting also declined. Since this kind of painting was dependent on the support of the court as soon as the support declined painting failed to survive. In this regard Sharifzadeh believes, "This problem occurred especially in the era of Shah Tahmasb Safavid when he lost his interest in painting in the last years of his life. Some people believe that it was because of religious prejudice

or failure to achieve maturity and proficiency in the art. Ghazi Ahmad says that it was because of illness that he lost his interest in painting" (Sharifzadeh 143). Little by little Iran official painting lost its importance to and lost its special aspects when western groups came to the court since during the Safavid era some Iranian painters like Mohammad Zaman went to the West which influenced by their art that was a different manner to that of Persian literature and calligraphy. Since this period Iranian painters made a single painting canvas for businessmen and rich people in society but they could not find the glory of earlier books of Soltani (monarchy) Library (Godarzi 144). The following factors caused new developments in the painting of Iran:

I. The decline in support from the court.

II. Arrivals of western paintings to Safavid kings court, and familiarity of Iranian artists with these works.

III. Development of a wealthy aristocratic class (Pakbaz 146).

The existence of European painters in the era of Shah Abbas I in Isfahan, a variety of gifts including painting canvases and changing tastes of the wealthy class encouraging Iranian artists to imitate European paintings led to the use of European and Hindi elements and as models to create different art works. These kinds of works led to the use of European relief style, lighting and scenic elements.

During this time wall paintings in homes and palaces were of special importance so that Iranian painters used a realistic view in their work influenced by European and Hindi paintings. The topics of these wall paintings were narrations of Safavid court celebrations, and nature. Paying attention to nature and European works created a kind of painting in Safavid period and in following periods called *Farangi-Sazi* [European style] that influenced all works of this period. Iranian painting since the eleventh century became popular among the public. People's attention to painting in

twelfth century led to new forms of art that in its most known and most used form was *Zirlaky*[20], painting that became common in the mid-eleventh century (AH). Many painters of this period used their talents to decorate objects such penner – the frame of a mirror – book cover – ink box and other items. Common themes in *Zirlaky* paintings were *Gol* o *Bolbol*, portrait of women and narratives of the "Leili va Majnoon" story. Pakbaz argues: "It can be said Penner Writing [*Ghalamdan Negari*] became popular due to factors such as recession in the book illustration of the court, emergence of new supporters among the urban affluent people and importance of the professional status of painting" (Pakbaz 150). Additionally this was an application of painting to script, science and literature. Paintings and illustrations have always maintained links with science and art though minor and indirectly. In following periods, especially the Qajar period (AD 1794-1925), painters of this period created ideal features using special equipment to create on small parts on the clothes of icons with holy and religious aspects. This method reminds us about traditions and practices of illustration before the era of Islam. It was in this era that a famous Iranian painter named Abol Hassan Ghaffari was sent to Italy to familiarize himself with lithograph technology. Ghaffari was the first Iranian artist trained in Europe, in the museums of Florence where he started his illustration works. This led to a new movement of painting in Iran. Ghaffari came to Iran with a new method inspired from the ordinary. Constitutional movement also greatly influenced Iran's political and cultural and artistic systems. At the same time Modernism and the way of looking at the west greatly impacted the Iranian nation so that Iranian people became familiarized with the literature of the West. The people set aside old literary methods in painting that was inspired from national illustration and painting, and created a situation for other cultural influences that led to different forms of art. Generally four parallel flows can be seen in Iran's painting during this era:

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[20]. Lacquer painting.

- Academic painting.

- New form of miniature.

- Modernist Painting.

- Coffeehouse Painting.

3.1.4. New Styles of Painting

I. Academic Painting

The academic style of painting in the Qajar royal system continued a life that was influenced by contemporary European painting style. Painters of this method followed the academic art of nineteenth century Europe that was a mixture of a surface classicism style and explicit naturalism along with a romantic feeling (Pakbaz 160).

Figure 3.6. The Baghdadi goldsmith by Kamal-ol-Molk, (oil painting), from Kashian Hussain, Kamalol Molk. (Tehran: Contemprary arts museum: 1983)44.

II. New Form of Miniature

The new form of miniature in the contemporary era essentially looked to the past. However, artists in this field always tried to adapt their works to the tastes of the time. One of the features of the new miniatures is its special attention to, for example,

representations of more beautiful and varied faces than that of old works. Also, the faces represented a more Iranian racial appearance and characteristics than that of old works. The dominant themes of these works are pursuant to old Iranian illustrations and narrative poems, including the works of Ferdowsi, Saadi and Hafiz, Khayyam and Nezami. However, artists tried to incorporate modern subjects and concepts in painting into their art, the earlier traditions of Iranian miniature were still dominant and maintained (Pakbaz 162). These works presented characteristics of Western painting including perspective rules and landscapes in a special manner. In this regard these works can be distinguished from ancient illustration works but as mentioned before, the tradition of narrative and illustration continued based on previous styles.

Figure 3.7. Hunting by Mahmoud Farshchian, from Roien Pakbaz. Neghashey-e Iran. (Tehran: Rozaneh, 1998)193.

III. Modernist Painting

Effects and reflections of painting and modernist art in the West arrived in Iran via political relations of the New World, the spread of World War II, political developments in Iran. The arrival of Allied troops in Iran in AD 1941 were among factors led to a new painting era in Iran. During this time Iran was exposed to different views and ideologies and in the social and economic arenas, influenced by western patterns and European models. In this regard Pakbaz argues:

Artists enjoyed new findings and were surprised by a range of new possibilities arising from these findings. They were like tourists that did not like to stay in one part of a beach. Their curiosity pushed them to test various methods ranging from Expressionism to Cubism and surrealistic fantasy to abstract formulations. Innovation and creativity remained hidden under a wave of efforts to attract new approaches and learning to dominate over new styles. (Pakbaz 202)

This new Iranian school of painters influenced by Western literature paid much less to the narrative and description. Artists aspired to achieve pure visual expression using new methods and techniques. They used an in-line approach to calligraphy, and literary journalism and narrative concepts, but often from the letters to form words. The use of color and texture features was organized in a way that created more visual impact rather than meaning.

Figure 3.8. Composition withy Alphabet by Hossein Zenderoudi, from Roien Pakbaz. Neghashey-e Iran. (Tehran: Rozaneh, 1998)193.

V. Coffeehouse Painting

One of the noteworthy practices in painting of recent times is coffeehouse painting. Coffeehouse painting is a common and narrative technique utilizing oil and paint with religious, epic and lyrical themes. Some researchers argue that the history of common

and religious paintings in the Iran goes back to the Safavid era when Shia was pronounced the official religion of Iran. But there is no valid evidence for this origin of coffeehouse painting. The increasing popularity of minstrelsy and reciting of Shahnameh and the effect of narratives provided an effective incentive to create religious and epic images within this kind of art style.

The first patrons of paintings for coffeehouses were the owners of coffeehouses. As mentioned earlier the coffeehouse first appeared in the Safavid period as a place for people of every class to gather even members and descendants of the nobility. Owners of coffeehouses entertained their customers. To attract customers, owner invited storytellers to narrate appropriate stories for mourning and for special ceremonies. In time little by little painters received money to paint pictures of folk stories. Pakbaz believes: "Such paintings that represented aspirations and interests of the national cultures in the middle classes were more modern phenomenon than that of ordinary painting formats like painting on the screens, wall painting, painting on the wall of holy places, painting behind glasses with religious themes" (Pakbaz 201).

Figure 3.9. The Tablue of Leily and Majnun, from Hadi Saif Naghashi Ghahveh Khaneh. (Tehran: Sorosh Press, 1989) 17.

Coffeehouse painting is among the first kind of Iranian painting that focused on the interests and aspirations of ordinary people, their beliefs and imaginations. That is why painters called this painting style, *khiali Negari* [imaginary painting] or *Ghalat-Sazi* [making mistakes] due to its folk and ordinary characteristics (Pakbaz 202). The

so-called false or fictitious style is a continuation of the tradition of the ancient and mystical world of Persian painting and moral painting unknown to non-Iranian, non-native audiences. Salvardor Dali, the Spanish Surrealist painter during a visit to an American exhibition of the works Iranian coffeehouse painter Abbas Blocki Far, considered Blocki Far's style of painting an "Iranian indigenous" art unknown to Westerners (qtd. in Godarzi 76).

Coffeehouse painting revived the forgotten ancient tradition of painting based on literature events that had been forgotten after the invasion of European culture and artistic styles. In this period of coffeehouse painting, Iran's literature was consistent with painting. Its main topic was common oral and folk themes taken from Iranian mythology with specific issues and topics of interest to the Iranian public that included epic and religious themes. Coffeehouse painting works gained much interest and unlike previous eras, paintings were ordered by ordinary people. Painters created works with a free fantasy and imagination using verbal orators from ancient Persia. In coffeehouses artists narrated ancient literary and religious epic stories. Painters created a unique, popular and fantasy style different from the Iranian miniature style of the court. While using the same source of inspiration and goals of the Iranian miniature style, coffeehouse painting developed its own imaginary world specific to Iranian ideas and thinking while. In the contemporary painting era young Iranian painters were affected by the West and used new works. It can also be said that the only style of Persian painting, drawing or painting a coffeehouse is completely fictional and in terms of content and style is Iranian. Perhaps only the use of materials and tools such as paint and oil are from Western painting. Today it seems that painting influenced by the Islamic Revolution of Iran have displayed more interest and willingness for ancient Iranian religious themes and methods. At the same time, modernist painters create art works under the influence of Western art and cultural flows in the new style, and it

seems these painters are far from the traditions and old methods. It seems that painting at the present time fails to recreate its native identity and its own style consistent with the societal goals. Though works created in the present time represent a current period, it is unlikely to achieve a new and unique Persian style.

3.2. Painting among Iranians

Historically, painting has had a special position among Iranians. Perhaps painting can be considered as one of the best ways to understand the mood and aspirations of ancient civilization with the lack of historical resources and information devastated due to land invasions over the centuries. Iranians used art not only to express their feelings and thoughts but they also created a specific and unique type of painting for themselves. Pictures painted by Iranians on the walls of caves, pottery, and minstrelsy canvases, carpets and other material have a clear and proven character that did not use simulations nor with a tendency to abstraction. In this regard Pope says: "The concept of Iranian art will be determined precisely when it is known as representative of this opinion: the intention of art is decoration not simulation" (Pope 42). This point is particularly more observable in painting with the whole visible world as a topic. Painting is better prepared to be attracted to simulation than other arts. Despite the inherent nature of painting to simulate nature as its original tradition, it is still faithful to tradition and creates a unique decorative art. Pope also believes:

> Iranian painting, like the other arts in Iran, could never be separated from
> its abstract principles, and always dominated decoration over simulation.
> The concept and the beauty of pure decorative elements have been most
> favored by the artist. As a result of this, this [stylized] art moved towards
> perfection. However, these elements were not used only as minor
> components, but they were considered as the main essence of the

pictures... Iranian art of painting involves: drama, love and dream, combined sensitivity and enthusiasm. (Pope 45)

Iranians were people who loved poets and their poetry. Poetry had a special role in different ages in daily activities, economic and social situations, ceremony and rituals of so we can say that poetry is a significant aspect of Iranian art. Since Iranian world views and ideas were a poetic view, and painting had a direct link to Iranian literature and its major parts as poems, poetry can be considered an important aspect of Iranian painting. This property can be seen clearly in Iranian painting. Since Iranians liked poetry over the centuries, they asked their artists not only to interpret and transfer images and stories but to also find and offer tangible ways to express poetic feelings and thoughts (Pope 49). As mentioned earlier, Persian painting was not looking for simulation but for discoveries, spiritual or theosophy intuition and utopia. Iran's painting created imaginative illustrations that were carriers of message from another world. This feature can also be traced in Manichaean religion. In this regard Esmailpour believes: "Mani in his writings and preaching always focused on wisdom, knowledge, books and parable. Of course, knowledge that Mani talked about was based on Illumination" (Esmailpour 4). Although Mani's worldview was based on rationality and myths, discovery and intuition was very effective in his religion. These discoveries available in Manichaean works influenced art and painting in following eras including Islamic paintings. The importance and position of painting in Iran was significant after the Islamic period. Despite Islam's opposition to painting and illustration and limitations imposed by Arab rulers on Iranian Muslims' art, art was never forgotten unlike in later period when certain factors led to book layouts and illustrations in the Islamic world. Upham Pope describes Persian painting like this: "The dominant spirit over the whole painting in Iran is a romantic spirit. Iranians have a kind of childish love to wonderful

and strange things. We believe that romance is escaping from reality into a world of wonders and Iranians believe that it is the breath of life" (qtd. in Arnold 173).

3.3. Features of Pardeh-khani Painting

A first glance of the act of *Pardeh-khani* painting to a viewer who is aware of the style of Iranian painting presents obvious differences. As mentioned before, one characteristic of Iranian painting is its narrative, especially after the Islamic era because of accompanying literature and inspiration from official literature. *Paredh-khani* represented a world and universe that came from literature. However, the painting on the *Pardeh* is another kind of narrative painting that is not based on formal and written literature; rather it is based on informal and oral literature and people beliefs. Since nearly all foreign and Iranian researchers consider miniature as the official paintings of Iran, *Pardeh-khani* drawing and painting is neglected. This kind of neglect is reflected in Peter Chelkowski's "Narrative Painting and Painting Recitation in Qajar Iran." (1987), where in Chelkowski erroneously defines *Pardeh-khani* painting the result of *Tazie*h. In addition to this comment there are other descriptions and studies presented by Iranian researchers about this art. The best description about this art seems to be provided by Behrooz Gharibpour, in his article "The Sacred Art of *Pardeh-khani*." Gharibpour says: "It seems that dramatic painting is the best title than can make a difference between icons and this kind of painting and immediately makes clear that this type of painting is a dramatic act and its paintings are turning points of stories the storyteller explains the beginning and end of them so that its scenes are not static and fixed" (Gharibpour 60). The term "dramatic painting" is an appropriate term for this style of painting. Although Gharibpour gives no further explanations about the characteristics of this kind of painting, the term "dramatic painting" can help us to understand the features of this style of painting.

According to historical reports of Iran's official painting, paintings known as miniature in the West and the world indicates that Iranian art is narrative and just a contemporary art influenced by art of the West without its narrative function as a means to express feelings of an artistic moment. But *Pardeh-khani* painting, though influenced by changes over its long life, has maintained the original features that not only includes aspects of the narrative but also meets the performance and expression features. In this type of painting, the painter not only uses appropriate topics and composition in narrative expressions but also depicts modes of its characters and uses expressive and subjective elements such as color, light and space for immediate impact. This is perhaps the most important difference between *Pardeh-khani* and miniature. In the miniature, artists do not seek for an immediate impact but urge viewers to spend more time to precisely explore the concepts of the image. On the other hand, in the Persian miniature, figures in the painting have no special facial state. In this regard Gray says:

> Undoubtedly no artists, except the Iranian painters and miniaturists, can dress his characters up in more fine clothing. Thus, the body is not much emphasized, and even often the characters' hands and feet are covered… although the difference between men and women lies in their turbans, their sexual and characteristic differences are not much emphasized. Figures in these scenes are all in their golden young ages and are seldom portrayed in half profile. (Gray 72)

The Iranian painter creates figurative world and space. He avoids using nature and perspective to achieve a certain world in which Islamic-Iranian wisdom is defined as world, the universe or imagination. In Iranian miniature, the painter uses colors not dramatically and expressively but to create a unity and harmony in the whole work. Sharifzadeh about miniature style syas:

[In this style] the Artist puts all required shapes and colors according to his desire anywhere in the miniature, without landscapes or Maraya… In fact, all colors are selected based on the taste of the painter: Horse or camel can be seen in pink, purple, yellow and blue colors. Also cloths with rich floral or geometric decorations are based on painter's taste. Color in painting has just a decorative and functional function. Objects and characters are merely representative of a particular object or character. In fact it is a complete example and an overview of the character, object or subject. (Sharifzadeh 67)

In this regard Nasr also asserts:

The artistic treatment of the themes takes place in a world above ordinary temporality where it gains a non- temporal and permanent significance. Even the plants and animals that are drawn are not simply those of physical nature but of primordial nature, of paradisal environment which remains actualized even now in the *alam al-khayal* or *alam al- mithal*. Likewise, the colour of each mountain cloud or sky is unique unto itself and different from natural colours, the uniqueness pointing to the angelic world where, according to the well known theological doctrine also confirmed by St. Thomas, each angel is unique and comprises its own species. (Nasr 179)

The same view can be observed in painters working with the paper and painting frame. The painter never allocates a certain place on the paper for an issue with a special purpose and concept. The painter uses the paper for the expression of uniquely concept. But all these points are different in painting of *Pardeh-khani*. This type of painting emphasizes expression and impression through the type of color, composition and the state of the characters. And unlike the miniature where the characters and the

objects are perfect examples of their own, in the paintings on the *Pardeh*, characters have their own personality and functions and each character shows up with its own different and specific feature on the *Pardeh*. In paintings on the *Pardeh*, persons have their own characters and functions and any special features and characters of each person is different from any others on the *Pardeh*. This type of painting uses a certain method that is followed for painting scenes in accordance with dramatic and expressive principles.
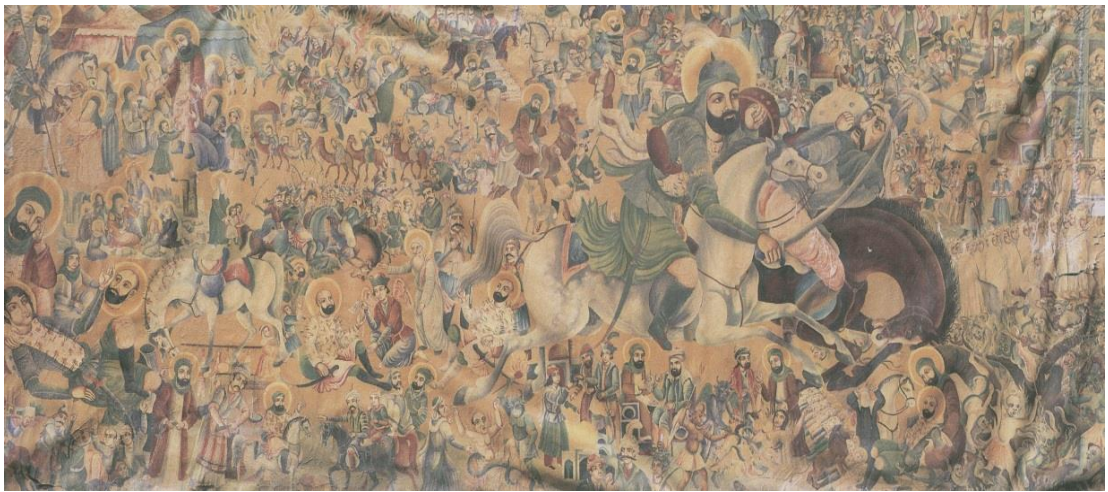
Figure 3.10. A sample of Pardeh-khani painting, from Hadi Saif <u>Naghashi Ghahveh Khaneh</u>. (Tehran: Sorosh Press, 1989) 65.

One of the painting properties in *Pardeh-khani* paintings is a scene. A scene of painting in *Pardeh-khani*, is on a large fabric canvas with 4 m × 2 m or 3 in 1/ 5 m dimensions on which narrative stories will be drawn. On this canvas epic or religious scenes along with painter and *Pardeh-khan* thoughts will be reflected as the desired symbol and wholly representative of the universe's creation. Each belief or thought belongs to a certain personality or object. The scene is a battleground where the forces of good and evil fight against each other. The scenes are visually expressive and narrative of the events concerning the conflict and struggle. The fight in some scenes is between epic heroes, enemies of people and land. In other scenes the fight is between righteous people and wicked people that especially represent religious events such as the Karbala. Belief in both good and evil forces is an ancient Aryan belief especially in

Zurvanism, Mithraism and Manichaean that are the main bases of religious beliefs. But among these religions, the Manichaean religion represented a mythical and aesthetic look to the belief in good and evil forces. Maybe it can be said that the Prophet Mani was a founder of this fighting method, giving a description of the forces of good and evil especially in Iranian painting. These explanations and descriptions are seen in his books, particularly in the holy Arjang book that was painted and reflected on by his followers in the periods following Mani's demise. In this regard Arnold believes:

> Some of his followers used to say that he had drawn the same evil he had in his mind on the scroll, and had called it "Children of Darkness" to explain the ugliness and darkness to the followers. Also he called beautiful things "Children of Light" to show in sublime the beauty to those eager to see it and used to tell them: "I have written them in books and painted them colorful, so that they hear them by words and see them in pictures. And those who could not read may understand them through the images." (Arnold 14)

The concept and idea of the dramatic fight between light and dark suggests Mani's thoughts of divine light particles captured in the form of evil materials. The human responsibility for relief and rescue, is to reach the land of light, and is the light that is represented in the paintings of Mani and his followers reflecting this dramatic struggle in scenes using elements that will be mentioned below.

3.3.1. Location

In *Pardeh-khani* any part of the painting belongs to a special character or characters. For example, the upper right side and the right side half of a canvas is for good forces, prophets and national or mythical heroes. The bottom and left side of the canvas is for evil forces and anti-heroes. Hell is located at the lowest and furthest left side section of the canvas. It is necessary to mention that according to the Iranian folkloric's beliefs

there is an angel on the right shoulder of every human being who writes the good deeds and a bad angel on the left who writes evil deeds. People believe that the right side belongs to good deeds and the left side belongs to bad deeds recorded by angels. But apart from this popular belief, such religious belief and classifications could be traced in Mani's thinking and method. In Manichaean Art and Calligraphy, Klimkeit says: "According to the main myth of Mani, eternal and light heaven is toward the north, east and west while the south part has been limited to the realm of darkness" (Klimkeit 47). The *Pardeh* is a symbol of the whole world with scenes of human life with its characters and history. Indeed the *Pardeh* is where characters take part in representing a story or event that are totally different. Each of these characters can be placed in different locations within the *Pardeh* to represent a particular story. In *Pardeh-khani* painting the breadth of location extends to interior and exterior spaces. However, most spaces belong to the exterior. There are small blank spaces for the representation of faces (Ardalan 28:12). Therefore, "location" in *Pardeh-khani* is a qualitative concept that can represent a general and unlimited location, a container for representation of past, present and future events.

Figure 3.11. A Pardeh of The day of the last judgment, from Hadi Saif Naghashi Ghahveh Khaneh. (Tehran: Sorosh Press, 1989) 30.

3.3.2. Icons

Dramatic expression in the icons and performance of them icons are well respected in *Pardeh-khani* painting. The icons of good forces, prophets and national or mythical heroes are depicted as beautiful, attractive, safe and quiet with a dignified manner due to redemption. Icons of evil forces are displayed as ugly, dark, frightening as well as uneasy and fearful of the consequences and results of their bad deeds. Painters of *Pardeh-khani* pay special attention in the drawing inner states of characters shown through the eyes of characters. For example, the eyes of good forces have a clear, calm and confident state that reflects their legitimacy and redemption at the end of the fight. Evil forces are shown with eyes full of sense of evil, fear, anxiety and ill-nature representing darkness and malfeasance (see figure 3.7 and figure 3.8). In this regard Ardalan adds:

> The eyes of icons on the *Pardeh* are wide open, except for some exceptional cases. The eyes in different profiles of the saints show traces of similarity and their still looks shows unchanged belief and subject and thought. Faith and confidence, innocence, purity, etc., suggest implications derived from the eyes of the saints' profiles. In contrast with the saints' looks, the evils' looks have partial resemblances. However, the direction and the state of the looks are not similar. This might account for the evils' illegitimate worldly wishes. Rage and anger mixed with cruelty, fear and regret, greed, ignorance and folly, are some of the concepts inferred from the evils' looks. (Ardalan 10:16)

Figure 3.12. Icons of eviles, Photo: Majid Fadaei

Heroes, icons and holy figures in *Pardeh-khani* painting have a circle of bright around their heads. This circle of light is rooted in ancient Persian beliefs referred to as Horneh, Farrah or Khvrnh, divine light, the splendor of God's divine status bestowed to particular human beings especially kings, heroes, and others. In the article, "Khorneh Mazdaie va Tasir-e Aan dar Asar-e Sohravardi va Ferdowsi." Medrasi argues that:

> One of the most basic concepts in Zoroastrian thinking and narratives of great people in Iranian history, whether religious or national, is related to the days prior to the advent of Islam that in Pahlavi era was called Khoreh (nah Xvar) and in pre-Islamic eras until the advent of Islam was called Khorneh (Xwarrah) and in Dari Persian called Far (Farrah) meaning happiness, while in Manichaean middle Persian called Farah meaning prosperity, glory and shine. Khorneh light comes from the depths of the divine nature – Noor al Alanvar – that is available from the dawn of the world its end and organizes and guides the universe. (Medrasi 19)

Figure 3.13. Icons of good forces, Photo: Majid Fadaei

3.3.3. Color

Color in *Pardeh-khani* painting has a fully dramatic and representative application that can be considered to have an arbitrary functions with a unique and special aspect in Iranian traditional arts. The most important application of particular colors in the

painting of *Pardeh* is to introduce characters, their emotional state and position in society. Color is in the service of characterization. For example, green and white colors are used for the characters of a clergy man and holy persons. Dark colors, especially red and black, are used to represent bad doers and evil forces. Other colors have different symbolic representations in this kind of painting. Dominant and symbolic colors used in *Pardeh-khani* painting include white, black, green, and red each with its own function and meaning. White is used for heroes, prophets and holy figures specifically for their clothing, tools and horses. White was synonymous with purity and brightness for Manichaeans that has maintained its meaning in Iranian culture and arts as a holy color after the Islamic era. Black is a symbol of night and darkness symbolizing evil and wrong doers. Black is used in *Pardeh-khani* for clothes, horses and the tools of evil and demonic forces. White versus black represents the struggle between good and evil, between light and dark. Since white is the color of hope we can consider it a hope for the victory of good over evil.

Figure 3. 14. The combat between Hossein's army and Sad's army, from Hadi Saif <u>Sote-h delan-e Naghash</u>. (Tehran: Kanoonaparvarsh, 2004) 20.

Green and red are the other dominant colors used in *Pardeh-khani*. Since green is a symbol of life and that plants represent immortality, green is used for prophets,

heroes and also good forces. Additionally, the color green is a symbol of legitimacy and eternal life in a promised paradise. According to a few works from the Manichaean, it can be said that green is less used than that of other colors perhaps because of the special place of these colors in religious rituals. Interestingly, green became the symbol of Islam in the Islamic period and considered the color of prophets and great people in the religion of Islam. This color is also often used in *Pardeh-khani* for the turbans and clothes of sacred and heroic characters. A green and white colored flag represents good forces and light while red is a symbol of cruel and evil characters. Red symbolizes the land and the devastating fire that destroys lives transforming to ashes as a black point that remains. Red also symbolizes lust, greed and bleeding, characters led by evil forces. The comparison between green as a symbol of life, immortality, and heaven versus red and black as symbols of death, destruction and hell is a reminder of the historic battle of good and evil forces in Iranian culture.

3.3.4. Composition

Painting on the *Pardeh*, unlike painting a miniature, does not meet common perspective rules. However painting on the *Pardeh* has its own criteria and rules. In this type of painting the size and dimensions of individuals can be determined by their concepts, applications and modes of expression and dramatic state. In this kind of composition the fight between good and evil forces is placed in the center of the box and occupies maximum space. Evil forces and good forces are at the center of attention and account for the largest share of the canvas while other characters composed with smaller aspects are on the edges of the frame. This composition allows the *Pardeh-khan* to represent his story for audiences about the two main characters that are the center of attention. When it is necessary, the *Parde-khan* can refer to other sub-events. Indeed, this kind of direct composition directly points to the particular subject of painter and *Pardeh-khan*. It is not unlikely to suggest that placement of the main subject in the center in *Pardeh*

painting is modeled after Mithraic reliefs and wall paintings. Mithra slaughtering a bull is in a central position, carved or painted with larger designs while other characters are smaller and on the margins. Ashorpour believes: "On the cave walls and especially in front of the [Mithraism] Mehrabs, the picture of Mithra when killing a cow, used to be drawn using oil color. Perhaps this painting had been the finest religious reading of paintings" (Ashorpour 81). This can be considered another proof for the antiquity of *Pardeh-khani*.

Figure 3.15. Wall painting of the tauroctony at the Mithraeum in Marino, Italy. from
, 23 Oct. 2011<http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Archaeology/dura_europos.htm>.

The location of the main character in the center of the canvas is emphasized by academics. M. Aliatoof in <u>History of Painting Compositions</u> says, "Academics affirmed that the main figure should be located in the center of the frame" (Aliatoof 151). This kind of composition in *Pardeh-khani* has been used over a course of centuries due to focus on the subject. For example, among small and large forms depicting religious scenes the largest paintings are about the religious and epic, of the war between <u>Mard ibn Sodeyf and Abbas Prophet</u>. In these kinds of paintings the features of two main characters are always larger than other characters in the center of the *Pardeh*. Abbas who is a positive character with a calm, reliable and faithful face is on the right side of

Pardeh while Mard ibn Sodeyf with a flushed and restless character who expresses an evil manner is on the left side.
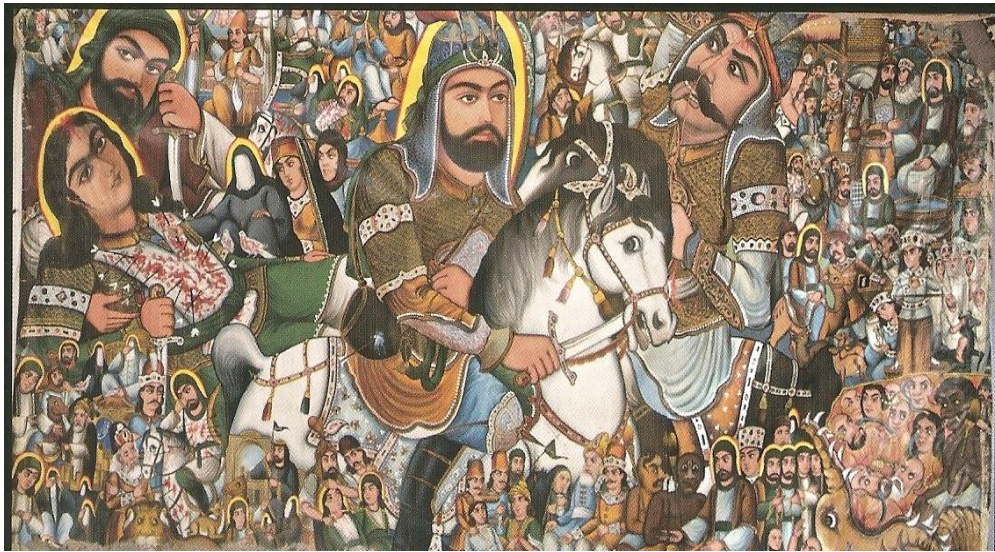
Figure 3.16. *Pardeh* painting of war between Mard ibn Sodeyf and Abbas, from HamidArdelan, Morshedan Perdeh-khan Iran. (4 vols. Tehran: Ferhangestan Honer, 2010) 12.

Or in the below painting of the Shahnameh:

Figure 3.17. *Pardeh* painting of battle between Rostam and Sohrab. from Hadi Saif, Naghashi Ghahveh Khaneh. (Tehran: Miras Farhangi, 1989) 45.

The above mentioned points represent dramatic aspects of this painting that is unique in Iran and the Islamic world.

3.4. Conclusion

It can be said that the intellectual principles and basics of *Pardeh-khani* painting are founded upon the Iranians' ancient religious thought and belief in the two forces of good and evil and their struggle, particularly inflected by the Persian Prophet Mani's thought and doctrine which added dramatic and mythological dimensions. In addition, canvas painting is a very successful example of moral, spiritual, and epic art which has been able to express mythical and religious concepts besides its dramatic and entertaining aspects. It is worth mentioning that most of the spiritual and religious arts need to use specific and encrypted forms for expressing metaphysical concepts, whereas storytelling painting on spiritual canvases has pictures, can easily express religious and spiritual concepts, and hence, has fascinating entertaining functions. The painting of *Pardeh-khani* in Iran is the only visual art directly connected with ordinary Iranian people, and unlike miniature painting enclosed in royal libraries as an official art, it is a popular art reflecting religious and mythical concepts of everyday people.

But the most important element in the art of *Pardeh-khani* is the painting, whereby one can reconsider style, mise-en-scène, dress-code, the kind of visual narrative of Iranian stories and myths, and use them in cinema. The importance of *Pardeh-khani* painting lies in the fact that it can be used as a model for the kind of mise-en-scène, make-up, genre and way of using accessories and dress decoration and design applied in cinema. In fact, by adopting an iconographic approach, one can easily use *Pardeh-khani* painting as a model to extract means of achieving a method of imagery, as dealt with in the last chapter. Speaking of this approach, Susan Hayward says:

> Iconography is a means whereby visual motifs and style in films can be categorized and analyzed. Iconography can study the smallest unit of meaning of a film, the image, as well as the largest: the generic qualities of the whole film. Iconography then stresses both mise-en-scène and

genre. Iconography also refers to the dress-codes of characters in the film. (Hayward, French 191)

Thus, the element of painting in *Pardeh-khani* can be a model mise-en-scène, makeup, genre, dress design, etc. and provide Iranian filmmakers with stylistic aspects of Iran's national cinema.

CHAPTER 4

STORYTELLING IN PARDEH-KHANI

4.0. Introduction

The live, human element in the art of storytelling is the narrator or storyteller of the art. The storyteller in this art functions as both director and actor, indicating how very important and unique his role and position are in the art of *Pardeh-khani*. A study of the art of *Pardeh-khani* shows that both key roles of directing and acting have characteristics worth considering and modeling in cinema. For example, the common traditions and practices of acting in the art of *Pardeh-khani* can be used in Iranian cinema and given the typology assigned by Susan Hayward. Acting and actors' modes and gestures in cinema originate from a nation's culture and national identity and can serve as an index of the national cinema. In directing, the storyteller's selection and use of factors such as story, painting, and acting and narrative style in the art of *Pardeh-khani* are also worth considering and are addressed in this chapter.

4.1. History of Storytelling in Iran

It is very difficult to determine the original date and history of storytelling. Storytelling is the most ancient form of transferring human dreams, fears, myths, events and experience to listeners. It is the oldest form of literature, an oral literature in every ancient nation and civilization. Oral literature is older and richer than other traditions among ancient peoples, nations and civilizations. In ancient times oral literature included champions, historical events, ethnic and religious myths and legends among other kinds of content. The storyteller has been the main factor in the transfer of this tradition. Ethnic stories were a tool for society links. These stories not only represented but also reinforced and organized people's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and behaviors (Pellowski 55). It should be said that in ancient times traditions, customs, heroism and

ethnic arrogance were maintained by storytellers and transferred from one generation to another. There has been considerable respect and attention accorded to the storyteller in the context of a storyteller's community due to his great awareness and knowledge of the past. Since storytellers held much information about the present, past and even the future, they were considered powerful figures. People were interested to hear about the people in the past and learn about their experiences. Storytellers integrated comic and funny elements into their stories such that the stories had been made enjoyable for the audiences. These needs encouraged storytellers to continue their works and activities. It is difficult and maybe impossible to determine an origin for storytelling. However, what we have today as evidence for a history of storytelling are found in Egyptian, Chinese, Sumerian and Hindi texts from past eras in a written form. In The World of Storytelling Anne Pellowski says:

> There are a number of early examples of stories or story fragments in texts from ancient Egyptian, Chinese, Sumerian Ancient and Sanskrit. However, many of these contain no indication as to who told the stories, to whom they were told, and how or why. The first written description of an ancient that at least vaguely resembles storytelling appears to be in the Egyptian papyrus known as the Westcar Papyrus, recorded sometime between the twelfth and eighteenth dynasties (2000-1300 B.C.). (Pellowski 3)

It is apparent that storytelling was common since ancient times used as an educational, religious and entertainment tool.

4.1.1. Storytelling in Ancient Iran (Before Islam)

Storytelling had a special position in ancient Iran. This work and art has a considerable antiquity. The most ancient report indicates the existence of minstrelsy and storytelling coming from ibn al-Nadiem's report in the Al-fehrest book:

The Persians created legends initially in the form of books and maintained them in their treasury. [These legends] were narrated through the animal characters. Afterwards, the Parthian kings, also the second dynasty of Iranian kings, hyperbolized these legends and extended [their stories]. And the Arab writers, made these [legends] shorter and eloquently rewrote them, and therewith authored new works with the same content and meaning. *Hezar Afsaneh* or *Hezar Khorafat* is the first book written, in this sense. (Ibn al-Nadiem 540-539)

This report proves that storytelling has a long history in Iran, at least as far back to the Achaemenid period at a time when people were writing histories. Documents and reports from the Achaemenid period indicate that there was a Khonyagar or Honyagar group during that era whose works related to poetry, singing, music, myth telling, storytelling, fiction, epic storytelling, history telling, and more. Mary Boyce believes that: "Khonyagari, as Xenophon suggests had flourished in the Achaemenid era: Cyrus was praised in the last days of his life in stories and songs" (Boyce, *Two Articles* 18). According to available documents the task of the Khonyagars was clear. Poetry, singing, music, myth telling, storytelling, fiction, epic storytelling, history telling are mentioned in Khonyagars arts. However Boyce believes the scope of activity of the Khonyagars during the Achaemenid period was further extended that included minstrelsy, clown plays and even news broadcasting. In this regard Boyce believes:

There are other evidences which suggest the influential role of Khonyagari in a wide area among the smart and music friendly community who did not know how to read and write. They were providing fun for the nobility and on special occasions for the peasants.

Khonyagars used to precisely remember what they saw and provide fun and amusements for the people. Based on the occasions, Khonyagars could be panegyrists, satirist, pantaloons, storytellers, historians, and commentators on the topics of the day. In a way or the other, they were responsible for shaping the public thought. Some of these singers were itinerant musicians and their pleasant poetry could spread quickly among the people. (Boyce, *A History* 77)

There were two groups of Khonyagars during the Achaemenid period. There was the official or courtier Khonyagars whose job it was to perform their different arts for kings, princes and courtiers. Non-official khonyagars or itinerants are those whose job was to perform for ordinary people and peanuts. Maybe it can be said that one of the important activities of these itinerant Khonyagars was to spread news, demands or policies of the Achaemenid kings. Today it is possible to say that itinerant or non-official Khonyagars were a great gift to Iran in preserving storytelling, music, and other arts. With the fall of the Achaemenid Empire and destruction of its court by the Macedonian, Alexander the Great, all traditions and customs were also destroyed. Since courtier Khonyagars were dependent on the court, they and their storytelling were also destroyed. However due to the independence of non-official Khonyagars and their direct relationship with people, they maintained a crucial role in Iran's art and culture. These itinerant Khonyagars, some of whom were working for Greeks and Seleucids (321-64 BC) after the invasions of these groups managed to garner a respect for their storytelling art, maintaining Iran's cultural and artistic heritage. Itinerant Khonyagars were the maintainers of national identity. Mary Boyce according to a description of Curtius talks about great Iranian ceremonies for Alexander as follows:

The Magi and the Chaldean were at the head of welcoming population followed by a group of singers and Khonyagars who were skilled in

panegyric poetry about the kings. After the Alexander's conquest of Persia, the royal pensions and privileges given to the Khonyagars could have been cut. The burden of proof could be the idea that the art of Khonyagari was not among the arts that the Macedonians could have inherited from the Persian kings. In addition, Greece was not a place for the Iranian singers and poets to make a living. Therefore itinerant Khonyagars and poets presented their traditional art only to Iranians in the Seleucid's era; apparently they had not been willing to serve the new owners of their land. (Boyce, *A History* 77)

During the Seleucid era the power of the Zoroastrian clergy diminished. Boyce says: "During this era the Zoroastrian clergymen accompanied itinerant Khonyagars in the rural or remote areas voluntarily, because they knew that their method is the most effective way to promote Iranian national and religious feelings in order to keep alive religious poems" (Boyce, *A History* 78). Indeed, itinerant Khonyagars had an important role in maintaining oral and artistic traditions, especially in the rural areas during the dominance of Iran by foreigners. Non-official and itinerant Khonyagars composed sad odes and poems after Alexander's invasion, massacre of Iranians and the destruction of Persepolis, the spiritual and religious capital of Iran. These Khonyagars also composed epopees telling about Iranian soldiers' gallantry which in turn led to the creation of Iranian national arrogance in the face of the failing to the foreign rule of Iran. Zoroastrian cleric leaders and Iranian kings and nobles played crucial and decisive role in building an Iranian government and keeping ancient traditions alive and strong. As mentioned in historical records, Zoroastrian cleric leaders and Iranian kings and nobles who were against the presence of foreigners in Iran supported Khonyagars in order to achieve the goal of keeping Iranian traditions. Ashrafi in Gowsun-e-Parsi: believes: "Therefore, Zoroastrian clergymen accompanied the Khonyagars to the furthest and

remotest areas. It is because the Khonyagars' way of exciting and inciting the Iranian national and religious sentiments was way more effective that the Magi's" (Ashrafi, *Gowsun* 50).

The main basis of epic and heroic literature and sad poems were established by itinerant Achaemenid Khonyagars since the time of Seleucid invasion and domination over Iran for people who needed to have a relationship with Khonyagars. Khonyagars had very strong relationships with groups of people and generated indescribable excitement due to artistic feelings in the fight against the invaders (Reeisnia 95). Ashorpour in <u>Namayesh-ha-ye Irani: Naghali</u> referring to Boyce's ideas about itinerant Khonyagars and minstrels asserts: "However, it should be mentioned that these Khonyagars were among the studious and skillful orators and are called itinerant Khonyagars by Mary Boyce. Khonyagars, however, inspired and motivated their audiences and moved them through inducing their [Khonyagars'] emotions" (Ashorpour 46). Ashorpour also considered the Khonyagars' act equal to a sermon that is /ma:thr/ or/ ma:nsara/ in the Zoroastrian religion (meaning thinking, divine words, citation, singing). Its subject is/ ma:ntaeraktae/ who is someone who gives God's message to people or is a messenger (storytelling delivering divine words). Ashorpour in this regard concludes: "Mansr means divine words and Mathrn means someone who gives these words to people". He says: "Iranian Zoroastrian Vakhshor (prophet) calls himself Mathrn. According to what has been mentioned before it will be clear that the Zoroastrian Assyria (Zoroastrian Prophet) be considered as the first Iranian storytelling" (Ashorpour 47).

According all that has been discussed above, it will be clear that since one of the main activities of Khonyagars was telling news and stories, the same as a prophet's responsibility, then we can say that there is a holy and religious aspect to the job of storytelling. In the following decades such characteristics consolidated a prominence for

storytelling respected by the people. Additionally, with the respect of Zoroastrian clerics and Achaemenid kings it seems that one topic that itinerant Khonyagars could choose for ordinary people in the rural and urban areas were religious topics. This was a reason for peoples' respect for storytelling as carriers and maintainers of divine words. This kind of respect was maintained for several decades and created a kind of charismatic characteristic for storyteller. After the defeat of the Seleucids and formation of the second Iranian government, Ashkanian also known as Parthians, headed the government. Unfortunately there is no verifiable information regarding the emperor. It is said that Parthians or Ashkanian ruled Iran for more than at least four hundred and seventy years (250 BC to 226 AD). While their tribal dynasty was famous for a long period our knowledge about their historical events is relatively limited. Keal in this regard says: "The period failed to retain much significance for later Muslim writers who regarded the ear as a dark age, of little importance, except that it had been obliterated by the light of Islam" (Keal 49). Lack of valid sources about the conditions of this government leaves a vague picture of the position of the Khonyagars although there are some remaining artistic works. During the Parthian era there was an expression called Gusan. Mohammad Moein considers Gusan a Parthian, Ashkanian word and an equivalent for Khonyagar and musician (Moein 3124). There is no detailed and clear information about origins and purposes for these Gusan and their methods. It seems that Mary Boyce was the first to research the word Gusan. In Two Articles of Musician and Music in Persian Boyce talks about Gusan as follows: "It is known that the word Gusan appeared two times in the Persian literature. One case was in "Vis va Rāmin" by Nizami Ganjavi with a Parthian origin. Another case was discovered by "H.W.Billy" in the Majmal al Tavarikh" (Boyce, *Two Articles* 28).

Gusan are mentioned in both Iranian sources with Khonyagar meaning "poem reader." Boyce investigated both sources as well as other evidences and concludes as

follows: "First of all it is proven that Gusan is a Parthian word. Secondly this source is a direct evidence of ancient storytelling of Parthian Khonyagars. Therefore it confirms the indirect evidence of Parthian role in maintenance of Iranian national traditions" (Boyce,*Two Articles* 30). Researchers believe that Gusans carried out the main task of Khonyagari during the Parthian period and other periods. However roles of Gusans were extended and their skills were considerable. Their working field included religious ceremonies such as magic, dances, praying words, ceremony of killing animals, juggling, eulogy and praise, and music playing. Other researchers considered Gusans as belonging to the time before the Parthian era as Iranian storytellers. All evidences show that Gusans had an important role in the lives of Parthians and their neighbors until the end of the Sassanid era. This artist who entertained the king and ordinary people took part in ceremonies and funerals. The Gusan was a dirge singer, satire writer, storyteller, composer and interpreter of ancient works (Boyce, *Two Articles* 44).

The influences of Hellenism, other religious and cultural thoughts, traditions and customs via the role of Gusans in the maintenance, development and extension of ancient traditions in the Ashkanian era led to hostility from a new religion and its clerics. Clerics from different religions who were aware of the position and deep influence of Gusans considered these artists rivals and enemies of their religious traditions. Therefore, these clerics used any opportunity to demonize the Gusans among the people. It can be speculated that Gusans reached people in ways unlike clerics of various religions who attempted to force people obey a particular religion without question. Gusans were considered dangerous for clerics who sought religious domination. In this regard Ashrafi says: "It can be said that the opposition of Christian, Zoroastrian and other religious clerics to Gusans was due to their certain duty in maintaining and promoting more ancient beliefs generally rejected by new religions,

and that Gusans performed people's favorite mourning and celebration ceremonies" (Ashrafi 44).

It seems that the Achaemenian defeat and Alexander's victory paved the way for the presence of Hellenistic thought in Iran and weakened the former great power of Zoroastrian clerics. Alexander's invasion paved the way for Sazahya, celebrating traditions and other ancient traditions by Gusans. This trend continued even into the Ashkanian era. However, it seems that Gusan influence in the Ashkanian period diminished. It is likely that in the late Ashkanian period and after formation of the Sassanid government no one had heard the word Gusan. The word Gusan was replaced by the word Khonyagar. Nothing of the Gusans was left. When clerics during the Sassanid era regained their power, Zoroastrianism again became popular. As official religion Zoroastrianism replaced previous beliefs and traditions. Zoroastrian clerics during the Sassanid period returned to their exact place in the Achaemenid Empire and promoted their traditional customs. Before the emergence of Khonyagars and their place in the Sassanid Empire, the Gusan's art was condemned so that gradually Gusans lost their role as carriers of oral tradition (Ashrafi 44). Sassanid people called themselves revivalists of religious, cultural and artistic traditions of the Achaemenid and followed their methods in many affairs. Khonyagars during the Sassanid Empire regained their same position as in the Achaemenid era. Khonyagars repeated their previous duties including composing poetry, acting, feats of physical dexterity, and as jesters for example, but not as tellers of religious propaganda which was for the Zoroastrian clerics. During the Sassanid era, Khonyagars formed a large group and was its own class in the court. In this era as in the Achaemenid era, there were two groups of Khonyagars, courtier/official Khonyagars and non-courtier/non official Khonyagars (itinerant). It seems that Khonyagars gained the respect and admiration of Sassanid kings. Storytelling, composing poems, music and other recreations during Sassanid era

found the same functions as during the Achaemenid. Poetry and music gained a special position during the Sassanid era, and Khonyagars found a valuable position too. Many researchers of art and history have noted this position of Khongyagars during the Sassanid era. For instance, Saadi Hasani notes: "Musicians and Khonyagars in the Sassanid court had a high rank especially in the Bahramgoor period. Musicians were considered as the highest class of people. Iranian musicians were working under supervision of a royal ceremonial head, Khorrambash, and were playing music for big parties by his order" (Hassani17). Khonyagars had an important role in ceremonies of this period in the performance of cultural and artistic traditions. In addition to entertaining the guests Khonyagars had an important role in instilling pride and stimulating audiences' feelings with poems and stories that had epic, historical and religious themes. In this regard Hasani says:

> Some of the stories were about historical events, e.g., Kin-e Iraj, Kin-e Siavash, Ganj-e Badavardeh, and some had religious themes, e.g., Dastan-e Yazdan Afarid. Among famous stories created to describe ceremonies and nature, one can enumerate stories such as Dastan-e Norouz-e Bozorg, Arayesh-e Khorshid, Mah Abarkohan, Mah Balay-e Kouhsar, Sabz andar Sabz; and as for the mourning songs Marg-e Shabdiz can be an example. (Hasani 22)

As mentioned earlier, during the Sassanid era (as in the Achaemenid era) there were two kinds of Khonyagars. Official/courtier khonyagars with a high rank in the court who performed for Sassanid kings, and nonofficial/itinerant khonyagars who related to the people of Iran and tried to fulfill their cultural, social and informational needs. These Khonyagars were guardians and protectors of oral, cultural, historical, mythical, and religious traditions of Iran. This is why Official/courtier khonyagars of

the Sassanid court after the Arab invasion suffered a similar fate as the khonyagars of the Achaemenid era. Ashrafi believes:

> Like the downfall of the Achaemenid Empire, the collapse of Sassanid Empire had the same implications for the Khonyagars: the official and courtier Khonyagars completely died out and had no chance to represent their art. Different generations Khonyagars who were generally in the service of the Kings and the courtiers, and had lived a luxury life for several decades under the court patronage, were so much used to the easy life that luxury, like their art and their feelings, had become an inseparable part of their character. Thus, this era marks an end to their historical. (Ashrafi 54)

4.1.2. Storytelling after Islam

After the arrival of Islam to Iran itinerant Khonyagars were placed in a very difficult position in comparison with their ancestors in the Achaemenid era. Muslims, unlike the Seleucids, did not tolerate itinerant Khonyagars at all (Ashrafi 54). When Arabs invaded Iran they opposed many Iranian arts, especially Khonyagari because these Arabs had newly converted to Islam and were not familiar with artistic traditions.

For Muslims these artistic groups with its traditions were the most blasphemous tradition of magic. Ashrafi believes:

> It should be noted that these new invaders' goals was not only about conquest. They brought with them a religion sharper than their swords. Leaders of this new ideology were interested in ruling the hearts and minds of people all over the known world, bringing new and special guidelines for any act or behavior believing that those guidelines were divine. There would be no place for ancient beliefs. (Ashrafi 55)

Arabs who had newly converted to Islam believed that any kind of Ghana, myth and storytelling and myth-making was unacceptable which made the situation more difficult for itinerant Khonyagars whose main job was myth and storytelling and myth-making, music and playing shows. Moreover, itinerant Khonyagars were carriers of ancient myths, cultural, artistic and historical traditions. Their ideology and art was a mixture of Zoroastrian religion and Iranian nationalism. In fact the story subjects of itinerant Khonyagars were heroes and athletes who were all Zoroastrian with behavior and actions of these heroes based on the philosophy of the ancient religion. Even their love stories were a history of the beloved who was a nobleman or attributed to a noble family. Religious and spiritual histories were based on Zoroastrian philosophy and thought. Arabs considered Khonyagars as magicians with a blasphemous tradition.

However, after the Arab invasion, because of the wrong deeds of the occupying Arabs, which was against the Iranian's expectation of the Muslim soldiers and rulers, and also because of Iranian's nostalgic feelings of their past, the art of the Khonyagars as an emblem of Iran's past glory and dignity was welcomed by the Iranians. Since Muslims used any tool for dominance over Iranians, many Iranian were forced to convert to the new religion (Zarinkob 24). This situation was more difficult for Khonyagars in the cities where Muslim rulers had more control. People were forced to join Muslim communities in order save their lives. Most Khonyagars traveled to rural and tribal areas where Iranian rural and tribal communities were less controlled by Muslim rulers, and therefore could still practice their own traditions. Certainly Khonyagars could work better in these societies and inspired oral traditions of tribes and rural areas as the basis for their own work. However over time and after the spread of Islam in Iran, the work of Khonyagars was considered Haram (unlawful) especially in urban areas. Khonyagari art inevitably decomposed into independent arts. The main branch of Khonyagari changed into new groups and branches with new names such as

poets, memorizers, natal readers, storytellers, <u>Shahnameh</u> readers among others all of whom performed the same work. It seems that Iranian Khonyagari adaptability to new conditions should be admired. Iran could not have today's arts and traditions if these artists, inheritors of thousands years of traditions and culture, did not tolerate difficult conditions. In fact not only did Khonyagars not retreat but also they created a new concept for their artistic forms based on the teachings of a newly emerging Islam. Doing so led to creation of new work through a conceptual metamorphosis in the Khonyagar's art. Iranian people witnessed severe contradictions between the teachings of Islam and the actions of Arab Muslim rulers and were disgusted by Arab rulers. However, Iranians accepted teachings of Islam because they found teachings compatible with their nature (Nasr 45). Iranians believed that Islam and the Prophet's instructions were not followed by the Arab rulers, that Islam was a tool used by corrupt rulers to govern. Therefore, Iranian people who were looking for independence and their own greatness were attracted to national movements especially Shi'ite. These conditions also provided opportunities for Iranian Khonyagars who were by that time divided into different groups of performers. Among the arts played very well by Khonyagars throughout its history was the art of storytelling. After the Islamic period *Naghali* (storytelling) can be considered the most important art of Khonyagars. Religious restrictions on some arts of the Khonyagars and people's desire to hear past stories, and historical events made Khonyagar storytelling more eminent. *Naghali*, the most important art of Khonyagars, replaced Khonygari. Today all Khonyagars' arts are concentrated in the word *Naghali.*

4.2.1.1 Naghali

Naghali is a telling of the story of an event in a poetic or prose form with dramatic gestures and modes. The purpose of the *Naghali* is to entertain, convey ideas and news create excitement and stimulate the audience's emotions through fascinating stories and fictions, musically effective words and dramatic movements. As Beyzai indicates:

"*Naghali* is different from sermonizing because *Naghal* does not transfer any special thought by using logic rather more focus on audience's emotions rather than logic" (Beyzai 65). Beyzai believes that Khonyagars of the pre-Islamic era usually told their stories and epics accompanied by a musical instrument. But after Islam music was forbidden. *Naghal* could not use musical instruments anymore. Therefore, *Naghals* turned to another method of event reading and storytelling reinforcement to compensate for the lack of a musical instrument. In this regard *Naghali* can be considered as a single player show (Beyzai 66). As mentioned earlier, Iranian people were accustomed to Khonyagari and storytelling for many centuries. During the Islamic period, despite all the limitations of the new religion imposed upon storytelling, there are evidences for *Naghali* during the early centuries of Islam. According to Bayzai the first evidences of Islamic *Naghali* belonged to the third century AH. In this regard Beyzai mentions Ibn Ghasiteh's report in <u>Oyon al Akhbar</u> that: "According to Ali (son of Hisham): In Merv[21] there was a storyteller among us. He was telling stories that made us cry. He then took up a Tambour and played it. He used to say: there should be little happiness in this sadness" (qtd. in Beyzai 66). After the arrival of Islam *Naghali* can be generally classified into 3 groups:

I. Epic *Naghali*

II. *Naghali* of historical and mythical stories

III. Religious *Naghali* (Blvkbashy 87).

Epic *Naghalis* are actually narratives of epic stories before Islam especially <u>Shahnameh</u> Ferdowsi. Epic *Naghali* were always popular among people due to the importance of the highly valued <u>Shahnameh</u> Ferdowsi book among them. These

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[21] . Merv was a major city in central Asia, located near today's Mary in Turkmenistan. It was an Achaemenid Satrapy. 20 Oct 2012 <http://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/silk_road.php.>.

Naghals who displayed a description of epic stories of the <u>Shahnameh</u>, were called <u>Shahnameh</u>-khan or Shahnameh-khans [<u>Shahnameh</u> readers].

Storytellers of historical and mythical stories comprised another group of Iranian *Naghals* who quoted mythical and fiction stories about Iran historical events. This group mostly took part in parties and festivities. Their purpose was to create happy feelings, stimulate excitement and entertain audiences, and tell romantic stories. Their main job was reading poems.

The third group is made of those *Naghals* who read religious concepts and stories. This group is divided in to several sub-groups:

A. Managhebe-khan

B. Fazayel-khan

C. Rozeh-khan

D. Pardeh-khan

E. Shamayel-khan or Shabih-khan

F. Hamleh-khan

G. Sokhanvar (spokesman)

A. Managhebe-khan

This kind of *Naghali* is among the first religious *Naghali* after the start of the Islamic period in Iran. Maybe it can be said that this kind of *Naghali* is an Iranian initiative in which *Managheb-khan* read odes and poetries to describe Imam Ali, heroic histories and wars, and stories about other Imams and families of Prophet Mohammed. The spread of Shiite religion along with Iranian political and religious reaction against the Umayyad and Abbasi Caliphates led to the creation of this kind of show during the Buyid dynasty (Ashorpour 86).

B. Fazayel-khan

In response to Shiite religious preachers and *Managhebe-Khan*, a group of Iranian

Sunni Naghal artists presented dramatic stories about the characteristics and behaviors

of Rashedin rulers based on the methods of the *Managheb-khans* (Ashorpour 88).

C. Rozeh-khan

Roze-khani is a religious Naghali in which the Naghal reads poems about

Karbala events, Imam Hussein and his soldiers' defeat and sufferings. This form of

Naghali focuses more on the representation of events in words, rather than performing

the show. The expression *Roze-khani* includes <u>Rozat al Shohada</u>'s book concepts by

Mola Hussein Kashefi Sabzevari. Kashefi wrote the book in the 9th century AH during

the Timurid era (1370-1526). It seems that the poetries of *Managheb-khan* and *Fazayel-*

Khan were very effective in the formation of this work. Mohammed Ja'far Mahjoub

considers the methods of *Fazayel-khani* and *Managheb-khani* as forerunners that led to

the formation of *Roze-khani* (Mahjoub, "Az Fazayel-khani" 338).

D. Pardeh-khan

Pardeh-Khan is a kind of *Naghal* that represents its histories in addition to showing

dramatical movements through painted images on canvas. *Pardeh-khan* is generally

classified into epic/<u>Shahnameh</u> *Pardeh-khan*, and religious *Pardeh-khan*. This kind of

minstrelsy is considered the most dramatic form of minstrelsy that is highly influential

and comprehensive in terms of its artistic-religious aspects.

E. Shamayel-khan or Shabih-khan

Shabih-khan is *Naghal* and actor in the *Tazieh* play representing a religious character's

role and communications of the Karbala and of other religious events.

F. Hamleh-khan

Hamleh-khans are *Naghals* that represent events of Imam Ali's life and the families of Prophet Mohammed using poetries in the Hamleh Heidari book. Actually the name of this kind of *Naghali* is derived from the Hamleh Heidari by Mirza Mohammed Rafi Khan Bazel (Deceased 1124), or the book Hamleh Heidari by Molla Beman Ali Raji kermani. Hamleh Heidari is a description of real and fictional histories and events about the life and character of Imam Ali.

G. Sokhanvar

These Nghals are experts with the experience to provide logical statements, Ravayat or Hadith, in support of communities' words and thoughts, to advocate for a group against another. This kind of *Naghali* or narrative telling can be considered a form of competition between *Managhen-khan* and *Fazayel-khan*. In *Sokhanvari*, two parties provide a proof or logic sentence, ravayat or hadith, to prove their legitimacy (Ashorpour 91).

As mentioned above *Naghali* in Iran evolved, affected by the new religion of Islam and its particular prohibitions and limitations of Iranian art. Preparations were made for the destruction of the oral and narrative arts rooted in the traditions of ancient rituals. But this art did not stagnate but developed a new generation of artists emerging with religion toward new forms of religious thought and ideology during periods of governance by non-Iranians. There are reports about the existence of the art of *Naghali* with religious themes, especially Shi'ite, even during the long period of Sunni governments in Iran. This indicates that *Naghali* at this time protected Iran's ancient religious and artistic traditions. When stories from the periods before Islam were prohibited by the rulers, religious stories were used to keep alive the tradition of storytelling out of a sense of Iranian nationalism. The peak of Iran's *Naghali* was during the Safavid period. During the Safavid era kings were Shi'ite so that this

particular type of Islam was announced as a formal religion. It was a time when most Iranian arts flourished and reached their peak. Artists were free to express their art without fear. Many researchers considered the Safavid period as a period of art emersion. Safavid rulers provided opportunities for Iranian artists to continue cultural and artistic activities after previous periods when artists were afraid of prosecution and punishment so that there is nearly complete information about the arts from this historical period. Information from this period supports researchers to consider that various Iranian arts were invented in the Safavid era. Safavids encouraged cultural potentials for their political goals and were successful in achieving goals using culture.

The formation of the coffeehouse during the Safavid era led to a considerable evolution of Iran's *Naghali*. Coffeehouses were fixed and certain places where *Naghali* performed for numerous audiences. The need for national unity and creation of passion and heroic among Iranians to establish a strong government against foreigners directed the special interest and attention of Shah Ismaeel Safavid, founder of the Safavid dynasty, toward <u>Shahnameh</u> and Shahnameh-khani. In this regard Parsadost says: "Since Shah Ismail period, Shahnameh-khani was more considered by the Iranian society. Baba Isfahani was one of the famous Shahnameh-khans. *Naghals* were reading <u>Shahnameh</u> stories with songs for presenting in the pantries, later called coffeehouse. They stimulated benevolence and the courage spirit in the people's heart" (Parsadost 745). Coffeehouses extended the careers of various religious and non-religious *Naghal* who are still working until today. However it is necessary to mention the characteristics of *Naghal* who had *Naghali* jobs. It seems that their jobs depend on *Naghal* characteristics rather than other factors. *Naghal* maintain some behaviors and characteristics of ancient traditions while adapting to current conditions and people's needs in any historical era. Here we will investigate the *Naghal* characteristic. As mentioned before, *Naghals* or storytellers are the same as Khonyagars and Gusans.

These artists had personal and occupational characteristics distinguished them from ordinary people. In ancient Persian source books such as <u>Shahnameh Abu Mansoori</u>, <u>Shahnameh Sa'lbi</u> and <u>Shahnameh Ferdowsi</u>, the word *Dehghan* or *Dehgan* (yeoman) was used to refer to *Naghals* or storytellers. In fact *Dehghan* or *Dehgan* was for a person who told stories and performed storytelling. Safa in <u>Hamaseh-e soraei dar Iran</u> about *Dehghan* or *Dehgan* says:

> However, *Dehghans* were people of ancient noble classes of Iran. Studies done about the *Dehghans* indicate that *Dehghans* had carefully preserved and maintained Iran's historical memorials. Since *Dehghan* people were among the pre-Islamic Iran's royalty and nobility, memories of the glories of their forefathers had made them preserve the national and local narratives. They had memorized most of these narratives and retold them for people. Certainly *Dehghans* had some information about ancient history. [Moreover, they were] involved in the preparation of a great history of Iran's ancient epic and national narratives. (Safa 66)

The *Dehghan* or *Dehgan* was considered a very wise and knowledgeable person who knew astronomy science. People respected and trusted him due to his knowledge and because he could provide guidance and played the role of prophet. *Naghals* had a high level of wisdom and ability to learn different arts such as music, acting, composing poetry, memorizing poetry, and remembering historical events or storytelling. Moreover they had a high level of self-confidence and could present their art everywhere at any time with great influence on people. Fortunately there are reports of European travelers in Iran during different eras including the Timurid and Safavid eras who witnessed the art of these *Naghals* and storytellers closely. These Europeans provided information about how *Naghals* performed and provided us characteristics of *Naghals*. For example, there is a narrative description by Jane Dieulafoy, a French

traveler during the Timurid era. Dieulafoy referring to the intelligence of Iranian *Naghal* reports:

> When Timur had set up a tent for recreation around the city (Isfahan) he allowed poets and dervishes to enter the tents. One day a dervish came to his tenant and read a piece of <u>Shahnameh</u> to him with a beautiful song.
>
> Timur asked: Dervish what is your name?
>
> Dervish answered: My name is Dolat [Chance]
>
> Timur said: Dolat and Iqbal does not have eye. It is always blind.
>
> Dervish immediately answered: If it was not blind then did not let a lame person like you becomes king.
>
> Timur, contrary to his habits, liked this proper answer of dervish. He laughed and gave a good tip to him. (qtd. in Ashorpour 208)

Yvonne Gres, who traveled in Iran during the Shah Soltan Hussein Safavid era (1694-1722), wrote about the interest of Iranian people in this art and about the influence of *Naghals* as follows:

> Every night in the corner of the square an old man named Habib would start his show. A group of people gathered to hear his stories. All people sat around him and sat around on the ground and listened to his words with pleasure. The minstrel, Ostad Habib, every night told us these stories and all his customers, who were addicted to his stories, believed all his words and were fascinated by his words. (Gres 229)

Jakob Eduard Polak, another traveler in Iran wrote:

> Many of them pretend to be alchemists and boast of being skilled in that job. They deceive people, receive a large sum of money and then they will disappear. They are excellent at minstrelsy and storytelling, and can attract the audience's attention with skillful juggling. Like the Arabic

stories, they suddenly disrupt the story in the most exciting moments in order to receive their wage from people, and resume the story the day after. These stories, presented in a good style and pure language, will expand the knowledge of audiences in terms of poetry and Persian language and these people are usually of lower classes of society. In this sense, the efficacy of these stories is far better that our rural shows, which at times distort the language and makes it invalid. (qtd. in Azhand, 38-39)

People believed that *Naghals* were unique people with a high level of religious and practical knowledge. People accept and trust their words. There is no exact information about how *Naghals* are trained. However, according to sources their training method in the past was that of teacher and student. This was an eastern method for the education of those who were interested in learning secret knowledge and the arts. Children or adolescents learned techniques of art and through the experience of practice via lessons with the teacher. After finishing a period of education, a student would ask the teacher to allow the student to work independently in that job or art. According to sources it seems that this kind of education was applied in *Naghali*. Mahjoub considers the education of *Naghals*, especially in the present era, as a hereditary issue Mahjoub says:

At times, we can find people who have been involved in the art of minstrelsy or the arts related to public shows for generations, such as Sokhanvari, Ta'ziyhe-khani, etc. They might have inherited this art from their fathers (as *Roze-khani* in some Sadat families is hereditary and fathers of families train their children to get familiar with techniques of the job to have good reputation). (Mahjoub 88)

But the only source available about ancient storytelling is from the 9th century AH in the book <u>Fotootnameh Soltani</u> by Mola Vaez Kashefi Sabzevari. In this valuable work Kashefi describes Iranian plays and *Naghali* and represents principles of these plays. Kashefi calls actors of the play, "Arbabe Ma'reke," and classifies them into three groups:

I. Ahle (Arbabe) Sokhan (Spokesman).

II. Ahle (Arbabe) Zoor (champions).

III. Ahle (Arbabe) Bazi (Actors) (Ashorpour 3: 124).

Kashefi considers storytellers as Ahle (Arbabe) Sokhan and about the traditions of mores of storytelling and myth reading says:

I. Practice and repetition in front of the teacher (if he is beginner), or by himself (if he is teacher).

II. Dexterity (agility) and legerity (not to be defeated by others).

III. Understanding tastes and limitations of audience in order to satisfy the audience.

IV. Combination of poetry and prose.

V. Avoiding exaggeration or saying impossible words.

VI. Avoiding complimentary and ironic words.

VII. Avoiding too much forgiveness or being stingy.

VIII. Avoiding overstatement and understatement.

He also suggests a six stage principle for *Naghals* who read their stories and narratives in poetry:

I. Reading with song.

II. Saying words that are pleasant for people.

III. Describing difficult verses for people.

IV. Avoiding words that bore audiences.

V. Avoiding overstatements and swearing in order to receive money.

VI. To mention the name of main poet.

Moreover Kashefi considers five characteristics for *Naghals* and Ma'reke Giran:

I. Having pure faith.

II. No jealously.

III. No prejudice and hypocrisy.

IV. No arrogance and pride.

V. Strong belief in God (Kashefi 250).

From what was mentioned above a *Naghal* should have a justified, pure and faithful personality in order to do his job. Since most stories and narratives told by *Naghals* have a kind of religious and educational aspect, the *Naghal* should first have the understanding in order to maintain and promote these narratives and to be able to present narratives to others. This kind of understanding is essential not only for religious concepts but also for epic, mythical and romantic stories. Epic, mythical and romantic stories or narratives in Iran have a religious theme. So that listening to stories and telling stories has an entertainment aspect but also includes religious and divine aspects. Kashefi discussing the advantages of *Naghali* of Ahle Sokhan and says:

 I. Being informed about past events

II. Realizing greatness of God when hearing strange and wonderful events.

III. Hearing about others' sorrows and feeling comfort.

IV. Indulging one's self not in the worldly affairs after seeing the kings' failures

 V. Learn lessons and experiences. (Kashefi 270)

As mentioned earlier *Naghals* are also skilled actors who can affect others. They are able to represent story characters with their modes and dramatic movements in front of others. Sometimes they can impress people with a character in their own mind. A *Naghal* can be successful if he has the abilities of a good actor. As an actor, he should have a correct and exact knowledge of audiences and their needs in order to select a proper story for the community. Beyzai about a *Naghal*'s acting ability says:

> In Iranian plays *Naghal* is one of the most prominent actors and some minstrels are really the most skillful actors. They really know which parts of their stories are the most exciting for the audience and they know what to say in order to be more influential. Moreover these minstrels are well aware of the acting techniques and facial gestures. They exactly know how to picture themselves in the difficult situations in the stories in order to best crystallize the stories. As is mentioned over and over, this actor plays a number of roles alone and by himself. And as we have seen, [the Minstrel] plays several roles convincingly without resorting to the props or any other dramatic effects. (Beyzai 65)

Often *Naghals* use a kind of wand or cane called *Metragh* in the show. This cane is used as a sword, bow, or when singing to refer or point to something during a performance. *Naghals* usually know their stories by heart but each *Naghal* has the written form of it with him and uses it if for any reason he forgets a character name or an event. As mentioned earlier, this handwritten text is prepared by the *Naghal* or written by another *Naghal* called *Tomar* as a written form of *Naghal* text (Anasorei "Daghaegh" 24).

Figure 4.1. A sample of *Metragh*, photo: Majid Fadaei

Tomar is a confidential notebook documenting exchanges between experts. This notebook is a handwritten version of the words of *Naghals* and storytellers and stories like <u>Samak Ayyar</u>, <u>Eskandar-nameh</u>, and others. These stories are written by people who have the education and creativity to do so or by those who have heard many *Naghali*. It seems that this text is called *Tomar* because it was in the form of a long and narrow text that was folded to be portable and carried in the *Naghal*'s pocket. *Tomar* as a literary source had an important role for maintaining the itinerant *Naghal*'s stories.
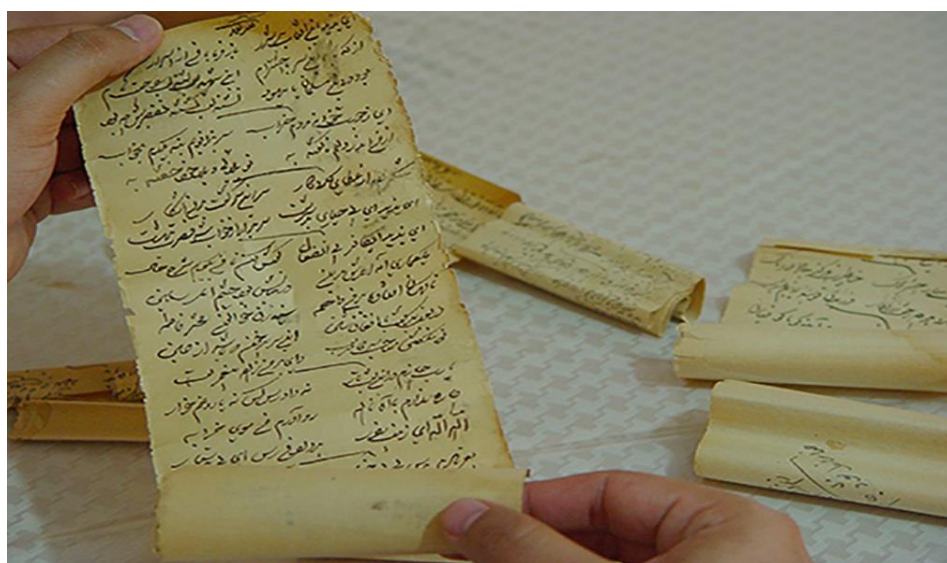
Figure 4.2. A sample of *Tomar*, Photo: Majid Fadaei

For many years *Naghali* was considered as a job in Iran. *Naghals* earned money through storytelling and informing others of news. People paid *Naghal* well, especially for religious and epic stories. During important scenes the *Naghal* would interrupt the story to collect tips from audiences convinced that audience members would be satisfied to give even a little amount of money. As mentioned earlier, according to Kashefi one of the eight principles of narrative telling is that the *Naghal* should avoid asking for too much money, not make it difficult for people to give. This kind of contentment and modesty is mentioned in various reports. For instance Ashorpour believes:

> Whenever the story reaches a climax (an eventful and adventurous point), the storyteller stops storytelling and asks for money and receives some money from people. *Naghal* never asks for more money. Though he first asks for 400 Dinars, he too soon becomes satisfied with 40 Dinars. Then he tells the audience that if anybody does not have money, there is no need to pay for it. And sometimes even becomes satisfied with people's payer. (Ashorpour 226)

The *Naghal* plays an important role in Iran, by pointing out eternal and moral truths in epics, mystical stories and other narratives. The *Naghal* is a teacher and guide who tells about truth and moral values according to conditions of a present time. The *Naghal* tells stories and particular "truths" based on who the audience is. Rahim Ali Reeisnia believes:

> In oral traditions of *Naghali* the *Naghal* is not a voice recorder or parrot but he is an artist affected by every day events of his environment and his audiences. It should be noted that social and ethical requirements of the environment caused him to make himself involved in the *Naghali* consciously or unconsciously and changes the story more or less. In the

mind of each *Naghal* there are a large number of decorative motifs, and styles like panegyric, metaphor, and advice etc. that uses them in different places. (Reeisnia 69)

The *Naghal*'s job is a live art via his contact with the audience in the present time and sharing of stories and historical events. This issue causes a kind of real and effective identify for audience assumption of the same nature. A *Naghal* 's work was a moral and educational learning experience wherein audiences felt a close relation with the narration.

4.3. Pardeh-khan

The *Pardeh-khan* has all the characteristics of a *Naghal*, using a *Pardeh* for telling his stories. Scenes with important points or events are painted on the *Pardeh*. It can be said that what the *Pardeh-khan* performs is the most complete form because the *Pardeh-khan* uses visual narratives in addition to speech narratives. With the addition of the visual, the *Pardeh-khan* is popular with a greater number of people. The *Pardeh-khan* has following characteristics:

I. Familiarity with painting art and iconography

Some *Pardeh-khans* are painters and iconographers. And in some cases the *Pardeh-khan* is not the painter or iconographer but is very familiar with these arts so that the *Pardeh-khani* is able to use an image with words simultaneously for a single meaning.(Ardalan 3: 12)

II. A *Parde-khan* prepares his storytelling based on the scene images and paintings and knows these by heart

Since the painted *Pardeh* contains different icons and feature it is necessary for the *Pardeh-khan* to have prepared stories. This preparation is even more important in the use of religious *Pardehs* related to the Karbala event than the epic *Pardeh* (Shah-nameh).

III. The *Parde-khan* has total control over his performance of roles

Pardeh-khans are skillful actors and have special skill and power in playing different roles. With different images and modes on the *Pardeh-khani* painting it is necessary for *Pardeh-khans* to have the ability to perform each character role on the canvas. In this regard Jaber Anasori describes:

> The *Pardeh-khan* can perform in a way that can generate emotions like fear as if an audience member can hear the sound of marching of horses of the Shemr -ibn zel Joshan. The *Parde-khan* can show the facial anger of Mokhtar at the time of carrying out revenge, Imam Hussein's immaculate and sad face, and the look of cruelty in the eyes of the character Shimr. When the *Parde-khan* talks about a Karbala a victim, he himself becomes ill and weak. When he claps those who are in deep thoughts suddenly become awakened. He speaks of great men with his every movement. Acceleration in movement is Ashghia' (wicked), and calm movement is Olia' (benefactors). (Anasorei 24)

IV. Familiarity with society and people's mood in terms of folk psychology

Understanding society and its audiences are among important characteristics of *Pardeh-khans*. A *Parde-khan* carefully recognizes the needs, feelings, and ideals in the audience's community and chooses appropriate narratives. In some cases the *Parde-khan* chooses people among the audience based on appearance and inner nature that are like characters on the *Pardeh*. For example if there is a child in a mother's arms, the *Parde-khan* asks the mother to let the *Parde-khan* compare her child to a child on the canvas such as Ali Asghar, Imam Hussein's child. Some *Pardeh-khans* try to find similarities between faces on the *Pardeh* and faces in the audience to connect imaginary characters on the canvas with audience individuals (Anasorei 25).

In addition to the visual aspects of the *Pardeh*, this canvas also functions like a *Tomar* in the *Pardeh-khani*. *Pardeh* is a visual *Tomar*. Since the names of characters are written next to the characters this helps the *Pardeh-khan* remember names. Moreover, there are two methods of narrations for *Pardeh-khans*. One method is the introduction of characters on the *Pardeh* one by one. In another method the *Pardeh-khan* first refers to the appearance of characters and faces, narrates the history and then tells of the secret and inner meaning of images and history. Ashorpour in his book Naghali says: "According to ancient *Pardeh-khans* each *Pardehdar* (*Pardeh-khan*) has two aspects: *Sorat-khani* and *Mahiat-khani*. Whatever describes the surface of the images is *Sorath-khani,* and what describes and interprets stories and narratives is called *Mahiat-khani*. The *Pardeh-khan* should consider these when he is doing his performance" (Ashorpour 383).

V. Familiarity with Iranian musical instruments

One of the required proficiencies for *Naghal* is knowledge of music and having a good voice. *Pardeh-khans* usually have a good voice that along with ancient musical instruments leads to a greater influence on audiences.

4.3.1. Performance Method of Pardeh-khans

Generally it is possible to recognize two performance and dramatic methods in Iran's *Pardeh-khani*. In the first method realistic motions and the playing of the *Pardeh-khan* gives a life to faces and characters on the *Pardeh*. This method is the most effective dramatic method that attracts audiences and gives them a quick understanding of narratives (Ardalan 10:8). In this method, *Pardeh-khan* points to the characters on the *Pardeh* by using his hand or a *Metragh* [cane] to realistically represent the action and the modes of the characters through which the intended message is communicated. As mentioned earlier, the existence of a story's characters on the *Pardeh* makes the whole

work of acting more difficult since the *Parde-khan* must play several different characters at the same time.

Figure 4.3. The *Pardeh-khan* is representing actions realistically, Photo: Majid Fadaei

The second method is one in which the *Pardeh-khan* performs abstract movements in order to give reality to the text. These movements can be affected by inner feelings and performance conditions. These movements could be particular habits such as nodding to show thanks to God, regret and others. Some movements are actually an imitation of the work of older *Pardeh-khans* continued in the work of younger *Pardeh-khans* (Ardalan 10:9). *Pardeh-khans* whose works are based on the work of older *Pardeh-khans*, bring less creativity and innovation believing that *Pardeh-khani* a holy and divine work. They consider themselves only as narrators of holy, divine, national and epic truths. They use past methods in order to accomplish a duty to transmit concepts and meanings in the narratives. This type of *Pardeh-khani* work and

this group *Pardeh-khans* usually perform narratives in rural areas. Their main job is for religious work or a national purpose. In this regard Ardalan says:

> In fact, *Pardeh-khans* who follow the traditional style of the past *Pardeh-hans* will be less creative and innovative in their storytelling. Since *Pardeh-khani*, in their eyes, is sacred and spiritual, these *Pardeh-khans* think of themselves merely as the narrators of sacred truths, and spiritual, national and epical matters. And based on the teachings of the past, they took it on themselves to pass down the concepts and the meaning of their narratives. (Ardalan 10:12)

Figure 4.4. The *Pardeh-khan* is representing the abstract movments, photo: Majid Fadaei

Other *Pardeh-khans*, especially those in larger cities or those who are itinerant *Pardeh-khans* who move around from one city or rural area to another, consider *Parde-khani* as a fulltime job. These *Pardeh-khans* have a belief and self-awareness that they are the owners of this job as a business with an art and skills of high value. These *Parde-khans* use their creative abilities to compete with other *Pardeh-khans* in order to gain greater popularity and more fans. They also choose stories, narratives, and a special

kind of painting *Pardeh*. This group of *Pardeh-khans* utilize different facilities in order to improve their works and do not limit themselves to traditional principles and frameworks. The works of this type of *Pardeh-khans* is less religious and traditional, and is more personalized. Ardalan says, "Some *Parde-khans* especially young *Pardeh-khans* try to use a kind of self-awareness in their own action and expression in such a situation. Doing so makes *Pardeh-khans* closer to a kind of play rather than an ancient tradition" (Ardalan 10:11). However as mentioned earlier, in recent decades with the development of multiple visual media for storytelling and the many problems of life such as the migration of rural people to cities and less leisure time, *Pardeh-khani* audiences have decreased. There is less attention paid to *Pardeh-khani*. Professional *Pardeh-khans* are forced to find other ways to earn money for living costs so that *Pardeh-khani* becomes a second job and a divine work.

4.3.2. Venues for Pardeh-khan Performances

Pardeh-khani performance like *Naghali* can occur in different places such as alleys, entrances of, inside or near holy places, and shrine areas. Sometimes P*ardeh-khani* is performed in other covered areas such as people's houses.
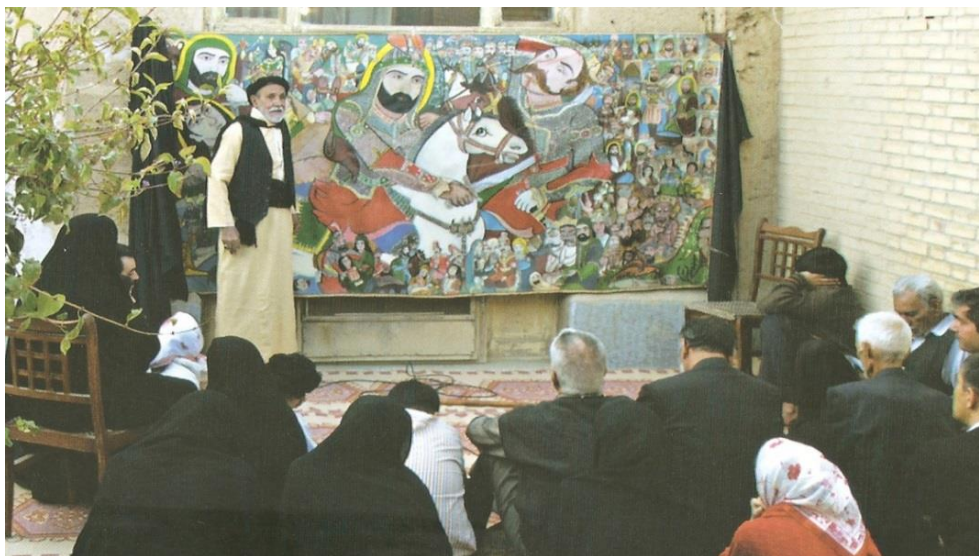
Figure 4.5.   The *Pardeh-khan* is performing a narrative at home, from Hamid Ardalan,

Morshedan Pardeh-khan Iran, (Tehran: Ferhangestan Honer, 2010) 12: 6.

However, there is a difference in the positioning and sitting place of audiences in the *Naghali* versus *Pardeh-khani*. *Naghali* audiences can sit around the *Naghal* in a circle with the *Naghal* standing in the middle of the circle, turning and facing every direction for a direct contact with each audience person. In the *Pardeh-khani*, audiences sit on one side of a space because of the *Pardeh*'s location. Usually audiences sit in a half circle that reminds one of an audience's sitting place in the cinema. Additionally, according to other sources there is another form of religious *Naghali* that is like *Pardeh-khani* called *Shamayel-Gardani* or *Sorat-Khani*. In *Shamayel-Gardani* the *Naghal* holds an icon or picture of divine Imams or prophet in his hand while walking through alleys and streets reading poems describe the difficulties and disasters of those depicted in pictures. This form of *Naghali* is not limited to a fixed area because the storytelling carries small, portable images and therefore the show is more mobile. About this type of *Naghali*, Ashorpour says, "*Shamayel-gardan* or the special term of *Zarreh- parvari* in the *Naghali* is another kind of Iranian show in the sectors of *Naghali*, phonetic, visual and speech representation" (Ashorpour 387). He also introduces this method as a way of educating and training the *Pardeh-khan* in which Ostad or Morshed (master) of the *Pardeh-khani* selects an image or icon among *Pardeh*'s icons and then paints it on the canvas or gets it painted by someone. The Ostad [mentor], then, teaches the story of the painted icon to his Morid [student] and later sends him to the homes and public places. This educational method is called *Zarreh-parvari* mentioned in this quote:

> "It is done for 3 purposes:
>
> I. Breaking Morid's (student) pride.
>
> II. Acquiring money for living costs.
>
> III. Practical training of the Morid (student)" (Ashorpour 167).

This method was applied until the Morid (student) memorizes the related story and learns its performance completely. When the Morshed is satisfied with the Morid's

knowledge of the first story, the Morshed, then, gives another icon to the Morid and trains him in the new story and related icon. When a Morid could learn 700 related stories in terms of *Sorat-khani* and *Mahiat-khani*, he could become a teacher eligible to have his own *Pardeh*, and aspire to be a Morshed himself, and be certified by his Morshed to set up his own *Pardeh* (Ashorpour 388).

Figure 4.6. The *Pardeh-khan* is training a student (*Zarreh-parvari*), from Hamid Ardalan, Morshedan Pardeh-khan Iran, (Tehran: Ferhangestan Honer, 2010) 12: 6.

4.3.3. Time of Pardeh-khan Performance

Pardeh-khani performance, as propaganda, epic, and religious art was not limited to a particular time of the day. *Pardeh-khans* earned money performing *Pardeh-khani* several times in a day as long as the show did not conflict with prayer times. This point is very important for *Pardeh-khans* and as suggested by Kashefi in Fototnameh Soltani: "*Naghal* or *Ma'rekegir* should not play the show for people during praying time and should respect the praying time" (Kashefi 323). However, during national and religious holidays, the *Pardeh-khan* has more work to do especially in the month of Moharram for religious ceremonies. *Pardeh-khans* performed religious narratives especially the

Karbala narrative. At the request of people, *Pardeh-khans* fulfilled many orders and *Nazrs* [vows] especially for ceremonies such as family mourning ceremonies using proper narratives based on a customer's request. Each narrative would normally last one to two hours. The *Pardeh-khan* can decrease or increase the time based on time constraints and who the audience is, in control of the performance and varying the speed of delivery skillfully toward the desired result.

4.4. Conclusion

The storyteller in the art of storytelling actually functions as a guide and teacher of morality, as it has long been used as a means to promote religion and ethics (by missionaries of Mani's religion). This special work and application has continued to be used through centuries and many storytellers consider their work as a continuation of the method and work of the prophets and teachers of ethics, holding fast onto this belief in their work. As such, storytelling is a sacred art for both storyteller and audience. On the other hand, the storyteller plays the main role in *Pardeh-khani* while the other two pillars of *Pardeh-khani*, namely story and narrative, are chosen by the storyteller. The storyteller simultaneously plays the roles of director and actor, both of which are addressed below:

1. Role of Director:

The storyteller does not choose all kinds of stories and narratives. He takes care to choose a subject with a proper and ethical message and that is not merely for entertainment. The two issues of national and religious epics are of high priority in the storyteller's selection. These subjects constitute most of their narrative, owing to the people's reception and their interest shown. This could be a model for the directors in Iran's cinema. Moreover, all the technical and aesthetic facilities at the director's

disposal serve human and moral messages, and although many storytellers make a living this way, they still regard their art and job as holy and respected. This point could also be an example for those cinematographers who are equally interested in their art, especially those interested in religious cinema.

2. Role of Actor:

One of the important tasks of the storyteller in the art of *Pardeh-khani* is acting and playing the roles of characters portrayed on the canvas. As previously mentioned, the storyteller uses both realistic and non-realistic styles. In the realistic way, the storyteller imitates the characters on the painted canvas and plays them in a realistic way, resulting in attracting the audience who will understand matters faster. However, in the non-realistic or abstract style, inflected by inner feelings and depending on the performing conditions, the actor uses specific and symbolic gestures to express the characters. These gestures are mostly used for holy persons and religious icons, for instance pauses and nods.

Therefore, storytellers' styles of acting and types of gestures in the art of *Pardeh-khani* can serve as an acting model for Iran's national cinema. Susan Hayward says:

> Gestures, words, intonations, attitudes, postures – all of these separate them, thus affirming the plurality of the cultures. Indeed, it could be argued that the gestural codes, even more so than the narrative codes, are deeply rooted in a nation's culture. Thus, when analyzing the nation's cinema, traditions of performance must also be brought into consideration as a further marker of this differentiation and specificity. (Hayward, *French* 12)

CHAPTER 5

STORY IN PARDEH-KHANI

5.0. Introduction

The third pillar of the art of *Pardeh-khani* comprises story and narrative. Story and narrative are the basis and foundation for painting, the art of acting and narration in the art of *Pardeh-khani* and has similar performance in the cinema, with one difference: removing the element of story from the art of *Pardeh-khani* is impossible. The story has a much more important role in the art of *Pardeh-khani* than in cinema because the cinema can communicate with its audience without a story and just be animated pictures of objects and other things -- without any concern for the story or causality. It can be presented as a documentary, but in *Pardeh-khani* the story is essential because without it there will be no painted curtain, and nothing for the storyteller (*Pardeh-khan*) to narrate. As such, the story plays an elemental, key role in the art of *Pardeh-khani*. In addition, according to Susan Heyward's typology of the national cinema, story and narrative are two of the main characteristics of every national theater. Also, one of the most important signs of a national cinema is the use of local and national stories and narratives by the filmmakers of the country; the stories and narratives originate from written literature, myths and especially the oral and folk literature of a country. The stories and narratives in the art of *Pardeh-khani* in Iran are also rooted in mythology, written and oral literature. And, like other nations of the world, Iranians have their own native traditions and history of storytelling, which, in the art of *Pardeh-khani,* have been used till now. That is why understanding the characteristics and performance of story and narrative in the art *Pardeh-khani* can be used as a model for the national theater of Iran. In this chapter, the history and methods of storytelling in Iran and the ways of using them in *Pardeh-khani* are addressed.

5.1. Background of Fiction Writing in Iran

People always need to hear a story, seeking joy and entertainment or acknowledging and recognizing unknown aspects of life. Robert McKee believes: "Our appetite for story is a reflection of profound human need to grasp the patterns of living, not merely as an intellectual exercise, but within a very personal, emotional experience. In the words of playwright Jean Anouith, 'Fiction gives life its form'" (McKee 9). Different nations and people have their own stories that form the main part of their identity. The identity of each nation can be recognized through its stories, mythologies and fictions. Past events such as battles, defeats and victory inevitably lead to creation of stories with championships and champions, as well as pains and hardships that are remembered from invasions. In fact, memories of war were the main source for forming myths and stories (Safa 12). It can be said that each nation's stories and myths were created out of the time of an experience. Fictions and epics are means for remembering the trials and sacrifices of people who stood for a nation. These epics were transferred orally, person-to-person until epics became the core of a nation's stories and myths (Safa 12).

5.1.1. Fiction Writing before Islam

Iran is one of the most ancient civilizations. Knowing the background and history of fiction writing and story specifications of this civilization, we should review the creation of history and formations of Iranian civilization. Stories and myths of a nation and civilization are reports of myths, battles, victories, defeats and attempts of that nation to build its civilization. The Iranian nation is one of the Aryan race nations (Indo-Europe) that lived in the Siberian area and emigrated from this area because of extreme cold (Pirnia 13). Aryans, and among them "Indo-Iranian" peoples, are credited with a civilization and literature. Approximately 3000 years before Christ main groups of "Indian"' and "Iranian" peoples separated from each other after having lived together in Middle Asia for a long time with a common religion, language, beliefs and myths and

referred to themselves as the "noble [people]." Later, they separated from each other and stayed in India and Iran, each group assigned this name to itself and remembered it (Safa 22). Aryan tribes divided into three sections and went to different places. One group went to Europe, another one to the East and India, and the third group to the Iranian plateau and southward. The second and third groups are those who emigrated to India and Iran. As Indo-Iranian tribes these second and third groups had common cultural and religious issues. Safa says:

> Aryan migrants that moved towards south and the Iranian plateau had to fight their way through the native tribes of the land, such as the Elamites, Tapooran, Kadoosian and other tribes. Therefore, rough wars happened between the migrants and the [native] tribes who were generally tall and powerful warriors, and were civilized or semi-wild who believed in a religion other than that of the Aryans'. Some Iranian epics are about these bitter wars within the Iranian plateau, and report on the wars between the Iranians and the Diwan (giant demons). (Safa 24)

Regarding this issue, Moin also indicates:

> Indo-Iranian tribes that moved from the north (cold area) to the south (hot area), did not forget the bitter cold of the past winters, and when thinking about the cold weather, they were reminded of their northern settlements which made them shivered in fear. On the other hand, coming to the Iranian plateau, the Aryans fought long battles in the ancient Tapurestan with the Amours who had gigantic physique and were extraordinary powerful. Such events have been crystallized in national stories and are implied as Divan-e Mazandaran in <u>Khodaynameh</u> and <u>Shahnameh</u> like, and religiously implied as Hell to signify northern

Iran. in that considered the northern of Iran as the place of evil. (Moin, *Articles* 30)

Historical reports suggest that Aryan immigrants' religion changed after their immigration to the south, battling and confronting native people's beliefs. Researchers such as Ashorpour considered the difficult situations and disasters of Aryan immigrants including wars in the south as the germinal formation of Iranian ideas of good and evil (Ashorpour 30). The belief in good and evil has played a principal role in Iranian art, religious and social culture over the centuries. According to this belief, Iranians consider a god in the sky with the name of Zurvan. Zurvan means unlimited time in Avesta, the holy book of the Zoroastrians. Zurvan religion's myth about the formation of his two children that were considered the agents for good and evil forces has an important role in religious beliefs and in Iranian stories and epics (Safa 30). The following is a brief account of Zurvan:

> Zurvan, wishing to have a son who would create the world and be a lord over it, brought sacrifices for a period of 1,000 years and became pregnant with beneficent deity Ohrmazd. During the thousand years of sacrifices, however, Zurvan had a moment of doubt and from this doubt originated the evil spirit Ahreman. Ohrmazd and Ahreman were thus twin-brother in their father's womb. Zurvan, realizing that he had two sons where he would have wanted only one, made the promise to grant the sovereignty over the world to his firstborn. Immediately, Ahreman pierced his womb and went before his father. Zurvan asked him:"Who are you?" and Ahreman answered: "I am your son, Ohrmazd." Then Zurvan said that this could not be so, but that his son Ohrmazd was radiant and fragrant, whereas this son was ugly and had a bad stench. Then Ohrmazd came to his father; at the moment when Zurvan wanted to

grant the sovereignty over the world to Ohrmazd, Ahreman reminded his father of his promise to grant this sovereigenty to his firstborn. Therefore, Zurvan gave the sovereignty over the world to Ahreman, but made Ohrmazd lord over Ahreman; He also promised that the latter would be defeatd in the end. (Jong 63)

The Aryan tribe's religion influenced by new beliefs of the culture and beliefs of Iran's plateau tribes transformed with the advent of Zoroaster and his reforms. The old memories and beliefs of Aryan tribes as well as the influences of indigenous people created the basis of old Iranian religious myths. These religious myths with its teachings, national narratives and stories of heroes together are the main root of Iran's religious and epic narrations and stories which can be found in the Zoroastrian holy book, the Avesta. This book is divided into five chapters today. In the past there were 20 volumes, each one with 100,000 couplets before Alexander's invasion of Iran, as recorded by Polybius the famous Greek historian. The main parts of the Avesta were burned and destroyed. This great book was interrupted and defective with Alexander's attack (Safa 66). In this regard Safa says:

> This great book was partly destroyed after Alexander's invasion, and according to Tansar's report only a few chapters about the historical events had been preserved. In the late Parthian and early Sassanid era, there were attempts to compile scattered pieces of Avesta; the old and new parts of Avesta were collected as far as possible which resulted in the compilation of twenty-one parts. But this collection was further scattered after the Arabs invasion of Iran. Gradually, large parts of this collection were destroyed and of which survived only a summary survived in Dinkard and sporadic sections of the missing chapters. From among these chapters, "Chiter Dot Sank" could have been the most

important, which discusses the fictionalized history of Iran; therefore, it could have served as an important source to find the origins of the [Iranian] national stories. (Safa 32)

In the current Avesta with its five parts, there are many narrations of national and epic stories especially in the book of Yasht ha. In this book one can find the names of kings, heroes, fictional subjects and Iran's epic. Indeed, the holy book of Avesta is the earliest resource in which Iranian stories are documented for the first time. Moreover, as a religious book, Avesta is the main source of epic, myths, moral narrations and stories. Therefore it is obvious why many Iranian epics and stories have a religious spirit. Determining when the Avesta was written relies on determining the time of the Iranian prophet, Zarathustra. This time is undeterminable despite the attempts of scientists and other researchers to find the exact date for the writing of the Avesta. However, there are speculations about this matter. For example, Safa in Hamaseh Soraei dar Iran argues:

According to some available documents, we could say Zoroaster had been living at about 10th century BC. Therefore, the Gatahas, those parts of Yasnas written by Zarathustra, date back to this time, [10th century BC], which is almost three millenniums ago. It is, however, difficult to determine exactly the dates of Avesta, and we could only think of Yasnas to be older than the other existing chapters. [In so much the same way], a number of the Yashts are also very old as they could be dated back to the era before the Achaemenids. (Safa 32)

The cultural and religious history of Iranian tribes before their migrations to the south, their battles and wars against natives followed by their establishment in new lands with other migrants and tribes led to the creation of their stories, religious and epic. Zarathustra as a wise prophet brought a moral and good religion for the people of

this new land that can be seen in his moral and spiritual training in the book of <u>Gata ha</u> written by Zarathustra. His moral approach penetrated Iranian stories, epics and myths and performed the basis and context of stories. Dinshah Irani in <u>Akhlagh dar Iran Bastan</u> says:

> The holy <u>Gathas</u>, the songs of the Vakhshovar (Prophet) of Iran, Zoroaster, is the main and oldest part of <u>Avesta</u> which is passed down to us from a far past. From a religious point of view, they should be considered as the foundation of Mazdisna and Zoroastrian religions. That considers them; besides, it is a complete and useful collection the moral teachings of which reminds us of the ancient civilization and sentiments of the Iranians in the past. (Irani 5)

Indeed, the basis of Zoroastrian thought is goodness. Goodness in acting, goodness in speaking and goodness in thinking are the three main aspects based in a moral order. This thought spreads throughout all affairs of Iran especially in art works at the time of Zoroaster and in following periods. In this regard Muhammad Khatami believes: "Artistic works of this era of ancient Iranian civilization had a moral and religious role for the people and social organizations. Songs and the paintings remaining from this ancient era specifically show that the artistic works meant to conduct people's behavior and morale to aspire to the moral life which is the essence of the religion" (Khatami 133). Upon closer examination, the implications of this thought surface in the stories of ancient era. It seems that the artists of ancient eras and religious leaders and missionaries wanted to create works that had educational and moral content. Nearly all of the literary works and stories that remained from Iran ancient eras have educational and moral purpose. For example, one of the oldest Iranian storybooks called <u>Ardaviraf-nameh</u> guided believers using a story style. Taghipour says:

Ardaviraf-nameh is a religious book which, through fear and hope, aims to guide believers to the right and appropriate path, and prevent them from committing sins. The writing style of the book suggests that in that era, fiction writing and narrating things in the form of stories had become a common style. Knowing the significant effects of fictionalizing, the writer/s employed the style in the writing of one of the most important religious books. (Taghipour 21)

Ardaviraf-nameh describes the journey to heaven and hell of one follower of Zoroastrianism, and therefore has a significant effect on other following works in Persian language and even on European stories. Some researchers consider Dante's Divine Comedy as an example of works affected by Ardaviraf-nameh. The Divine Comedy written about one thousand years after Ardaviraf-nameh, has significant similarities to Ardaviraf-nameh Shafa, the translator of Divine Comedy of Dante to Persian, in the introduction to the translated work indicates:

The Ardaviraf shares many similarities with Dante's Divine Comedy such that it would be odd if we say Dante had no knowledge about it. Though this claim seems a bit far-fetched, among all the Eastern and Western literary works which share similarities with Dante's Divine Comedy and could be considered as a background for it, Ardaviraf is the one that shares the most similarities with the Divine Comedy: the kind of journey to the other world; the kind of guilts; the kind of tortures, etc., are similarly observed in the Ardaviraf and Divine Comedy. However, there is no such intricacy in the other books written before Divine Comedy. Therefore it can be said that one thousand years before Dante' Divine Comedy, which is known as the most important literary genius in Europe, such a work had existed in Iran. However, unlike the Divine

Comedy that has been studies and analyzed from the very beginning, this

Iranian [literary] work, [Ardaviraf] has remained unknown (qtd. in

Taghipour 24)

Moreover, Iranians selected and adapted from Indian works with moral insight

and this is the reason for tribal and cultural similarities between these two tribes. For

example, the story book of Calila-e Dimna is one of the important works which is

written before Islam. The book is originally written in Sanskrit which is later translated

into Pahlavi language, and from Phalavi into Arabic and later translated into Persian.

This work is a collection of animal fables, a story that mentions unique moral and

educational aspects. Some even consider the original story as Iranian, that Indians

derived the story from an Iranian story. But the main point is that Iranians glorified and

published this story. The main art in Iran's ancient era was affected by religious, artistic

and moral teachings and this moral view can be seen in the literature of ancient eras

especially in Sassanid literature with the existence of two kinds of stories. The first kind

was stories and narrations that had no historical basis and were written for moral needs

and interest. The second type is comprised of epic, historical and myths stories. It can

be said that the first level and era of Iran's art and story writing were influenced by the

teachings of Zoroaster including laws at a moral level.

First stories include the moral needs and desires, and the second stories include

the historical and epic stories. It should be said that both of these especially epic stories

were affected by Iranian epics that often were incorporated with epics from other areas

such as India and Mesopotamia. It can be said that epic stories contain the main parts of

Iranian stories and fictions. What is important in this kind of stories is the moral

specifications of epics and heroes that were influenced by the spiritual and moral

teachings of Zoroastrianism. Some researchers believe that Iranian tribal people's

cultural and religious backgrounds before immigration to the south, along with their

battles against natives and following wars with other invaders made their stories religious and epic (Safa 34). Indeed, Iranians were eager to hear stories with epic and religious contexts because of their tribal and religious content as along with stories about their environmental conditions and events they were faced with.

We can find this in old epics from a long ago period of the holy book of the Avesta. The story of Yadegar-e Zariran is one of the oldest and famous Iranian epics. The main story of Yadegar-e Zariran is about the war between Iranians and Turks surrounding Zoroastrianism that ends with Iranian victory. In this regard Safa says:

> This epopee is both religious and epical. In this epopee, themes used to describe the battlefields are not dissimilar to with those in description of the Some contexts are similar to the Shahameh or other epic epopees of the fifth century AH (11th AD). However, the eloquence and the skill used to describe the heroes' feelings in the epical epopees in later stages cannot be observed in the epopee of Zariran. But this epopee and other epics (even if existing we know nothing about) … could be considered as an introduction to the appearance of our great national epic in the fifth and sixth centuries AH. (Safa 123)

5.1.2. Fiction Writing after Islam

After the Arab invasion and defeat of the Sassanid government Iranians were divided to two groups. The first group accepted the Islamic and Arab principles while the second group attempted to retain their ancestors' religion with more payment of ransom and tribute. This second group comprised mainly of Zoroastrian priests along with scientists and scholars had a significant role in the maintenance of old works. They wrote, edited and retained ancient books and especially the Avesta with its ancient knowledge of Iranian culture (Safa 36). However, the intransigence of Arab rulers led to many

opposition and national movements like Shu'ubiyya movement as the target of Arab disdain. Groups such as the Shu'ubiyya movement remembered Iranian's past via poem, prose and story description. A sense of patriotism with the decrease in political and religious power of Arab rulers led to independence for Iranians and led to the creation of national epics such as the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi. Iranian defeat by the Arabs led to artistic creations with epic context and Iranian art with its own uniqueness. Khatami believes:

> Epic art seeks national and social freedom and from among these two signifies the elements which can be significant in the battles and social ethics, and place the individual in the Iranian ethnical and spiritual proportions. This art had been in line with the situation of the Iranian society at a time which marks an end to the ancient Iranian civilization and the dismantlement of the Iranian empire by the Muslim army and the beginning of Arab domination, and continues into the ending of 6th and beginning of the 7th century AH. (Khatami 135)

Iran's literature with its epic stories after Islam can be divided to three parts: national epics, historical epics and religious epics. In reaction to the occupiers and via attempts to make the country independent from its invaders led to a significant jump in the creation of epic stories after the arrival of Islam. There were stories about heroes and the championing of ancient Iran before Islam that also occurred after the arrival of Islam and that can be seen in Arab reports. But the creation of works with new characteristics and an epic spirit occurred after Islam. The most famous and complete epic is Ferdowsi's Shahnameh about Iranian art and culture. Khatami believes:

> Epical art in this era of Iranian art had a distinct form. The dominant aspect of Iranian art in this era is firstly [marked] by the combination of Iranian national spirit with morality and religion, meaning the recovery

of religion and morality in Iranian epical spirit... Secondly, since this art describes the relation between morality and religion as well as Iranian's epic spirit, it, therefore, depicts a new image of the Iranian world in that era. Thirdly, this art has a one to one relationship with what it represents. (Khatami 145)

Iran's epic stories are about evil and goodness. In these kinds of stories, a good character battles against a bad character with a central hero as an example complete and clean who destroys evil and ugly agents, darkness and Satan (Safa 41). In Iranian teachings from the ancient up to the Islamic era, religion was about the battle between goodness and evil, light against dark. Goodness was the base of Iranian religion, in all aspects of action, speaking and thinking. Heroes and epic characters have this goodness. What is important in epic art of this era are the acts of heroes that determined Iran's culture and spirit. These heroes embodied tribal aspirations in their bodies. While they had human form these heroes were beyond human myths. The deep insight that the epic poet supplied about Iran's cultural heroes compares well with the image of a human semi-god throughout Iran's eastern culture. The human that displays moral values with his heroic behavior is the savior of his tribal culture and customs. The human with a holy spirit, a physical nature with a moral spirit ascends to the top via this unity (Khatami 132-133). Iran's epic stories and heroes recover an Iranian world destroyed after the Arab invasion and settlement in Iran. Language and culture that collapsed due to Arab influence lived in these stories. Therefore, Iranians consider listening to and quoting epic stories especially Ferdowsi's Shahname, as a national activity with religious rewards even selecting the names of heroes and champions for their children. The destruction of Arab power in Iran and the replacement of Arab rulers by other invaders, especially tribal Turks and slaves, reduced the number of epic and heroic stories. Gradually these kinds of stories changed into religious epics and stories (Safa

42). The expansion of Islam in Iran as well as the empowerment of Turk slaves who were already Islamized and used the Islamic teaching of equality with no superiority among races stopped the protest and independency of Iranians. Safa says:

> Slaves who ruled this country for years were the ones who converted to Islam before their domination of Iran and were included in the rule of "the believers are brethren." The secret to the success of these [Slaves] in rapidly dominating the people lies in their being Muslims; using the public policy of Islam, which eradicates special favors and privileges based on ethnicity, they, [the Slaves] could aspire to be a king. (Safa, *Tarikh* 94)

The people who were slaves dominance on Iran especially led to catastrophic results since their religious bias and blind and intense belief in superstitions that became a set of religious rules, penetrated Iranian society as a tradition, destroyed national epics and reduced the people's sensitivity to national identity and sense of rationality. After the sixth century, the influence of thoughts and ideas in epic stories gradually disappeared because of two main factors: the intense penetration of Islam and the weakness of national thought and rationality. Therefore, Iran's national epics changed to historical and religious epics (Safa, Tarikh 155). During this era religious epics were created using historical or fictional figures of Islam such as Khavaran-nameh, Sahebgaran-nameh and Khodavand-nameh. Out of a difficult political and religious situation, we can see the writing of stories that show the creativity and talent of story writers in Iran. The long story of Samak-e Ayyar is one of the important examples of story writing in Persian literature during that era. Safa believes:

> Samak-e Ayyar is one of the best Persian language novels in the sixth century AH. The subject of relevant stories in this book is perfection, charisma and palatability. It concludes various natural and social issues,

description of durbars and houses, different men and women as well as arms and etc. If we care about and study them carefully, most of the social information can be gained from the era before the Mogul. (Safa ,*Tarikh* 988-989)

The story of Samak-e Ayyar is one of Iran's "popular" stories that were the source of entertainment and joy for Iranian's people for centuries (Tagipour 46). It can be considered a story for common people. If moral and epic stories are considered formal stories, the story of Samak-e Ayyar is a story for common people.

From the middle of the sixth century Mogul invasion and domination of Iran, a new chapter began in Iranian's political and social culture and thought. Like the Turks, the Moguls accepted Islam readily. Their government's survival had no national and religious rival (Safa 46). The Ash'ari[22] word and Hadith[23] attitude was not consistent with the Iranian spirit. Based on the teachings of this view of Islam, came into being some sort of superficial view of religion and also [the idea of] practicing religion just because it is an obligation (Khatami 135). However, it seems that the new rulers, afraid of losing their position, preferred to not show any kindness and inflexion to the Shiites and in order to retain their power were inclined towards the Sunnis. Such an inclination created a sort of bias in Islam making it even worse for the Shiites. Under such circumstances and with the despair and frustration after massacres and hardships, some Iranian scientists, artists and poets became isolated. The Mogul's brutal crackdown and religious fanaticism caused Iranian's scholars to come to the conclusion that under oppressive circumstances, the way to freedom is not in cooperation with others nor via

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[22] . Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, (born 873/874, Basra, Iraq—died *c.* 935, /936, Baghdad), Muslim Arab theologian noted for having integrated the rationalist methodology of the speculative theologians into the framework of orthodox Islām. In his Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn ("Theological Opinions of the Muslims"), compiled during his early period, al-Ashʿari brought together the varied opinions of scholars on Muslim theological questions.
20 Nov 2012 <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/38121/Abu-al-Hasan-al-Ashari>.
[23] . Hadith, Arabic Ḥadīth ("News" or "Story"), also spelled Hadīt , record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, revered and received as a major source of religious law and moral guidance, second only to the authority of the Qurʾān, the holy book of Islam.
20 Nov 2012< http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251132/Hadith>.

public battle but is within each of their own selves, within each Iranian (Khatami 146) . Khatami believes: "Previously, unlike the Manichean art which stressed the salvation of the individual and the inner aspects, epical art considered the salvation of national spirit as its own salvation and this was clearly an emphasis on the social morality and communal relations in the Iranian world" (Khatami 149). Creating a kind of histrionic in religious society and Iranian culture, a split was established as a conflict of appearance versus the internal in Iranian thought. In this regard Khatami believes:

> In this conflict between the appearance and the inside, the game of truth and abstract, the Iranian spirit experienced its disruption again and, [therefore] noticed that it is impossible to display its spirit in such a biased and distorted appearance. Thus, isolation again. This is why in this era Iranian art depicts the Isolation of the Iranian spirit. In this period, Iranian spirit experienced the isolation in Sufism and mystical arts... Finally, Iranian spirit preferred isolation again and searched its glory in the internal and connection to the Origin and occupied itself in ethereal affairs. And through the art, it complained about separation. (Khatami 152)

Indeed, because of and after the Mogul period a mystical era began in literature especially in stories that were suited to Iranian thought and spirit. Iranian mystics had created significant works after this era. Although mystical these mystics carried moral and epic characteristics too. From this era stories are more mystical, moral and allegorical. Most of the writers who wrote these works became world-renowned. Iranian spiritual and moral stories have influenced world literature via the works of Rumi, Saadi and Attar. For example, Masnavi of Rumi includes mystical and moral allegories and stories that captivate Iranians and people around the world. Saadi's Boostan va Gulistan includes allegories and stories that Iranians use in their soirees.

There is no exact information about stories and fiction books in the eighth and ninth centuries AH (Tagipour 100). Researchers consider this absence primarily due to difficult circumstances, an unorganized Iranian people, and the elimination of the old and wealthy people. But at the end of the eighth century until the beginning of the ninth century we find epic stories of two famous writers, Bakhtiyar-nameh and Firouz-nameh, the process of creating religious epics continued in tenth century. But in the tenth and eleventh centuries, with rise of the Safavids, the process of fiction writing accelerated with new subjects. During that era it was common to write long stories so that there are existing books from this era. The Safavid period is considered the golden era of Iran's culture and art after Islam with its significant changes in art fields such as story writing. The main factor for these changes was the existence of Europeans in the Safavid court with their political, artistic and cultural influences. Iran's connection with the west led to the journey and immigration of tourists and travelers to Iran that affected travel literature as part of Iran's story writing that continued up to the Qajar period. The great trust and respect of Europeans by Safavid kings along with appreciation of European achievements and goods led to acceptance of new products within the court as well as within the educated class of Iranian society. The influence of western art and culture that began in the Safavid era reached its apex during the Qajar era and left its signs on Iran's art and culture. The influence is especially obvious in story writing. The novel of Amir Arsalan-e Namdar is one of the famous examples of this influence. Christopher Balaii about Amir Arsalan-e Namdar saying:

> In a period that Persian literature, at a climax of change, witnessed the appearance of new literary works−itself is a sign of literary revival which is simultaneous with social and political changes in the last quarter of nineteen century AD−Mirza Muhammad Naghib wrote a literary work that can be considered the last Persian novel written in a traditional style

like <u>Samak-e Ayyar</u> and <u>Hamze-nameh</u> as well as <u>Hussein kurd</u>. These are the most famous and popular stories in prose, and are marginalized by the versified novels and the epics in the classic literature. Therefore, <u>Amir Arsalan-e Namdar</u> is the last novel written in this tradition and the last incarnation of a literary style which does not become obsolete even after this work, [Amir Arsalan]. However, henceforth, this style experiences significant modifications. (qtd. in Taghipour 113)

The novel of <u>Amir Arsalan-e Namdar</u> showed the existence and continuation of traditional story writing up to the Qajar in Iran. In this regard Taghipour says:

In fact, <u>Amir Arsalan-e Namdar</u> is the place of intersection for two narratives: oral and written, its written text versus the "dialect" of its verbal text. At first, a person narrated it and afterwards another person wrote it. Naghib Al Mamalek, the storyteller of Naser al-Din Shah narrated this story for him and Fakhr Al doleh, his daughter, hidden behind the eunuchs room wrote from the back of half-open door what she heard. Although this story originated from the imagination of Naghib Al Mamalek, it is considered the work of Fakhr Al doleh, too. (Taghipour 114)

Undoubtedly, there were many stories that were not written. The writing of this work is perhaps because of the effects of European novels or stories and the need of Iranian writers to write and make a change in Iranian stories. As it has been said, Safavid kings brought Europeans to their court to counter against the threats of Ottoman Empire rulers who coveted Iran. Westerners entered Iran with all of their cultural, economic and military systems and affected Iran's art and culture that were religious and idea logic in the Safavid era. Through western presence, European literature gradually arrived leading to its affects on Iranian writing in the Qajar era.

The establishment of the first lead printing followed by lithography in the Qajar period led to the printing of old stories such as <u>One Thousand and One Nights,</u> <u>Amir Arsalan-e Namdar</u>. European translations affected Iranian writers and led to a transformation in Iran story literature. Christopher Balaii believes:

> A new era had begun and a new language was needed. Writers in the middle of Qajar era had realized this social need and through the expansion of travel writing, stories and translation of European works prepared the grounds for social awakening. Albeit, some were extremists and even rejected the older literary works and some were mediocre while some did not approve of changing the older styles of verse and prose. (Balaii 235)

Western novels and story literature from a practical aspect affected Iran's story writing. This trend accelerated with the formation of the constitutional or freedom movement in Iran [Enghelab-e Meshruteh 1905-1907] (Tagipour 150). Iranian people's familiarity with the west's developments as along with the insufficiency of Qajar kings who were concerned more with protecting their throne than people led to dissatisfaction with the court. Iran's defeat by Russia and the separation of northern parts of Iran created greater and greater dissatisfaction of the people and especially intellectuals. Dissenters were mainly intellectuals who considered governing traditions as the cause of Iran's misery and backwardness. The formation of a constitutional movement that was based on democracy and blindly looked toward western achievements were highly abundant views. Writers borrowed from western literature with its patterns and ways of thinking. The short story was the beginning of changes (Dastgheib 18). Mohammad Ali Jamalzadhe started this process with the publication of his short stories in 1300 AH (1921). After Jamalzadhe, Sadegh Hedayat was effective in the expansion and acceleration of this process. It should be mentioned that short story and fiction story had

an ancient root and background in Iran and had been used as narrations about moral, mystical and allegorical matters. Indeed it seems that what western culture did with Iranian culture was to induce humanist thinking and promotion of humanity with a moral look inculcated in the mind and thoughts of Iranian writers. A holistic, supernatural, moral, mystical and magical ancient literature was replaced with an analytical look at the man with western ideals. Western story writing and literature provided new aspects to look at Iranian fiction from a subjective point of view with the writers looking into the inside of the routines of the world and life. Iranian writers were affected by western patterns and techniques. However, with regard to their function as well as Iranian mind and world view, Iranian ancient stories also had their own special techniques. In some cases, westerners also used methods and techniques derived from Iranian ancient stories such the <u>One Thousand and One Nights</u>. Although changes and effects occurred via short stories at first, changes occurred in novels too so that a remarkable number of writers who wrote short stories also wrote novels.

In the Pahlavi kingdom era (1924-1979), the effectiveness of Iranian young writers continued especially in western literature (Dastgheib 25). As a result of close ties with the West and the increasing Western influence over the Iranian literature and culture at large, Iranian writers followed the Western literary styles and schools. However, this trend declined with the victory of the Islamic republic in 1978. The 1978 revolution created an Islamic as well as anti-imperialist and anti-western environment with an emphasis on returning to roots and indigenous traditions. Writers of short and long stories sought to find and identify story writing traditions as well as local and native achievements. Therefore, Iranian writers were encouraged to write further away from western culture and according to national methods and Iranian examples.

5.2. The Characteristics of Fiction Writing in Iran

Storytelling and story making in Iran has its own characteristics similar to eastern storytelling. For a better understanding of storytelling characteristics in Iran perhaps it is useful to compare Iranian with western stories and dramas. Comparing Iranian stories with eastern stories cannot clarify distinctions between the two because of their familiarity with each other, although storytelling in Iran has some differences with eastern countries, too.

Narratives, tales, events, quotes, stories, legends, epics, proverb, secret stories, essays, Hadith, memory, history, novels and more all belong to storytelling fields with specific definitions (Azadivar 149). A lot of researchers have attempted to propose separate definitions for each one with a determined function. But in Iran's ancient culture, there were no divisions according to the style of writing. And there is no exact meaning for narratives, tales, stories, legends and Hadith in Iran's literal and classic resources (Azadivar 149). In Persian literature, historical events, mystical and spiritual affairs, folk tales, epics and legends all have been named stories and tales with a special place as well as moral and educational function in Iran's literature. Hoshang Azadivar argues: "In ancient literature and Iran's oral culture, storytelling like poetry forms the basis of artistic description so that theoretical and practical thought and knowledge of Iran is narrated and registered in a manner of storytelling" (Azadivar 150). Accordingly, two main factors can be considered: Story and the Narrator.

Story, from the point of view of storytellers and narrator, has mythic, religious and moral concepts. Therefore, a story has existed as a truth before it is narrated ever. In Iran's ancient culture the concept of story exists with a message from the past. The narrator gives the story meaning and beauty with his art (Azadivar 151). He identifies the lessons and wisdom aspects from the original text according to the needs of his listeners and current circumstances, and changes the presentation and expression for his

addressees. In other words, the storyteller does not create the narration but identifies the secret of a story and characterizes it differently −the same stories are narrated differently− according to his knowledge and cognitive abilities. The ancient storytellers and narrators were interested in building a story and making it relevant to a past holy place and time. Azadivar believes that "As a tradition in Iran's ancient culture, stories should be dated back to antiquity to be worth listening to" (Azadivar 159).

Text and story in Iran's ancient culture becomes alive as raw material and spiritual reality told via a storyteller. But in western storytelling methods, story is like a bowl with a determined message where it is not important who tells it and how a story is told (Azadivar 152). Indeed, this is the structure of story that makes it attractive and transforms the story's hidden meaning. In his famous work Poetics, Aristotle described western storytelling of the ancient era. His methods are followed until today in story writing, play writing and even cinema. Aristotle's principles in Poetics are the rules he decrees for the Greek drama, comedy and tragedy. These principles include the epic, too, with differences which are more quantitative rather than qualitative. That is, with regard to their length, drama and epic differ from each other. Drama has limitations in size, narration and time while epic is more natural in these two fields and similar to general human life (Yari, "Shagardha-ye" 64). As mentioned earlier, ancient Iranian stories were prose with a moral and epic tone. One characteristic found in Iranian stories institutionalized in verse and prose stories is time. Because of their epical quality, time, in the Iranian epical and ancient stories, is not linear and limited; it is not confined to a specific period. It seems that story occurs in an unlimited time as Aristotle states as occurring in Greek storytelling and drama. Indeed, Iranian storytelling has no unified time and creates its own time. This definition of time in Iranian stories goes back to the effect of Iranian epics and stories from people's ancient beliefs and myths. Iranian stories are affected by old beliefs and myths of Iran's ancient civilization. Myths were

respected in ancient civilization as eternal samples. Therefore, stories which contained themes related to these myths were respected. Iranian narrators and storytellers related their own stories to the past (Azadivar 150). This belief can also be seen in ancient civilizations. Mircea Eliade in <u>Myth and Reality</u> in the section titled "True stories" and "false stories" states:

> We may add that in societies where myth is still alive the natives carefully distinguish myths "true stories" from fables or tales, which they call "false stories." The Pawnee differentiate 'true stories' from 'false stories,' and include among the 'true' stories in the first place all those which deal with the beginning of the world; in these the actors are divine beings, supernatural, heavenly, or astral. Next come those tales which relate the marvelous adventures of the national hero, a youth of humble birth who became the savior of his people, freeing them from monsters, delivering them from famine and other disasters, and performing other noble and beneficent deeds…The 'false' stories are those which tell of the far from edifying adventures and…in the character of a trickster, deceiver, sleight-of-hand expert and accomplished rogue. (Eliade 9)

Iranian storytellers wanted to relate their stories to the myths known to their audiences. It is because the audiences had the tendency to assume that myths had elements of truth within them, and therefore, could find the stories and their incidents more real and plausible. Storytellers considered their work as a moral and holy affair toward good work and thoughts. Eliade adds: "We see, then, that the "story" narrated by the myth constitutes a 'Knowledge' which is esoteric, not only because it is secret and is handed on during the course of an initiation but also because the 'knowledge' is accompanied by a magical religious power" (Eliade 15).

Because one of the main characteristics of myth is undefined time and place, various definitions from researchers about the concept of time in mythological insight should be considered. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling views mythical time as prehistoric undivided time, meaning time that is always similar to itself. The beginning of this time is just like its ending because this time is not constituted of various sequences of time (Shayegan 134). Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, philosopher, mentions: "Myth time is full of past and pregnant of the future" (qdt. in Shayegan 134). Myth time is when its beginning is like its end. Therefore, events that begin and happen today, happened in the past and are repeated. In other words, myth time is unlimited. The concept of mythical time in the minds of ancient peoples and first tribes is the concept of hereafter and ending time found within the evolution of human consciousness. The primitive tribes only knew of the primitive time which is usually synchronized with the revival of the nature (Bahar 213). Eliade believes: "We realize that the Mesopotamians felt that the beginning was organically connected with an end that preceded it, that this 'end' was of the same nature as the 'Chaos' preceding, Creation, and that hence the end was indispensable for every new beginning" (Eliade 17). This was the belief of Mesopotamia people as well as most people of ancient civilizations. Mythical time is a cycling meaning that its end goes back again to its beginning like a continuous circle that turns around itself. It can be measured with the Greek allegory of Ouroboros[24] meaning a dragon that bites its tail.

This kind of mythical concept from circular time exists in Iran like other ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, India and Greece. But the Iranian concept has a main difference in the belief about the beginning and end of the world. In the beliefs of Mesopotamia, India and Greece, time is circular with a beginning and end with the

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[24] . 'Ouroboros' is derived from the Greek for 'tail-eater'. This symbol is believed to have derived from Ancient Egypt. According to Plato, this Mystical snake devouring its own tail was immortal and the first living thing in the universe (Carmine 92).

point of new creation as beginning and creation, beginning again in an endless and continuous sequence. But in the Iranian concept, mythical time is a cycling with a beginning and end and back to the first creation situation. The end time occurs after the final battle of goodness and evil when Satan will be removed from the scene of the world forever and the universe ends. Then the beginning time that is light and without the existence of evil will begin. This cycling concept of time comes out of the teachings of the Iranian prophet Zoroaster and first myths. The complete period of time in Iran is twelve thousand years divided into four periods of three thousand years each.

First period: creation of the world *Mino* (a clear and light world without evil= God's creation).

Second period: creation of creatures (world).

Third period: Evil invades beginning a pollution that leads to contamination of God's creation (we are in this age).

Fourth period: the last three thousand years of separation, resurrection and return to the first period nature of Mino, first state of the world (unlimited light) (Bahar 425).

Indeed, in Iranian-Zoroastrian cosmology the end of the world is light after the battle between evil and goodness followed by the victory of goodness. The world never becomes blended and will become the promised paradise. This idea later appears in Abrahamic religions with a belief in heaven at the end of the world. Bahar believes:

> Although Monotheism was born in west Asia, it is not peculiar to Iran only. However, its elevated form belongs to Iran. Symbols of Evil and Ahriman [Evil] are the children of Iranian thought. [In the same way] going to heaven or hell, because of good or bad deeds originates from Iran. As such, two of the three main principles of Monotheism originates from Iran and is, thence, spread in the whole west Asia. Therefore, you never find a religion in west Asia with any one of these three elements

missing (Unity of God, the existence of the Evil, and the Hell). (Bahar 422)

The concept of time in Iran ancient storytelling came from these beliefs mentioned above. Azadivar believes:

Each story has an immortal and allegorical structure in the ways that a storyteller refers to time. If the storyteller refers to time, time is decorative (dark night, light sun, another sunset) or a historical cause (prayer time, Moharram, Eve day, year of famine). Time is not according to the calendar and truth. Realistic representation of the time that can dramatically affect the story is one of the narrator's responsibilities to color a story according to his audiences' spirit. (Azadivar 155)

This characteristic is also true about place. Place is undefined in Iran's ancient stories. All events took place everywhere. In fact, place has a sub-role or complementary element in the story environment. In other words, time and place in Iranian ancient stories is for accurate expression and complete conception according to the moral or divine environment of the story. In this regard, a narrator can create a special place for his audience. Time and place are two important elements in the hands of a storyteller to express secrets of a story.

Another aspect of Iran storytelling different from western method is the idea of character. In the western method, the main characters stand against destiny or any element in front of them. The main character or hero should solve the problems alone to achieve his goal. He may suffer in misery or be ruined in his attempts, so that the story begins with tragedy. Character development is a priority so that within the story changes in the hero's character is apparent. But this kind of character development is not common in Iran's ancient stories. In the religious insight of Iran, humans surrenders to God and never battles against his predetermined destiny. The heroes of Iranian

ancient stories battle for the achievement of collective ideals not for personal aspiration. In this regard Azadivar believes:

> Characters in Iranian stories, if they are called characters at all, are idealistic, symbolic and [legendary]; they are not like western characters, [subjects]. And once they [characters in Iranian literature] are made subjects, [characters with no superhuman qualities] they are wasted. In Islamic culture, the character or the I should dissolve itself in its ideology to achieve perfection. However, ideology, from the traditional point of view is the same as the finding the truth and achieving perfection and is not a political or philosophical ideology. Therefore, most of the fictional characters have typical names or no names at all. In the absence of characterization in Iranian stories, there is not much [possibility] to identify the self or sympathize with the fictional characters. And it is replaced by ideological convergence [between the fictional character and the reader]. (Azadivar 155)

The characters and heroes of Iran's ancient stories are not humans, and therefore, are not bound by limitations. They have special abilities that make them different from other people. These characters help common characters in special circumstances. In the characterization of Iran's ancient stories, the pace of a myth's heroes is completely determined. Bahar in the book of <u>Az Ostoreh Ta Tarikh</u> believes: "After the emergence of Zoroastrianism and beginning of monotheism in Iran, mythical gods before the existence of Zoroastrianism like Greek and India's gods that existed in the people believes widely, fell from their god place to become deities and then epic heroes or angels some of whom entered heroic or epic stories" (Bahar 423). Bahar's view shows the validity and place of epic characters and heroes in national epic and religious stories.

Another aspect of storytelling in Iran's ancient stories is the method of telling a tale. The process of a story does not proceed in a linear way. Other events occur simultaneously with the main event such as Hezar Afsan [A thousand Tales also known as One thousand and one nights] and other ancient stories. This is different from storytelling in the western and Aristotle structure because in his way, the story is strong when its events have unity (Aristotle 36).

From the Aristotelian view, each event that occurs is the result of its previous event. The observance of the principle of causality is necessary in the story. So, in this principle there is a cause and effect relationship. This principal is practical in western drama and story as well as story writing and drama in eastern and Iran. In Aristotelian logic, each story without unity is weak and not effective. But as mentioned earlier, this causality principal is not in the structure of Iran's ancient stories and the method of narration. Instead, different events occur simultaneously with each other without any relationship to each other, and the narrator can change the story in the middle of another story. Some researchers regard this method as a kind of suspense approach. Azadivar says:

> In Iranian stories instead of suspense, "tale in tale" is used to keep the listener focused and waiting. Or for ample a storyteller like Shahrzad [the character of One thousand and one night] at the end of the night in which she finished the story, for making the king waiting, ended the story like: "the story I told you is nothing against the Hadith (story) I will narrate tomorrow." (Aristotle 154)

Moreover, sub-plots or stories within stories expand the time and the place in the Iranian story. We are dealing with a holistic view which does not stress the inner details. We are faced with an overall theme just a minor one (Azadivar 152). Yari in his article "Shagardha-ye Ravayet dar Dram Irani." argues: "Digression from the subject

[main topic of the story] is defined as creating meaning out of the main story of the novel. The novelist leaves the story at a point and develops his meaning" (Yari, "Shagardha-ye" 79). The method of "tale in tale" and escape from the subject is one of the main and practical specifications in Iran storytelling brought into Iran's ancient stories and dramas. Some researchers believe that the "tale in tale" method has roots in Indian storytelling, relating it to circular thought versus the linear in western and Aristotle structure (Yari "Shagardha-ye" 80).

The suggestion that there are cultural and tribal commonalities between Iranian and Indian tribes with influences going both ways between these cultures and civilizations can be acceptable, even if not proven completely. However, beside commonalities of epic thoughts between Iranians and Indians, Iranian scientists and philosophers, after Islam, argue that this idea is rooted in Iranian thought. For example, Imam Mohammad al-Ghazali, Iranian philosopher and scientist, in denying the principle of causality in Aristotelian theory said:

> The first point of inquiry in their thesis is that the connection observed in existence between causes and effects is a connection of necessary entailment and that it is not compassable (*maqdur*) or possible for a cause to exist without its effect or an effect to exist without its cause. The connection between what is customarily believed to be a cause and what is believed to be an effect is not a necessary one in our view. The connection is on the account of the prior ordination of God, who creates these things in sequence. [Therefore], it is not a result of its own intrinsic necessity. (qtd in Yari, "Shagardha-ye" 88)

Ghazali denies the causality of Aristotle. Ghazali argues that events can happen according to the desire of God without any reason. Mulla Sadra, (Ṣadr ad-Din Muḥammad Shirazi) one of the sages after Ghazali, states his view about this matter. In

the opinion of Sadra, God is Grace. According to the idea of philosophers and thinkers, God is Creative. But Mulla Sadra's opinion is different. Yari adds: "Mulla Sadra's philosophy is a combination of mysticism, faith and argument which argues that God is not only creative and original, but also is graceful. This does not mean that the world is created and abandoned. Based on this theory, God is creating the universe continually" (Yari, "Shagardha-ye" 89).

This is the theory that Islamic Sufism and Buddhism refer to as constant creation or Zen (Yari "Shagardha-ye" 89). According to this theory, all affairs and things change and renew in each moment. The pattern of narration and fiction writing is occurs via constant creation since the world creates at the moment, versus the closed and linear pattern of Aristotle. For an Iranian storyteller, the incidents do not happen in a sequential order; that is, he develops two or more stories at the same time and, therefore, two or more incidents could synchronically happen at the same time. Therefore, Iranian ancient stories are open patterns so that each event can be taken forward, backward or happen at the moment and appear in a new way. This pattern is relative with the structure of fiction and storytelling in Iran (Yari "Shagardha-ye" 82).

As previously mentioned, Iranian storytelling has unique specifications that fit with the country's epic, regional and social thoughts. Unfortunately, these specifications are ignored in the contemporary era. Beginning with the Safavid era, the establishment of western political and military bases at the invitation of Iran's court, introduction of western arts and culture gradually led to the fading away of cultural and artistic ancient achievements of Iran. This paved way for the one-way taking effect from [the western models] of the Iranian story writers in later periods. For example, the story of Amir Arsalan-e Namdar from the thirteenth century AH reveals this effect. Taghipour observes:

The novel Amir <u>Arsalan-e Namdar</u> has some characteristics of modern novel. First of all, time and place are perceived differently in this novel. There is no doubt that this novel is not bound by the constraints of time and place. However, there are traces of reality in the novel [meaning, though the novel is legendary, the writer tries to represent some elements as factual and real]; it tries to induct the image of true life with signs of truth in an awkward way. Place [the setting of the novel where the events take place] is also both ambiguous and clear and is constituted by a parallel combination of two plots: mythical and realistic. (Taghipour 116)

Iranian storytelling via import methods were balanced at first but gradually became imitative, forgetting, ignoring or disregarding Iranian narrators and artists and their ancient storytelling. However, those in the young generation involved in storytelling acknowledge the modern west's fiction and its influences in changing in their storytelling especially in examples that come from eastern and Iranian narrative patterns and traditions such as <u>A Thousand and One Nights</u>.

5.3. Story and Narration in Pardeh-khani

Story and text together can be considered the main and first element in *Pardeh-khani* since the two other elements of painting and narrating (with drawing) are affected by story and text. Story in *Pardeh-khani* can be divided into two kinds of epics, heroic stories and religious stories. Heroic stories are about Iran's epic characters and heroes before the arrival of Islam and at the same time inspired by the Quran and religious historical stories. The kind of story and text determine the kind and form of *Pardeh-khani*. Therefore, the art of Iran *Pardeh-khani* is divided into two forms of epic *Pardeh-*

khani that narrates heroic epic stories, and religious *Pardeh-khani* that narrates religious stories.

The text and story chosen for *Pardeh-khani* has a divine aspect as well as epic and moral concepts. These stories are introduced as a preexistent superhuman thing or truth that contains divine concepts. This special place and divinity affects the two other elements of painting and narrating. Illustration and the expressive and performance style of these stories are affected by the nature of the text giving it a unique direction. Looking at the main sources of *Pardeh-khani* stories, it can be claimed that they are one of the best or even the only decent and unique sources of its kind. For the next section takes a look at the most important sources for a better understanding of the specifications of *Pardeh-khani* stories.

I. Ferdowsi's <u>Shahnameh</u>

<u>Shahnameh</u> is one of the greatest epics of the world. It is a masterwork epic in Persian language and an Iranian national epic. The greatest proof of their identity named *Ajam Quran*, the Persian "Holy book" (Malkol o-Shoara). According to stories of the ancient era in the Zoroastrians' holy book and preserved in oral tradition, the <u>Shahnameh</u> was written in the fifth century AH by Abul Qasim Ferdowsi. The <u>Shahnameh</u> preserves racial feelings, national pride previous figures restored in Iran as well as moral, supernatural and epic concepts. This valuable work contains three eras of the epic, heroic and historical with its Iranian specifications.

A. Epic Era

In this era, occupancy occurred; humans discovered food, cloth, housing, and fire and also learned agriculture and trades. This era showed the reason of epic formation and innate human needs. Moreover, human conflict with demons is the basis of kings' stories that ends with humans having the advantage (Safa 204). One of the main sources of this era's stories is the holy book the <u>Avesta</u>. In this regard Safa says:

The contents of this episode of <u>Shahname</u> are more condensed and
concise than what we come across in religious narratives…In this
[mythical] era, the kings are not only the rulers of the world, but their
leaders to civilization and provider of the means such as: housing, fire,
arms, writing, etc. There is no trace of the great fictional heroes here.
And in this era, on the whole, has not epical, but mythical value (Safa
207).

Although the journey of champions does not exist in the era of the <u>Shahnameh</u>,
but it can be said that indeed kings are mythical heroes that provide for the people's
needs. Kings are primary heroes that create stories and myths. It can be said that
mythical kings of this era are the ancestors of the heroes in following eras.

B. Heroic Era

The <u>Shahnameh</u>'s heroic era includes Iranian national epics. Up to this era, usually
kings themselves were taking part in the battles. But in the heroic era of the <u>Shahnameh</u>,
Iran's great epic heroes such as Rostam, appears. The heroic era should be considered as
a period of great and long battles. This part of the <u>Shahnameh</u> contain epic
specifications where time and the period of a kingdom, a lifetime as well as events and
people are extraordinary and unusual, beyond normal human conception (Safa 210).

C. Historical Era

The third part of <u>Shahnameh</u> is historical era. Epic, heroic and extraordinary actions
gradually disappeared. Historical persons are replaced with historical tone. In this era
stories are often derived from the accounts of the history of Iran, and the heroes are
sourced from real historical figures. Indeed, <u>Shahnameh</u> has three kinds of story but in
some of these stories all of three specifications of the story appear in one. <u>Shahnameh</u>
reveals the preference of Iranians for mythical and epic stories from the past that
Ferdowsi satisfies with his writing. Hanif believes: "Moreover, <u>Shahnameh</u> has a

special prominence because of the symbolization and the way its stories are structured. And its heroic aspect, because of its dramatic features, is more prominent" (Hanif 9).

Shahnameh has a special and revered place for Iranian people. *Pardeh-khani* uses the Shahnameh as its main source for content and in the formation and development of epic *Pardeh-khani* in Iran. Without the Shahnameh, *Pardeh-khani* would never have found its place with Iranian people. Because of particular specifications and dramatic elements the Shahnameh became the main source for *Parde-khani* storytellers. In the following sections some of the dramatic elements and specifications in Shahnameh used in *Parde-khani* are pointed out.

1. Plot

Plot is one of the main elements in the story. Jamal Mir Sadeghye in Anasor-e Dastan, says: "Aristotle has a clear definition for plot and considers it as a regulatory of events and imitation from the action. The meaning of "regulatory of events" is a natural sequence of events not one that the writer may select in his taste to transpose them" (Sadeghye 150). Shahnameh's stories have suitable plots but not all of them. Some have a strong plot while others have a weak one. In this regard Azadivar indicates:

> In some stories of Shahnameh, the plot is so much sophisticated as if Ferdowsi has used modern techniques of novel writing to construct them. In such cases, the incidents in the stories of Shahnameh are organized with a subtle order and the causative relation has appropriately linked them together. However, the common point in both kinds of heroic stories (stories with strong or weak plot) is the passivity of humans in the face of destiny, as if destiny is the root of all the events (Sadeghye 157).

What this points out is that even in stories with causal relationships, the way in which Aristotle argued causality does not appear in these stories. Instead, causal

relations between events are in the hands of God. Fate and divine providence advances the events and this is one of the unique specifications of Ferdowsi's epic as a reflection of the world and the Iranian spirit. Compared with the Aristotelian view, Ferdowsi does not place the events naturally via one tradition's use of natural sequence but transposes events and so that a storyteller creates his own narration. Hanif believes: "Traditional story is a model until a storyteller transforms his opinions according to it. Here, story is a raw material that becomes alive with the narration of storyteller and message appears" (Hanif 25). Ferdowsi considers himself a narrator, not the one creates the stories; that is, in <u>Shahname</u>, Ferdowsi has a style of his own, although there are some instances of intentional or unintentional usage of Aristotle's dramatic theory in <u>Shahnameh</u>.

2. Dialogue

Dialogue is one of the dramatic elements that Ferdowsi uses very well. In the dialogues between the characters of his stories, description, character introduction, conflict and other elements are clearly obvious (Hanif 29). In the <u>Shahnameh</u>, Ferdowsi uses other kinds of dialogues such as ranting, cursing, confiding, pray to God, demanding and apologizing for example as a kind of dialogue with one's self. This kind of dialogue became a pattern that is often used in *Pardeh-khani*. This pattern is considered a narrative style for the creation of drama in *Pardeh-khani*. Speech characteristics of <u>Shahnameh</u> make it more than a literal text. <u>Shahnameh</u> becomes a dramatic and display text as used effectively in *Pardeh-khani* storytelling. Saeed Shapour gives a reason: "The thing that specifies drama and story is dramatic performance. When the story is read [express] with a narrative tone, it seems the story happened in the past but dramatic text creates a kind of "eternal present" when the narrator reads it for the addressees" (Shapour 206).

3. Characterization of a Hero

Character is a key and main element in dramatic literature and Ferdowsi constructs character in a perfect way (Mokhtari 15). Shahnameh's heroic characters are mythical and this specification makes them idealized and heroic. Although mythical characters are usually presented with characteristic patterns or a type of personality, Ferdowsi reveals the inner specifications of a character and draws out their thoughts and therefore far from character type making but closer to characterization. Faridzadehe describes visual examples of dramatic elements in the heroic stories of Shahnameh:

> In the stories of Shahnameh, the heroes, and their adventures and destinies are discussed; it is therefore possible to turn each of these stories into a dramatic work. In the terms of characterization, these characters could be "dramatic characters." The hero is a diligent person who attempts to reach humanity, and humanity means embodiment of some divine characteristics in a human character. The hero who embodies in himself such characteristics has, for sure, failed to embody some other [divine] characteristics. Hero's success or failure in embodying such characteristics prepares the ground for the hero's conflict with the situations, self, others, society and the nature. (qtd. in Shapur 13-14)

Ferdowsi's description about characters can be considered important in the painting of *Pardeh-khani*. In fact, the painter of the *Pardeh*, through painting the descriptions of the characters and heroes of Shahname speculates the mental images of Ferdowsi. Descriptions of Shahnameh's characters are a guide for painters. When telling the story, *Pardeh-khan* points to the images on the *Pardeh* and provides more details in order to make the characters more alive and dynamic. The details provided by *Pardeh-khans* are beyond the text through their addition and deletions according to their own

knowledge and innovations, Hanif believes: "Ferdowsi's exploration of the inner world of the characters is an element which distinguishes <u>Shahnameh</u> from many older works. Such an exploration combined with precise description of the physical features of the characters bears a lot of influence on imagining the conflicts in the mind of the readers" (Hanif 34).

4. Conflict

Tension, conflict and war are the essence of drama and is the nature of the <u>Shahnameh</u>. It can be said that <u>Shahnameh</u> is based on the battle between good and evil. Conflicts that began since the time of creation will continue until the end, thereafter goodness will be the victor. What is important about this mythical belief and thought, is that the battle between good and evil in Iranian thought is a divine and holy war. Battling against evil powers is a moral task and is the basis of conflict in Ferdowsi's <u>Shahnameh,</u> reflecting Iranian thought. Conflicts occur between people, as a person's battle with him or herself, humans versus nature, as struggles with destiny, and manifests via tensions between individuals and society as well as tensions between different societies. Conflict and war is displayed in *Pardeh-khani* vividly. In the painting of *Pardeh-khani*, the conflict between right and wrong or good and evil is seen in the characters' behaviors and colors with a symbolic expression. In *Pardeh-khani*, this conflict is performed with expressive behaviors. Ideas of conflict and the battle between good and evil are borrowed from <u>Shahnameh</u> story and text.

5. Other Dramatic Elements

Dramatic elements such as conflict and the resolution of problems via crisis, suspense, climax, along with time and place in Ferdowsi's <u>Shahnameh</u> are used. One example of this use is the famous tragedy of Rostam and Sohrab. <u>Shahnameh</u> with its special specifications differs, in its use of time and place, from classic stories derived via

Aristotle and western ideas. Place and time in <u>Shahnamheh</u> follows the requirements and functions of the time and place in Iran's ancient stories as well as Iranian beliefs. Hamidian argues:

> In their relation to the universe, ancient humans had always been a part of [the whole]. The history of mankind and its events, therefore, had been [explained] by the changes and cosmic cycles. In other words, humans' calendar had been qualitative [circular time] and not quantitative [linear time]. Therefore, the time span in the mythological era of <u>Shahnameh</u> deals with the truth and not fact. For example, if the reign of Zahhak[25] is said to be a thousand of years, this number primarily signifies the stresses the rule of evil in the three millennia cosmic time span. Moreover, if in the first three millennia, good has been dominant; and if in the third millennia their [good and evil's] life is made shorter, it is, then, the symbol of the integration of good and evil, and the conflict between Hormoz and evil in which no one wins over the other side. Thus, it is natural that the time spans are made shorter to better express the mentioned circular quality of time. Finally, at the end of this millennium, with the promised appearance of Kikhosro and fighting the long battle in which the power of both sides of the conflict [evil and good] will tire out in favor of Hormoz [good]. [Therefore] several-centuries long lifetimes of heroes such as Zal and Rostam shows the circular quality of time, including the stability of heroic spirit [meaning, these heroes have a stable character and show up with unchanged features in different parts of Shahname]. (Hamidian 29)

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[25]. Zahhak is also known as Bivar Asp. At the time of Jamshid, in Arabia there is an upright Arab spear thrower called Mardas. He has a valiant but evil son called Zahhak. Satan deceives Zahhak and prompts him to kill his father. 20 Nov. 2011<http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/shahnameh/characters_ferdowsi_shahname.php> .

Place in <u>Shahnameh</u> is also a mythical place. Place is qualitative in that causality and mythical time relate to various directions. In mythical place, content is not separated from the place and we cannot separate the relation between the thing in the place and the quality of the place (Hamidian 29). The specifications of time and place in <u>Shahnameh</u> are brought into and transformed in *Pardeh-khan*. Place and time in *Pardeh* stories and the performance style and mixture of different scenes of *Pardeh-khani's* painting have qualitative specifications.

The second type of texts that are used in *Pardeh-khani* are religious stories that have led to the creation of Religious *Pardeh-khani*. Gharibpour writing about the origin and source of Religious *Pardeh-khani* stories believes:

> Around 560 AH, a kind of history writing was common that was referred to as <u>Maghtal</u> writing. The sufferings of Imam Hussein's tribe were written via <u>Maghtal</u>. In the sixth century AH, Kharazmi wrote an interesting book titled <u>Maghtal Al Hussein</u> that included fourteen subjects about Imam Hussein and the suffering of his helpmates. However, the main source that canvas stories take from is the book of <u>Rozetol Shohada</u> written by Molla Hussein Vaez Kashefi in the ninth century AH. It is clear that making a dramatic story included specifications that this writer from the Timurid era knew very well. (Gharibpour 59)

Surveying the religious stories of the <u>Rozetol Shohada</u> that includes the Karbala event in the year 61 AH, along with the <u>Khavaran-nameh</u> about the life and battles of Shiite follower's first Imam, demonstrate that these books were influenced by Ferdowsi's <u>Shahnameh</u> description styles. In this regard Safe believes: "The emergence of Shah Name in Persian literature propounded a special movement that is not outdated to the day; that is a movement in writing the epical stories or historical and religious

epics from the fifth century AH to fourteen century AH" (215). Indeed, Islamic religious *Pardeh-khani* extends into epic *Pardeh-khani*. While there are not any historical reports and reliable documents for *Pardeh-khani* until the Safavid era, it can be hypothesized that epic *Pardeh-khani* was the formal and main *Pardeh-khani* in the era before the Safavid that continued after the Safavid government, used for the promotion of religious arts in Iran so that religious *Pardeh-khani* also spread throughout Iran. In the following periods, this style of *Pardeh-khani* continued as epic *Pardeh-khani*. The epic expression styles in Ferdowsi's <u>Shahnameh</u> that had tribal and a national spirit with all of its dramatic styles are used for Islamic historical events and contests, and create the basis of religious *Pardeh-khani*.

II. Religious Stories

Religious *Parde-khani* art attracts people who lean toward religious historical events. In religious stories, transition from the physical or historical time [linear time] exists as an old and semantic tradition. Many religious *Pardeh-khani* stories could be cases to this point. For example, the following is a story about Sultan Qais [Qais king] that some *Pardeh-khans* narrate:

> Soltan e Qeys of India dreams of a dangerous lion. He relates his dream to his astrologers and interpreters of dreams but they cannot interpret it. In order to escape the atmosphere of the dream he goes hunting with his vizier and armies. On the way Soltaan e Qeys sees a deer. He orders the deer to be surrounded and warns that if the deer escape the side of anyone, the possession and life of that person would no longer be safe. However, as if the deer had heard these words escape past the side of the Soltan… the Soltan chases the deer but then is faced with the same lion of his dream. While fearing for his life, the Soltan asks his vizier a

solution. The vizier encourages him to seek the aid of the idol hanging from his neck… but the lifeless ideol can do nothing. Finally the vizier who is a Moslem tells the Soltan to ask Imam Hossein for aid. The Soltan brings Imam Hossein's name to his lips…Imam who is himself struggling at war with Yazid's army, is in the land of Karbala and while having a few arrows in his body he comes to the aid of the Soltan and saves him from the danger of the lion … Now the Soltan intends to return to the aid of Imam Hossein but the distance is far and the Soltan would not be able to translocate in the same way as Imam Hossein and Imam Hossein says to plant the ney in the ground, then whenever blood flows from it, know that I have been martyred…The Soltan sees the blood flowing a while after planting the ney [this story is reproduced with some changes in here]. (Ardalan 8:20)

It can be seen in this religious story that the narrator wants to create a special environment by combining two stories or events. He passes linear and physical time as well as two separate and distant places, Karbala and India, to create an ideal time and place to achieve a special meaning. *Pardeh-khans* also use Quranic stories in many religious *Pardeh-khani* performances. The Quran and its stories are a reliable resource for *Pardeh-khans*, used as they are written or via the *Pardeh-khans* personal impression of stories. For example, the story of Joseph that is referred to as "the best story" has been introduced as a dramatic story by experts as pointed out by *Pardeh-khans*.

Therefore, it should be said that *Pardeh-khani* stories come out of valuable and important literature such as the Shahnameh, and religious sources such as the Rozatol-Alshohada and the Quran. Divine values contained in these sources make the text and story of *Pardeh-khani* as a religious art for the people.

5.4. Conclusion

The Iranian thought and worldview can only be conveyed exactly and completely through ancient traditions of storytelling and narration. The Western Aristotelian practices, though generally posited as an acceptable manner in all cultures, seem to be incapable of conveying the concepts existing in this thought and world view. Therefore, in order to express and convey these concepts and contents, the ancient expressive traditions used in other traditional arts, especially *Pardeh-khani*, should be used in new arts such as the cinema. On the other hand, Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and epic stories considered to be the main source of inspiration for storytellers and canvas narrators, can be deeded a proper grounds for modeling in Iran's national cinema. As Susan Hayward mentioned, the stories and national narratives of each nation can be effective in creating a national cinema as well as in the next step, in the creation of national solidarity and national identity among the cinema audience. On the other hand, the written and oral stories of a nation are suitable feeds for the cinema's box office, because these subjects and narratives attract large audiences and have higher chances and less risk of investment. James Monaco believes that:

> Popular novels have been a vast reservoir of material for commercial films over the years. In fact, the economics of the popular novel are such now that recycling the material as a film is a prime consideration for most publishers. It almost seems, at times, as if the popular novel (as opposed to elite prose art) exits only as a first draft trial for the film. (Monaco 25)

In addition, according to Susan Hayward, story and narrative are two marks of a national cinema and reflect the nation. She believes this reflection in any national cinema is possible in two ways:

First, the filmic narrative can be based on a literary adaptation of an indigenous text. In this respect, reflexivity operates by virtue of a reinscription of one existing cultural artefact into a filmic text. In this mode, the film, in transposing an indigenous text, offers up a double nation-narration, the text it refers to and its own filmic text. Literature (narration one) is on screen (narration two) confirming the natural heritage (the nation). (Hayward, *French* 9)

As noted, in *Pardeh-khani*, adaptations of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, and sometimes other written epics, the Quran, or other religious and spiritual resources such as Masnavi Manavi, etc., are made, which can be easily used in cinema, especially the national cinema. Hayward continues:

In the second instance, the film can confront the spectator with an explicit or implicit textual construction of the nation. Explicit films are those which set out to signify the nation, however problematic that nation is (because they appear to reinforce dominant myths). For example Gance's Napoleon is less about the military campaigner than it is Gance's own vision of Napoleon. Similarly, D.W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation seems to address the birth of America. (Hayward, *French* 9)

One of the very important functions of *Pardeh-khani* in the past eras, especially during the Arab and Mongol conquest and hegemony over Iran, more efforts were made to preserve the Iranian national identity through narrating stories and national epics than before. In fact, the storytellers (*Pardeh-khan*) used epic and national resources, particularly from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and other historical sources, to defend the Iranian national identity and cause a sense of national solidarity and unity among the people of Iran in countless wars against enemies. This case, as pointed out by Susan Hayward, can be used in Iranian cinema, and has an important propagandist

function in terms of the internal audience because this approach in cinema is a continuation of the function and approach of *Pardeh-khani*. Therefore, the adaptation and type of narrative used by storytellers from epic and literary sources as well as verbal sources in letters and their own personal methods of storytelling may serve as models for Iranian script-writers and filmmakers.

CHAPTER 6

PARDEH-KHANI: A MODEL FOR IRAN'S NATIONAL CINEMA

6.0 Introduction

"Cinema starts with cinematography a term referring to 'technical equipments' of cinema. It is a mistake to ask when cinema was invented. It was just the 'cinematography' system that was invented. Cinema is by far beyond a machine; it was not invented at all; it just grew up" (Ceram 7). If this statement of C.W. Ceram from Archaeology of the Cinema is accepted, the beginning of cinema shall not be assumed to be December 25, 1895 nor the display of the first moving pictures on screen in Paris. Instead, cinema shall be presumed as an effort to visually display movement since a long time ago. It shall be thought of as the product of a process extending from centuries ago and still developing and evolving. In What is Cinema?, the prominent realistic cinema theorist Andre Bazin, opines that "[a]ny account of the cinema that was drawn merely from the technical inventions that made it possible would be a poor one indeed" (Bazin 18). Bazin is of the view that "[i]n short, cinema has not yet been invented!"(Bazin 21).

The idea that "cinema has not been invented yet" is an expression of Bazin's ambition and longing for cinema's achieving a capacity through which this art could represent a full-scale imitation of reality. From Bazin's point of view, cinema has not been invented yet because the equipment of cinematic expression as well as its technical accessories have not yet developed enough to perfectly and thoroughly imitate the reality. Cinema will be truly invented when it can perfectly imitate real life (Bazin 25). Taking into account Ceram's opinion that cinema was not invented at once but was developed over the course of time with Bazin's theory that cinema has not yet been invented and that the word "Cinema" is derived from the Greek word "Kinema"

signifying movement, a hypothesis is proposed that the concept of cinema as the creation and reconstruction of movement, has been a part of mankind over centuries. Cinema was first introduced in the form of its "Cinematograph[ic" technology; that is, the use of technical props as an art in motion picture photography]. Thanks to provision of technological and technical facilities in late 19th and early 20th centuries (Thompson and Bordwell 8).

The achievement reached before the late 19th century and before the invention of cinematography was a "decomposition of motion" not a "combination of motion." In other words, before invention and development of the cinematograph in 1895 the artist tended to decompose the movement rather than combine the movement. Technically, it was only possible for humans to decompose the movement. Pictures were combined in the human mind as a mental and subjective process rather than via mechanical and objective production on the cinema screen. The contexts for the invention of cinematography in late 19th century provided the possibility of decomposing a movement by means of a mechanical apparatus creating separate frames and then assembling these frames as continuous and successive displays of these frames in a fraction of a second.

Evidences of motion decomposition and cutting the scenes of a story are mentioned in chapter 3 regarding paintings on potteries, embossed patterns, and in Iran's *Pardeh-khani* art. All these efforts have remained at the level of motion decomposition so that instances of movement decomposition are encountered but not its combination (compilation).

Cinema would have a long-standing record if past attempts to regenerate or display the movement are recognized as a sort of cinema. Each nation possesses this art depending on their artistic and cultural potentials. Some researchers have gone further by assigning the idea of cinema to the human mind inspired at least by the time of

Plato's famous parable of the cave. In an article titled "The first cinema; cinema's theory according to Plato.", Jack Purcell writes, "The most obvious "image" of Plato's writings about cinema is the simile used in *Parable of Cave* based on people shackled in the cave facing shadows dancing on the wall can be regarded as a cinematic interpretation of Plato's special social, educational, cosmological, ontological, and political concerns" (Purcell 10).

6.1. Background of Cinema in Iran

Keeping this introduction in mind, first a memoir of cinema activities of Iran will be incorporated in the following discussion. The intent is to specify the relationship between this modern art and other Iranian arts. Subsequently, the history of cinema will be discussed after its invention and importation to Iran.

6.1.1. Prior to the Invention of Cinema

I. Jaam-e Jam or Cup of Jamshid

In historical studies and dissections of Iranian thought and arts, particular devices and phenomena are encountered that can be regarded as the primary idea of cinema similar to Plato's Cave Parable. There was an effort to conquer time, to have knowledge of the unknown and the mysterious, and to reconstruct movements and events. For example, the Cup of *Jamshid*[26] or *Jam-e Jam* myth is an ancient Iranian legend that can be presumed as the oldest idea for cinema in Iranian culture. Mohammed Jafer Yahaghi says: "According to all Persian dictionaries and encyclopedias, *Jam-e Jam* was a cup in which the universal condition and mysteries of the whole world could be seen" (Yahaghi 157). This cup has always had a special position in Persian literature with

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[26]. The ancient Persian king Jamshid was said to have possessed a magical cup in which he could see the whole universe with all its secrets. Gazing into this cup, like gazing into a crystal ball, can reveal hidden knowledge. In Persian, the cup of Jamshid is known as *jam-e jam* often referred to as the 'mirror of Alexander' or *aine-ye sekendar* (Miller 174).

many implications by Iranian poets of the cup's divination aspects. The cup of Jam-e Jam was believed to be an instrument by which Iranian kings, especially King Jamshid to whom the cup is attributed, would know the secret affairs and circumstances of other people. The *Jam-e Jam* could disclose information beyond the limits of human vision and even realities of the metaphysical world through displaying images of secret facts. Various terms such as *Jam-e Jam* and *Jaam- Jahan Bin*, Khosrow King's cup and Qias-Ol-Loghat refers to a cup in which good and bad modes were revealed. In Iran's mythologies, ownership of this cup was assigned to kings particularly King Khosrow and King Jamshid. Possession of this cup has also been attributed to Alexander, Solomon, and Hermanus in oral Persian literature as well as in mythologies of other nations (Hinnells 487).

II. Pardeh-khani

Pardeh-khani art is another historical phenomenon with visual aspects similar to cinema. As mentioned in the second chapter, this tradition features a long historical record in Iran with documents suggesting its antiquity and origin back to at least the time of the Manichaean faith during the Sassanid era. Many similarities in form and content make *Pardeh-khani* art and cinema very close and analogous to one another. This matter will be thoroughly discussed as the principal subject of this chapter.

III. Otagh-e Tarik

Another phenomenon that can be directly attributed to the invention of photography and cinematography is the Otagh-e Tarik [dark room]. The Otagh-e Tarik was innovated and developed by an Iranian scientist named "İbn-i Heysem" or Alhazen. Jaferie Naeni in the Great Islamic Encyclopedia argues**:** "İbn-i Heysem's ancestors were from the academic city of Jondi Shapour under Sassanid rule and of Zoroastrian faith, who

emigrated from the city along with many other scientists like Nowbakht and Bakhtishou progenies" (Naeini).

İbn-i Heysem was from Khuzestan[27], lived in Vahishet Ardeshir City (modern day Ahwaz), and was a proficient polymath in mathematics, calculus and geometry, trigonometry, algebra, optics, and other fields of science. With regard to İbn-i Heysem's significant accomplishment of the dark room, Siegfried Zielinski writes in <u>Deep time of the media</u> that, "Alhazen as the prominent originally Iranian polymath of natural sciences is the first person in the present millennium that has clearly and methodologically depicted the principles of dark room" (qtd. in Tabatabai & Byanlo 87).

Heinrich Frankel also attributes the dark room to Alhazen and mentions this invention as an actual, crucial and historic transformation in paleontology of cinema. (Frankel 20) Alhazen, proved for the first time that constructing and using the dark room with light that travels along a straight line causes the formation of an image in the dark room. Tabatabai and Byanlo comment about this polymath:

> İbn-i Heysem had methodologically and scientifically discovered and depicted how to use a dark room and the mechanism of image formation in a dark room by far before eminent scientist of optics during the Renaissance such as Della Porta, Francis Bacon, Vatillo, and Leonardo de Vinci. This achievement is particularly important in the technical transformation process of cinema. (Tabatabai and Byanlo 162)

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[27] . The province of Khuzestan is 63,213 km2 (24,407 sq mi) in the south-west of Iran, bordering Iraq and the Persian Gulf. Ahvaz is the capital of this province.
25 Dec. 2011 <http://www.iranchamber.com/provinces/15_khuzestan/15_khuzestan.php>.

IV. Fanos-e khial

Fanos-e khial is another device that has been used as a visual and imaginary instrument for entertaining Iranian people. *Fanos-e khial* is often indicated in historical and literary sources. The oldest reference to this visual and imaginary device is assigned to Omar Ben Khayyam (AD12[th] and 13th centuries). In these quatrains, Khayyam explicitly and clearly describes this lantern and its internal structure:

> This revolving world in which we are astonished
>
> *Fanos-e khial* is an example of this world for us
>
> The sun is [like] the torch box and the universe is lantern
>
> We are like pictures rotating in this ensemble (Kayyam "Quatrain" 122)

While a precise report is not available about the details and operating mechanism of this apparatus, the definitions in dictionaries to some extent describe the lantern's respective mechanism and procedures. These definitions have been collected by Yahaya Zka. In Zka's paper titled "Fanos-e khial" among its definitions according to the Rashidi dictionary compiled in 1064 AH, "It is a lantern in which pictures are drawn and rotate around the smoke of a wick" (qtd. in Zka 13).The Borhan Ghate dictionary written in 1602 AH defines the *Fanos-e khial* in this way, "It is a lantern in which pictures are drawn and these pictures are rotated by means of the air coming from torch fire" (qtd. in Zka 14). But the most accurate description of *Fanos-e khial* is mentioned in Qias-Ol-Loghat (1242A.H): "*Fanos-e khial* or imaginary lantern is a lantern in which pictures of paper pieces are mounted on a cylindrical object around a candle or another light source; the cylindrical object is rotated and images of the pictures look delicate and charming outside of the lantern" (qtd. in Zka 16).
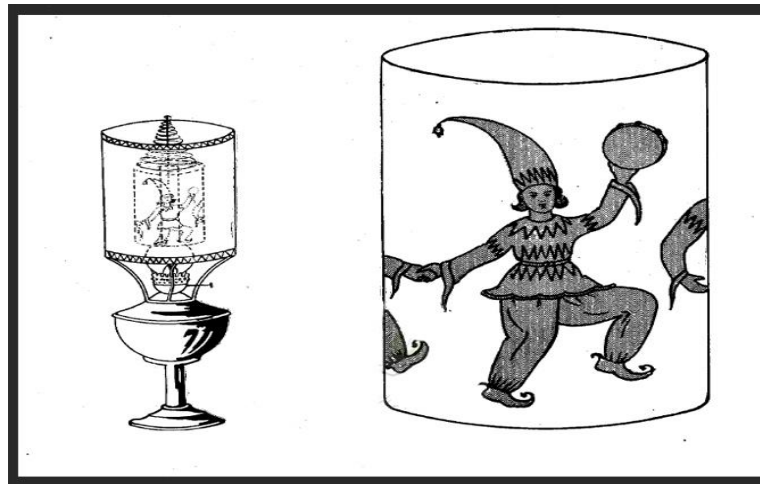
Figure 6.1. A design of *Fanos-e khial* by Yahaya Zka, from Yahaya Zka, "Fanos-e khial."

<u>Honre va mardom</u>. (Tehran: Farhang va Honer, 1964) 22:19.

Having referred to definitions from the aforementioned dictionaries as well as other Persian word references, Zka defines and explains the *Fanos-e khial* as follows:

> This amusing device or show light was called *Fanos-e khial*, imaginary lantern, or revolving lantern and shadows were reflected on its external curtain by means of the light from a candle or torch. And, various delicate images of beautiful visages, dancing dancers, butterfly pictures, etc were painted or cut and mounted around a cylindrical wall or an internal ring. This cylinder was rotated around the light source by the air current and colorful images could be seen from outside of the lantern (out of the second wall) as beautiful as a peacock's feathers creating dreamlike pictures. Another trick was applied in some cases where the pictures manifested rotational movement in addition to the translational motion. (Zka 17)

No exact information is available about the provenance of the *Fanos-e khial*. Fouladvand in <u>Khayyam Shenasi</u>, asserts that this lantern originated from China and writes without offering a credible document in his book that, "The revolving lantern originally came to Iran from China, and, it is not far from possibility that it had been present in Iran even before Khayyam" (Fouladvand 52).

Note that the mechanism of displaying pictures in the *Fanos-e khial* can be presumed in association with or inspired by the Chinese traditional art of Shadow Theater (Tabatabai & Byanlo 146). Considering the extensive ties between Iran and China over the centuries, it is likely that dramatic traditions such as Shadow Theater came to Iran, influenced or inspired Iranian fabrications of the *Fanos-e khial*. Various literary implications in the writings of Iranian poets reveal the popularity and renown of this imaginary and entertaining device. This device seemed to have been more popular among Iranian people than the shadow theater, with closer similarity, in terms of imagination, to *Jam-e Jam* mythology. Moreover, historical accounts are indicative of efforts made by Iranian inventors and scientists to develop or improve the *Fanos-e khial*. An example comes from Zka in his paper *Fanos-e khial* quoted from the author of Habibo alssyer history, an account by the author of the respective book about a celebration of the birthday of Sultan Saied Gurkani's son held in 869 AH in the royal palace of Iran. In this ceremony, Iranian engineers and inventors exhibited their inventions. One of the inventers was Khajeh Ali Esfahani who exhibited 32 instances of his contemporary crafts in a glass. Zka explains:

> It is inferred from the contents of Habibo alssyer 's sentences that this extraordinary invention of master Khageh Ali Esfahani had been a huge fancy lantern made of glass in which a technical trick was deployed so that some of the pictures and patterns could exhibit movements parallel with their crafts when rotating around the light source. The shadows of pictures were reflected on the curtain of the light or lantern deeply astonishing the visitors. (Zka 15)

On the other hand, Iran's *Fanos-e khial* is very similar to the 'magic lantern' invented by a German priest named Athanasius Kircher in the 17th century (Bohn and

Stromgren 5). This magic lantern is believed to be among the major devices along with the dark room that greatly influenced the invention of cinema. Robinson states that:

> Of all the optical entertainments of this period, the magic lantern was the most popular and it is with the magic lantern that the technology of the cinema proper begins. The magic lantern worked upon the principle that a brightly illuminated object placed before an objective or magnifying lens will project its inverted image onto a screen in a darkened chamber. (Robinson 12)

The author of The Cinema's History quotes Loren Manoni as saying: "Henri Langlois, co-founder of French Cinémathèque, regretfully recalls the colorful and fantasy lanterns based on a Khayyam's quatrain that delighted Persia's bazaars during the 11th century as a recreational device. He regrets that no other sample of this device remains to decorate the Cinema Museum of Paris" (qtd. in Tabatabai & Byanlo 167).In contrast, Loren Manoni holds the opinion that, "Langlois has been confused as a result of a poor translation of Khayyam's quatrains about the fancy lantern. He believes that the device described by Khayyam is not a fancy lantern but a shadow show inside a box with sunlight as the light source" (qtd. in Tabatabai & Byanlo 167). This statement shows that Langlois misunderstood Khayyam's verses, and in fact, Manoni's interpretation is more accurate and intelligible. Nevertheless, although the *Fanos-e khial* is not exactly the same as the magic lantern, they have similarities with functions that are basically identical. The only difference between these two devices is that the pictures in the fancy lantern is a device where occasional rotational motions are used to revolve images inside a cylinder around the candle or light source by means of the hot air current. The pictures in the magic lantern were reflected as fixed images like a slide show.

Frank Eugene Beaver writes about the operating mechanism of the magic lantern. "Using several mirrors and the light of a candle, Kircher reflected images on the wall from the device he called the magic lantern. Eventually, Kircher added a lens to this setting so as to more clearly display on the wall the pictures that were normally drawn on the slides" (Beaver 17).

Ceram writes about the fixed pictures reflected by the magic lantern: "The slides in the magic lantern did not show the real movement but they just displayed a displacement" (Ceram 11). In contrast, the pictures in *Fanos-e khial* had a combined motion (translational and rotational) around the light source. Based on this argument, the magic lantern can be posited as the result or logical extension of the *Fanos-e khial* which in turn can be regarded as the extension of Jam-e Jam or Cup of Jamshid with its concept of imagination and crucial application in Iran's thought, culture, and arts, of course, at a more limited and lower level.

VI. Shehr-e Farang

Shehr-e Farang or peep-show was the last visual and recreational device that was commonplace in Iran for a short duration before and after the importation of cinema. Ceram writes: "In the mid 19th century, scroll panorama or mobile world show was commonplace across Europe. Peep boxes were among the most prevailing street amusements and recreations during 18th and 19th centuries (in Europe)" (Ceram 38).

There is no clear and precise information about when and how peep boxes were imported into Iran. However, some conjectures and speculations are proposed. One conjecture can be found in the explanation for a *Shehr-e Farang* apparatus in Iran's Cinema Museum as follows:

In the mid-19th century, "scroll panorama" also known as "mobile world show" was commonplace across Europe. This panorama was a portable painted fabric wall

comprised of different pictures wrapped around two bars accompanied with singing and music when displayed. It can be speculated that Mozaffareddin Shah purchased a mobile world show (peep-box) apparatus during his first visit to Europe in 1900. It can be confidently asserted that Mirza Ebrahim Khan Sahaf-bashi possessed a box-shaped apparatus called kinescope that was kept in the hall he had established in 1905 on Tehran's Cheragh Gaz Street. A person would stand behind the kinescope and could see film pieces for a few seconds through a hatch after inserting a coin in a slot. During the same period, Iranians fabricated peep boxes through merging scroll panorama with kinescope. Within subsequent decades, peep boxes were a favorite leisure activity for children and adolescents all over Iran until the late 1950s when this entertainment gradually faded away with the arrival of television sets. As mentioned earlier, these descriptions come from written information displays of peep show apparatus for visitors of Iran's Museum Cinema in Tehran.

Figure 6.2. *Shehr-e Farang* [peep-show] in Iran's Cinema Museum. Photo: Majid Fadaei

Jamal Omid in Tarikh Cinemaye Iran, reports the presence of three peep boxes or world show devices in the first public cinema hall in Iran. "Mirza Ebrahim Khan

Sahaf-bashi during the month of Ramadan 1322 AH (1904) inaugurated a hall on Cheragh Gaz Street of Tehran. It is famously known that three peep boxes were placed against the entry door of the cinema hall and the viewers could see embossed pictures through the hole mounted in the apparatuses" (Omid 23).

Based on what is mentioned in <u>Tarikh Cinemaye Iran</u>, it seems that the devices referred to in the Iran National Cinema Museum as Kinetoscope[28] were in fact peep boxes. Omid describes embossed pictures not moving images. Furthermore, it would have been very unlikely for Sahaf-bashi to place Kinetoscope machines at the entrance of his building rather than his film show halls where he could display film and moving pictures for a larger audience. Additionally, Edison's kinetscope had been somewhat outdated by that time following the invention of cinema by the Lumière brothers. It can be surmised that the peep boxes prevailing in Iran were in fact the same as European peep shows. These devices were initially manufactured and distributed in Iran under the name of World Show after the ancient Cup of Jamshid mythology. The apparatus later came to be known as *Shehr-e Farang* in Iran. There are two noteworthy points in this respect. First, the visual appearance of peep boxes indicates that these devices were manufactured by Iranian craftsmen. Second, taking into account the name of these devices, *Shehr-e Farang*, one can state that the pictures used in these devices were sceneries from European cities because *Farang* was the word that Iranians referred to as France. Subsequently, the word represented the entirety of Europe and the western world. The device was dubbed *Shehr-e Farang* because it contained pictures from European cities. The owner of the device was called *Shehr-e Farangi*. It is interesting to note that, even today, many elderly Iranians remember peep boxes indicating the prevalence of this amusement in Iran.

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[28] . Thomas Edison 's Kinetoscope…was a peep-show device holding a fifty-foot loop of film(Bohn and Stromgren 9).

Shehr-e Farang was a portable device with several holes through which scrolling pictures of different cities of the world, and occasionally Iran, could be viewed. *Shehr-e Farangi* [the peep box man] in return for a sum of money allowed individuals to peep at continuous pictures with various sceneries. *Shehr-e Farangi* described the pictures while performing a pleasant song which attracted more customers. Some *Shehr-e Farangi* selected a story before the performance or narrated an impromptu tale enriching the peep box images with a romantic and narrative aspect. *Shehr-e Farangi* carried the device on their back or with the aid of wheels mounted under the device's legs could push *Shehr-e Farang* upon the ground. *Shehr-e Farangs* were popular and widespread in Iran with its main customers being the children. The *Shehr-e Farangi* was a reputable and prestigious occupation but over time *Shehr-e Farang* became museum displays as television prevailed.

| *Jaam-e Jam* | *Pardeh-khani* | Otagh-e Tarik | *Fanos-e khial* | *Shehr-e Farangi* | Cinema |
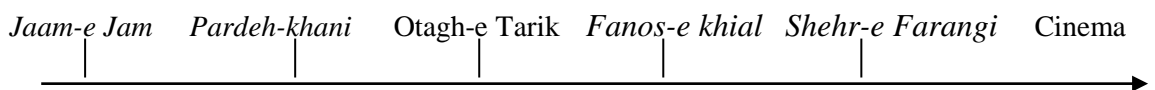
Figure 6.3. Timeline of cinema in Iran prior invention.

6.1.2. After the Invention of Cinema (1895)

Iranian people's acquaintance with the cinematograph dates back to 1900, five years after its invention and launch in France in 1895 by the Lumière brothers. Mozaffareddin Shah, the king of the Qajar dynasty, became aware of the cinematograph while on his travel to Kirksville of France, and was captivated with this phenomenon and invention of the late 19th century. The Shah ordered his personal photographer to purchase the apparatus. The Qajar king mentioned in his itinerary:

> In the evening, I ordered my photographer to have the person who brought cinematograph and magic lantern from Paris make the

arrangements for us to watch a movie. They went and brought him over by dusk. We went to a place near the hostel where our servants used to eat dinner and lunch. We sat down, they darkened the room. We watched both devices; they were very nice and exquisite things…And, I ordered the photographer to purchase all those apparatuses. (qtd. in Omid 21)

A month after the king's order, Ebrahim Khan, the king's personal photographer, recorded the first moving pictures of Iran by using a camera purchased in the Belgian city of Ostand. Jamal Omid, writer of <u>Tarikh Cinemaye Iran</u>, mentions: "As such, Mozaffareddin Shah is the founder and pioneer of importing the first movie camera for displaying films. And, Ebrahim Khan Shah's special photographer is considered the first Iranian filmmaker" (Omid 21).

The cinematograph was taken to the royal palace by the Qajar king as a souvenir of his European travels. This cinematograph was confined in the palace for a long time. Documents are indicative of Mozaffareddin Shah's attention to the cinematograph. Like his father −Nasereddin Shah− who was deeply interested in photography and considered among the primary Iranian photographers, Mozaffareddin Shah paid a great deal of eager attention to his device and would issue orders to have certain ceremonies or occasions filmed. Mozaffareddin Shah must be recognized as among the first Iranian directors. On his behest his photographer Mirza Ebrahim Khan shot films of the king's favorite and desired subjects and themes. Iran's cinema researcher, Mohammad Tahaminezhad, in <u>Cinemaye Iran</u> provided two documents of Mozaffareddin Shah's orders to film events: "Photographer; bring the cinematograph with three rolls (film tape) early tomorrow morning to take pictures of lions" (qtd. in Tehaminazhad 17). Or in another document, the king issues an order to film mourning rites: "Take the cinematograph early in the morning and take pictures of the mourners' lines in the Sabzeh Midan Square" (qtd. in Tehaminazhad 17).

Various historians and critics of Iran's cinema hold negative viewpoints about the manner by which cinema entered Iran via the king and his exclusive possession of the cinematograph in the royal palace (e.g., Mehrabi, Omid, Thaminezhad). Critics consider this exclusive possession among major reasons for the failure of localization and industrialization of cinema in the Iran. However, Iran's cinema critics do not take into account cinema's presence in the royal palace as a part of Iranian cinema history due to this exclusivity as a supposed lack of connection with people. Taking into account the themes of available films of the royal palace documenting women's parade, Kazakhs and king's marches, horse-riding, sports in the suburbs, the interiors of Golestan Palace and other examples (Thaminezhad 20), it must be stated that Iran's cinema actually and literally emerged in Mozaffareddin Shah's palace. Under the king's orders films were shot and then displayed for palace residents and servants who constituted a remarkable population. The introduction of cinema via Iran's royal palace was one of the most complete and most appropriate cinematic production and displaying cycles. The subjects of these films were based on daily life in the king's palace, filmed for a local audience, those people who lived in the palace.

In 1904, the first public film show hall was established in the capital by Ebrahim Khan Sahhaf-bashi, the Iranian merchant and freedom-seeker. Cinema thus became available for the general public four years after its initial entry in 1900 via the royal palace. Sahhaf-bashi founded a hall at the entry of Cheragh Gaz Street during the month of Ramadan 1322 AH which is indeed the first public cinema hall in Iran (Omid 23). This hall popularly known as "Cheragh Gaz Hall" operated only during the night. Customers at that time included the grandees', prominent figures, and relatively well-off persons. The films displayed in this hall were all foreign movies owned by "Pate brothers Company" (Omid 23). It must be stated that only foreign films were shown in this cinema for the public, whereas the films shown in the court were made in the royal

palace and meant for show only in the court of Iran's king. Cheragh Gaz Cinema was shut down after one month. Two reasons have been proposed for the closure of this cinema. Omid mentions two narrations for this event:

> 1- Denouncement by a group of people who believed that the establishment of cinema in Cheragh Gaz Street was irreligious. Sheikh Fazlollah[29], the influential cleric of the time, excommunicated the cinema and Sahhaf-bashi was forced to shut down his cinema hall.
>
> 2- Since Sahhaf-bashi was among the advocates of the constitutional movement and had disputes with the royals, a pretext was provided for the monarchists to shut down the cinema as a result of denouncements. (Omid 23)

No other cinema was inaugurated after the closure of this cinema until 1907 when a political crisis led to the commencement and victory of constitutional revolution. In 1907, two Russians Rousikhan and Agha-yof opened two cinema halls in Tehran. With the support of the Russian and British embassies a greater number of people became familiar with and were attracted to the cinema. These halls displayed foreign movies but no Iranian films were shown because no domestic movies were ever produced (Mahrabi 17). According to available documents, the films shown in the cinema halls were mainly war movies. Perhaps the principal reason was of the success of the constitutional revolution that represented a republican and anti-monarchical campaign as along with the global circumstances of the time. The First World War was about to break out and countries who were to be involved in the war prepared and broadcast abundant reports and news films about the disputes. These works attracted many fans among the Iranian people. Kohestani nezhad believes:

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[29] . Hajj Sheikh Fazlollah Kojuri known as Nouri, one of the great religious authorities (mojtaheds) and scholars at the threshold of constitutionalism was born in 1843.
24 Dec. 2011<http://iichs.org/index_en.asp?img_cat=149&img_type=0 >.

The value and significance of war movies displayed in the cinema of the constitutional period are so great that it can be asserted that [the permanent film show halls] in Iran were born together with war cinema. During 1915-1923, Iran's cinema managers, in particular Khorshid Cinemas, planned their fundamental activities to show war movies. The respective movies were probably imported under the endorsement of Russian and British embassies in Tehran for propaganda purposes. (Kohestani nezhad 31)

In addition to global circumstances such as the First World War, the Iranian people's acceptance of war movies can be also attributed to their historical interest in war and epic themes. Besides war movies, films with other themes also became popular among cinema fans, Kohestani nezhad writes in this regard: "Displaying moral movies shall be also mentioned in Iran's cinemas. Khorshid Farous Cinema is reported as an interesting instance of famous cinemas: Moral cinema is greatly beneficial and useful for school students, as it is common all over the western world" (Kohestani nezhad 31).

As discussed earlier, the first Iranian films were recorded by Ebrahim Khan Akkas-bashi as ordered by Mozaffareddin Shah, recognized as the pioneer Iranian director and producer. Later, Akkas-bashi and Khan Baba Motazedi produced several documentaries among which the film documenting the coronation ceremony of the first king of the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) in 1926 was the most important and most notable one (Mehrabi 18). Nevertheless, the first long story Iranian movie entitled <u>Abi and Ruby</u> was produced in 1930 by an Armenian-Russian immigrant named Avanes Oganians. Oganians, a cinema graduate from Moscow, entered Iran in 1929 and made a crucial contribution to acquainting Iranian people with the cinema profession and cinema acting techniques (Mehrabi 23). In fact, the <u>Abi and Ruby</u> movie is the result and product of actors he trained. However, a number of Iranian cinema critics and

filmmakers did not express positive comments about this movie. One of the major reasons for criticisms of the movie was due to it imitation of a theme from a Danish comedy movie which at the time attracted the wide attention of the people and cinema-fanciers. Tahaminezhad writes about this film: "In Tehran, the funny Danish movie called "Pate Pate Shown" made many viewers laugh, and, Oganians produced <u>Abi and Ruby</u> based on its story…The inappropriate and awful tradition of copying (imitation) forms from the very first Iranian movie" (qtd. in Mehrabi 23).

The movie <u>Abi and Ruby</u> is regarded as the first emulation of foreign cinema. But despite its technical weak points this film was welcomed by the people and encouraged Oganians to produce subsequent films. Oganians produced his next movie called <u>Haji Agha Actor-e Cinema</u> in 1932. This film, unlike <u>Abi and Ruby</u>, had an Iranian theme and it can be asserted that <u>Haji Agha Actor Cinema</u> is a completely Iranian movie (omid 44). This film was also by far, more technically acceptable compared to Oganians' former work. However, <u>Haji Agha Actor-e Cinema</u> suffered a commercial failure when the hit film <u>Dokhter-e Lor</u> was released, the first Iranian non-silent movie produced by Ardeshir-khan Irani and Abdol Hossiein Sepanta of the Indian Imperial Film Company.

As a silent move, <u>Haji Agha Actor-e Cinema</u> could not succeed despite its local and outstanding subject overshadowed by tremendous sales of <u>Dokhter-e Lor</u>. <u>Bolhavas</u> directed by Ebrahim Moradi suffered the same fate as <u>Haji Agha Actor-e Cinema</u>. The great success of <u>Dokhter-e Lor</u> in Tehran and other Iranian cities resulted in the commercial failure of the contemporaneous and even in production silent movies, leading to resentment and outrage from the directors of those silent films. Hence, these directors started denouncing and sabotaging the <u>Dokhter-e Lor</u> film.

In spite of the disagreements of between the filmmakers and other individuals involved, Sepanta resumed his career and produced <u>Ferdowsi</u> in 1934 followed by his

third movie <u>Shirin and Farhad</u> in 1935. Sepanta expresses his ideas about his film saying: "Personally, I love <u>Shirin va Farhad</u> a lot because, in this film, I could do whatever I thought was right to do. Especially, because I was neither a novice as at the time of <u>Dokhter-e lor</u> and nor was I pressured by the constraints of time and the obligations of the contract as in the production of <u>Ferdowsi</u>…" (qtd. in Omid 73). <u>Shirin va Farhad</u> was the last film Sepanta produced for the Indian Imperial Film Company. In 1934, the Indian Krishna Company offered Sepanta a job whereupon he rendered the screenplay of <u>Chashman-e Siyah</u> to the new company and started producing the movie in the same year. This movie received great acceptance in India but failed in Iran owing to sabotage actions by agents of the Imperial Film Company. The officials of the Krishna Company sold the movie to Iran's Cinema Corporation at a low price and were dissuaded of making films with Persian themes or for Iran. Omid writes about the resumption of Sepanta's career:

> After <u>Chashmane Siyah</u>, Sepanta was invited to another film company in Kolkatta to direct another movie. This time, he offered the screenplay of <u>Leyli va Majnoun</u>. The movie production initiated in 1935 and was released in India in 1936, and again, attracted the attention of cinema analysts. Yet, the film encountered difficulties in Iran and the numerous problems mainly caused by film importers particularly agents of Mumbai Imperial Film Company resulting in absolute lack of popularity for <u>Leyli va Majnoun</u> in Iran. (Omid 76)

After <u>Leyli va Majnoun</u>, Sepanta never managed to produce another film because of his enemies in Iran and India. Foreign companies, specifically Indian companies in India thought of Sepanta as their rival. In order to gain a larger share in Iran's film market, Indian companies were obliged to prevent Sepanta from producing movies because he was increasingly advancing with his cinema technique and language.

Simultaneously in Iran, importers of foreign films considered Sepanta's movies as their competition and for the same reasons having to do with Sepanta's advanced skills and talents, attempted to demoralize him.

Sepanta constantly complained in numerous interviews and conversations about the problems and sabotage carried out by country mates and foreigners. Farrokh Ghaffari retells one of his conversations with Sepanta concerning Leyli va Majnoun: "Sepanta himself told me that American companies -that these companies have no agency in Iran at the time and the importers directly used to purchase movies of the companies−have felt that Iranian film−making might lead to rise of a rival for them in India, and for the same reason, did not allow our works to succeed" (qtd. in Golestan 38). Domestic and foreign obstructions made it more difficult for Sepanta to work as time passed. Sepanta's wife, Gowhar Taj Sepanta, recalls:

> In Tehran, state authorities did not welcome his works. In addition, agents of foreign film companies in Tehran who had realized that Iranians widely accepted Iranian movies, even if not technically favorable, because they were being produced in their own language, and, the resumption of Iranian movie production might endanger the business of foreign films. Thus, they started finding faults with Sepanta's works. Also, some authorities had high and practically impossible financial expectations to issue the permit to display Persian movies. Accordingly, they joined the importers of foreign films to oppose domestic products. (qtd. in Omid 75)

In an interview with Jamal Omid, Sepanta himself states:

> Popular acceptance of Dokhter-e Lor was peerless until that time. Almost everyone unanimously agreed that a good film had been presented regardless of superficial defects. Meanwhile, a group of foreign film

company owners and unfortunately a couple of Iranian directors joined the antagonists. It must be explained that I do not mean at all that nobody should have criticized my work, but what occurred following the broadcast of <u>Dokhter-e Lor</u> was not criticism, it was envious vengeance in order to prevent the development and deepening of my next displayed movies. (Omid, *Abdolhossein* 48)

Owners and brokers of foreign movies in collaboration with a number of Iranian cinema officials made the domestic cinema arena inhospitable for Sepanta. Following <u>Leyli va Majnoun</u>, Sepanta's other plans did not materialize in India. He returned to Iran in 1936 with the hope of having better opportunities, but failed.

From1937 to 1948, Sepanta as well as other Iranian directors could not produce a movie due to the lack of government support, the absence of independent investors, and the seemingly planned sabotages by film importers. No Iranian movie was shot in front of the camera during this period referred to as the "silence or hush period of Iran's cinema" (Mehrabi 50). With the stoppage of domestic movies, film importers found further opportunities to present foreign movies. Cinema halls turned into good and suitable sources of revenue for their owners. Regarding the development of Iran's cinema halls and governmental regulations for cinema-holders, Omid writes: "In 1935, Iran's board of ministers issued a directive to organize the conditions of cinemas, which improved status of film show halls and motivated new groups of investors who were mainly Arab or Russian immigrants to establish new cinema halls" (Omid 99).

Responding to the Board of Ministers' Directive ratified in 1935 that laid out cinema hall owners' obligations, cinema halls during this period were required to equip their halls with an audio system. And since these films were produced in original languages, owners and importers of these foreign movies added Persian inter-sequence explanations to further connect viewers with the movie. This measure led to further

connection and adaptation of Iranian viewers to the narrative styles of commercial films produced by foreign companies. These films continued to be displayed in their original languages until 1945 when Dokhter-e Farari, the first Persian-dubbed foreign movie, entered Iran's cinemas. Golestan states in this respect: "In 1945, the first Persian-dubbed movie profoundly impressed Tehran. This French movie called *The First Date* had been dubbed in Turkey by Esmaiel Koushan who named it Dokhter-e Farari in Persian" (Golestan 51).

Influenced by Indian and Egyptian melodramas as well as American comedies, Iranian people and cinema fanciers were further connected with the cinema when more movies were dubbed in Persian (Arjomand 23). Cinema sales grew remarkably. The dubbing of foreign movies led to a greater impressiveness with its novel factor of Persian dubbing attracting new viewers. The comprehension and attachment of Iranian viewers to these imported films increased as more and more foreign movies were dubbed. Iranian viewers' tastes changed via the narrative and thematic styles of foreign products dubbed in Persian attracting many people to cinema halls.

The growing popular acceptance of Persian-dubbed movies and the increase in the number of cinemas and movie-fanciers encouraged Koushan to make an Iranian movie. In 1947, Koushan began producing the second non-silent Persian movie after Dokhter-e Lor called Tofan-e zandegi, released for the public after one year. Although Koushan benefitted from a professional team and experience gained in the dubbing of foreign movies and their narrative styles, due to the lack of suitable technological facilities and other technical defects, Koushan failed to successfully compete against foreign movies produced by large companies enjoying extensive facilities. Thus, Tofan-e zandegi was a commercially failed (Mehrabi 51).

Twelve years of absence of Iranian movies along with the presence of European, Indian, Egyptian and American movies had gradually changed the tastes of

Iranian viewers. And in particular, dubbed foreign movies created very high expectations by Iranian audiences of Iranian movies formerly welcomed due to native and domestic themes despite technical defects. Iranian viewers no longer welcomed domestic movies shown after approximately ten years of dubbed foreign film presence. This lack of connection and high expectations of Iranian viewers who wanted domestic products to be comparable with foreign movies led to the failure of domestic, Iranian movies. However, despite his first commercial failure, Koushan took steps to make subsequent movies such as Zandani-e Amir in 1948, and Variety-e Bahari in 1949, both of which also failed commercially due to circumstances discussed above.

In addition to the low technical quality of Koushan's movies, sabotage by foreign companies must be counted as another reason for the commercial slump of domestic movies. Nonetheless, Koushan never gave up. In spite of failure with his three previous movies, Koushan produced his fourth movie called Sharmsar that enjoyed eye-catching success. Omid comments: "With the fourth movie, the inhomogeneous wheels of Iran's cinema chariot were rounded and the tortuous route of Iran's cinema started in the second renaissance. Sharmsar is the first great and exemplary success that created a sufficient confidence margin for doubtful artists to inject their capitals to be active in Iran's cinema" (202). The film's achievement via its screenplay caused this kind of story to become a model and benchmark for Koushan and other Iranian filmmakers greatly influencing the production process for future films of the Persian Cinema. Regarding the impact of Sharmsar on subsequent movies, Omid writes: "In general, the story of Sharmsar − considered romantic in terms of story style − turned into a model for following scriptwriters… The subjects of subsequent movies were mostly similar to this story and its elements are found in all of them: village, inn, singer, court, innocent youth, vicious man, and rural girl" (Omid 203).

Koushan continued his filmmaking career up until Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979. Some critics ironically labeled the cinema Koushan founded, re-configured and resumed as "Farsi Film Cinema." Regarding the impact of Koushan on Iran's cinema, Amin Farajpour writes in the book titled <u>Tarikh Tahlili-e Cinemaye Siasi-ye Iran</u>:

> Dr. Koushan could be said to have been the most influential on cinema [Iranian cinema] because of four of his films (<u>Tofan-e Zandegi</u>, <u>Zandani-e Amir</u>, <u>Variety-e Bahari, Sharmsar</u>). Dr. Koushan's influence on Iranian cinema has deprived it of protest, criticism and rationality and propounds the foundations for a type of films truly known as FilmFarsi [Persian Film]… And, his role [Dr. Koushani's] can never be neglected in converting Iran's cinema into a tasteless and inert cinema; and we shall not forgive him for doing this! In fact, the low-quality cinema and the films produced later are indeed the legacy of Koushan. And indeed, this type of cinema structured itself on Koushan's paradigm of indifference to his society and people. (Farajpour 50-53)

As mentioned earlier, the "Filmfarsi" genre founded by Koushan dominated Iran's cinema from1948 until 1979. This genre featured cliché themes with dancing and singing as necessary elements followed by other Iranian directors so that a category of cinema called "Filmfarsi" was formed by Kavousi. Regarding the naming of this film genre Kavousi says:

> The term I used for that sort of cinema was a cinema in which actually nothing existed but a series of photographed moving pictures. In fact, it was a moving photo tape because that cinema genre in reality bore no indication of cinema. Later on, I used the "Filmfarsi" term (this word must be written and read as a single word). And as we know, it contains

a third meaning because such films are in Farsi language but in reality

they are neither film nor Farsi. (qtd. in Golestan 80)

This example indicates that the cogwheel of Iran's cinema started rotating during that particular period and like its counterparts in other third world countries was producing movies with native themes commensurate with social cultures, and mainly aimed at creating a commercially successful and entertaining medium. But a group of cinema experts criticized this genre and sought for an ideal cinema as well. This group believed that their country's cinema deserved a more serious and cultural position so that in the late 1960s a generation of Iranian filmmakers emerged contributing to a cultural transformation in Iran's cinema. Members of this group founded an intellectual and artistic cinema starting in the late 1960s. This transformation in particular started with two movies, Gav and Qeysar both made in 1969 granting a fresh spirit to Iran's cinema. Mehrabi states in this case: "Gav directed by Dariush Mehrjuei can be considered as a turning point in the history of Iran's cinema because it encountered popular acceptance despite ignoring all money-making agents of market-oriented cinema. This movie drastically negated the assertion of producers of market movies, that people only like superficial and amusing films" (Mehrabi 129).

Many critics praised the Gav movie. For example, Hushang Hesami comments in an article titled "Gav; a historical point in Iran's cinema.": "Eventually, the historical moment in Persian cinema arrived and we now can simply claim we have in hand a movie that can be presented to international markets…The movie Gav has caused a fundamental and tremendously great transformation in the cinema of this territory" (qtd. in Omid 543).

Qeysar was another brilliant film that flourished simultaneously with Gav. Despite its inferiority to Gav, Qeysar attracted the attentions of cinema fanciers and critics. Mehrabi comments about this movie: "Although *Qeysar* was inferior to *Gav* in

terms of content values and cinema style and was essentially classified as an entertaining movie, its director had smartly and delicately benefitted from commercial factors and attractions and fascinating tricks" (Mehrabi 126).

Gav was not only welcomed by movie viewers and critics but its presence in foreign film festivals also yielded brilliant achievements. This movie was shown at the Venice Film Festival and was largely acclaimed and praised by critics and experts. Gial Carlo Vicorli, the eminent Italian critic, writes in Catretino newspaper under the caption "Re-discovery of Iran":

> Gav is a movie with brilliant style; a tragic film about a reality which the filmmaker has felt with his soul and heart. We soon realized in the second round of the festival that *The Cow* made by Dariush Mehrjuei, the young Iranian filmmaker, was the outstanding movie of this year's festival. This movie is undoubtedly a re-discovery of Iran; a reliable and valuable discovery. This movie introduces us to a sagacious filmmaker, and promises a fledging cinema which is full of fresh experiences. (qtd. in Omid 543)

The domestic and international success of Gav and the extensive popularity of Qeysar among domestic viewers drew other young directors into filmmaking, opening a frontier against the commercial cinema or so-called "Filmfarsi".Examples include Ali Hatami, the young and talented filmmaker, whose work is characterized by the use of native stories and Iranian folklore with a vivid performance. Iran's cinema made a great leap in terms of film production in the 1970s. Omid comments on this decade: "1972 was a unique year in Iran's cinema history. The feature of this year is its production ceiling which remained unreachable until now: 91 movies in one year" (Omid 600). During the 1970s, cinema production belonged to commercial and market movies. At the same time different films including cultural films, were also rendered by intellectual

filmmakers with a gradual increase in the number of such products. Despite the fact that film production grew rapidly during the 1970s indicating growth and development of the cinema industry in Iran, Iran's cinema suffered a recession in late 1970s due to various reasons such as excessive salaries, film production expenses, lack of people's support and the excessive importation and broadcast of foreign movies. The recession of Iran's domestic cinema reached its nadir in 1977. With the spread of citizen demonstrations and worker strikes in 1978-79, cinemas were among the places that faced threats and suffered violence.

Although intellectual filmmakers produced different and memorable movies in 1977 and 1978, these products failed to find opportunities to be shown due to widespread protests. Military conditions led to cinema halls as among primary places threatened. Three hundred seventy-seven people were killed due to a fearsome fire in the Rex Cinema, Abadan (south of Iran) where the movie <u>Gavaznha</u> produced by director of <u>Qeysar</u> was being shown. The movie featured a safe theme. The government resigned after it was disclosed that the fire was purposely started resulting in the establishment of a military administration. Under these circumstances many cinema owners shut down their movie halls. Iran's cinema stopped its activities at the peak of the Islamic Revolution after the shutdown of cinema halls and cessation of film production in 1978-79 (Thaminezhad 65).

6.1.3. Iran's Cinema after Islamic Revolution

The Islamic Revolution led to changes in the country's political and ideological system causing fundamental transformations in Iran's cinema. An order was issued to re-inaugurate the cinemas following the victory of the Islamic Revolution with many ideological and revolutionary movies displayed in cinemas. Tahaminezhad writes about cinema in this period: "Through a joint session among Iranian producers, importers, cinema owners and filmmakers in 1979, it was decided to prevent the importation of

any sort of foreign movies in order to support domestic cinema. The proposal of excluding the foreign movies was a shock that served as the basis for future developments" (Tahaminezhad 71).

This decision was a crucial and decisive one for Iran's cinema after the Revolution leading to future transformations of Iranian cinema. From the very beginning, many religious fanatics and groups of traditional communities did not have a positive view about cinema due to obscene and anti-Islamic Iranian and foreign movies. Religious fanatics organized confrontations and resistances at varying levels against filmmakers, artists and even cinema halls, hampering the activities of cinema proponents. Additionally, the new governing leaders of the country did not have a clear stance toward cinema until public comments from the Islamic Revolution's leader about cinema resulted in the alleviation and concealment of sensitivities and disagreements with cinema to a great extent. Imam Khomeini in a speech stated: "We do not disagree with cinema but we oppose prostitution" (Khomeini 15). This statement and Khomeini's comment about the movie <u>Gav</u> delighted pioneer filmmakers, and determined the approach and policy of cinema in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Dariush Mehrjui, director of <u>Gav</u>, responding to Khomeini's statement mentioned:

> Under the circumstances during the initial months of the Islamic Revolution, it was a damned task, people set all cinema halls on fire. Because they believed cinema is the place to spread prostitution. For the same reason, film production reached zero and cinemas were shut down. In this situation, television accidentally showed <u>Gav</u>. The late Imam Khomeini watched the movie and stated in a speech: We don't say that cinema is essentially bad. Films like <u>Gav</u> could be cultural and instructive, making the thought and soul of the viewer inspired." These words of Imam were very decisive for cinema. (Mehrjui 24)

With the positive opinion of Iran's leader about cinema at the very beginning of the Revolution, the new cultural authorities thought of nurturing a new generation of filmmakers to serve the ideology of the Islamic system and revolution with the intention of creating a novel cinema commensurate with revolutionary slogans. With this purpose, the government founded the Filmmaking Training Center in 1979 under the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Additionally, the Organization of Islamic Preaches administered under its leader's supervision was established in 1981 in the field of Islamic arts and thought. This organization intended to deal with filmmaking training and film production. In a debut of new movies, themes were influenced by the Islamic Revolution and orientated to the campaigns of revolutionary forces as well as negation of the former regime. Although some young filmmakers after the revolution took hard stances against former filmmakers and their movies produced before the revolution, a number of these older filmmakers took steps to produce films using themes relevant to the political system. It seems that post-revolution cinema, having undergone a total transformation and adopting a cultural and artistic approach, was formed by an Islamic and revolutionary ideology. Iran atmosphere where no foreign movies were present, Iran's cinema could experience a new start. Under such conditions, due to the existence of an already large group of viewers and cinema-goers in Iran, the works of even inexperienced filmmakers attracted considerable attention.

The Islamic Revolution was an excellent theme to utilize in producing many movies about different aspects of the Revolution. However, Iraq's 1980 invasion of Iran rapidly changed the revolutionary and idealistic atmosphere in the initials years of the Islamic state. Attention was diverted to the enemy's aggression and the war, and consequently war cinema was adopted by filmmakers as an important and required genre for the country. Besides the aforementioned supportive production centers, the Farabi Cinema Foundation, a non-organizational organization, was established with the

endorsement of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to participate in policy-making (Tahaminezhad 90). This foundation played a significant and substantial role in the production and orientation of cultural and artistic movies. The mission of this foundation included supporting and directing filmmakers to produce movies with suitable themes and contexts, introducing Iran's new cinema to the world, to instill the presence of Iranian movies in the international market including film festivals. These objectives very soon yielded results with the tremendous accomplishments of Iranian movies in international festivals attracting world attention to Iran's new cinema. Along with this new cinema, commercial and popular cinema resumed activities and attracted its own audiences. Of course, Iranian cinema-goers much preferred to watch this genre of cinema rather than artistic and festival-oriented movies. Despite the low acceptance of artistic and festival-oriented movies by Iranian viewers, the new cinema's films did not follow the structural and narrative styles of the more popular commercial movies.

The success of this new Iranian genre of movies in international festivals became an essential advertising factor for further sales. Over time with the production of movies by directors and producers who considered international festivals and foreign audiences as their target market, the attention of domestic viewers gradually faded away. The country's cultural and cinema authorities began to have suspicions that some of the awards in the foreign festivals might have been presented for films with unsuitable cultural orientations via the deviations of Iranian filmmakers, and that international festivals were venues to create conspiracies against Iranian national culture and policies. Under these circumstances, some cinema artists and cultural authorities in the cinema sector planned to establish a national cinema that could represent Iranian culture and identity and attract domestic viewers to films that responded to Iranian society's cultural needs. This kind of cinema was also expected to be defendable as a cinema commensurate with the criteria and patterns of Iranian culture, arts, and identity.

With this intention, Jafari Jelveh, the cinema deputy of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance published a book in 2008 titled <u>Dar Masiere Sinemaye Melei: Neghsheye Baraye Hal</u>. Jelveh talked about national cinema and the government's determination to achieve specific goals. Akbarpour mentions:

> Jafari Jelveh (The Cinema Deputy) recognizes the national cinema a product of eastern thought and joint interactions among great countries such as Iran, India, and China as the common provenance and foundation of major civilizations of the world. He holds the opinion that the religious attitude and role of faith and religious beliefs is highly significant and undeniable in these civilizations aimed at presenting a national and cultural paradigm in the cinema scope. He also specifically emphasizes the significance and linguistic commonalities in this geographical region and believes that this factor is effective and substantial for the evolution of national cinema. (Akbarpour 27)

Although the concept of "national cinema'" has been discussed here and there over previous decades, the subject of "national cinema" was specifically addressed by governmental authorities from 2008 and onwards. Its diverse issues are debated in the country's cinema communities including experts who express their variant viewpoints.

6.2. Cinema and Pardeh-khani

As mentioned in the historical background of cinema in Iran, *Pardeh-khani* is one of the arts that can be closely associated to cinema. *Pardeh-khani* was thoroughly discussed in the previous chapters. These explanations are required because no complete and precise research has been conducted on this art. And even if previous research has been conducted, the related works are too concise and imperfect. The thorough analysis of *Pardeh-khani* art in this dissertation provide readers with a clear insight aimed at

proving the research hypothesis. The relationship between cinema and *Pardeh-khani* art is discussed in the current chapter and is the main part of the present study. In this chapter, it will be shown that *Pardeh-khani* art can be utilized as a model for Iran's national cinema due to its numerous similarities and proximities to cinema in terms of content and style. Investigating the similarities of these two arts will demonstrate the reasons and possibilities for using the achievements, content and structural features of the traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* as a model in the modern art of cinema.

6.2.1. Similarities of Pardeh-khani Art and Cinema

Many similarities can be found between the traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* and the modern art of cinema proving proximity of these two arts. Here, the most important similarities are mentioned:

I. Apparent Similarities

A. Place of Performance and Displaying

Both arts need a place or space for performing (*Pardeh-khani*) and displaying (motion pictures).These places are apparently similar to one another. Normally, professional *Pardeh-khans* in different regions had special places to perform their practice. These places included coffee bars, shrines and mosque aprons. However, many of the traveling or non-professional *Pardeh-khans* used to perform their in the alleys, public streets or squares because they did not have their own special places. In public areas these non-professionals could also seek new customers.

A special place and space is more necessary in cinema because a dark place with a ceiling is required in order to show moving images. Thus, the existence of special places becomes further necessary. Nevertheless, it was possible to show films by means of portable instruments in cities and outlying villages at night and in open spaces outdoors as an instructive and cultural means in isolated areas in the past.

Analogies between the communication methods and manner of these two arts make them very similar to each other in form. In both *Pardeh-khani* and cinema, audiences are situated on one side of the *Pardeh* or screen. The painting *Pardeh* of *Pardeh-khani* and the cinema screen is located on the opposite side of the audience. In fact, one of the differences between *Pardeh-khani* and its narration and other traditional Iranian dramatic arts is that audiences in *Tazieh* and other Iranian dramatic arts encircle the performer. *Tazieh* narrators of other dramatic arts perform their program inside the circle.

But in *Pardeh-khani* as in cinema, audience members sit down or stand on one side facing the *Pardeh* while watching the pictures and listening to the narration of the *Pardeh-khan* and his dramatic movements. The only difference is that cinema requires a dark and confined space while it is possible in *Pardeh-khani* to perform in bright light and in open spaces (outdoors). However, even this difference is minimized to a great extent by the possibility of displaying movies in outdoor summer cinema halls at night. In the same respect, another similarity between cinema and *Pardeh-khani* is their collective impressiveness. In other words, both arts establish a connection with a group of audience members. Programs are displayed or performed publicly for a group of people.

B. Presence of a Screen in Both Arts

The use of a screen or *Pardeh* in both arts is another close similarity, necessary to tell a story so that a screen is considered as one of the major and important elements in both arts. In *Pardeh-khani*, the story is presented to audiences through paintings on curtains that contain characters, locations, and turning points of each story or narration. In cinema, the screen is the place upon which moving pictures are displayed to impress viewers. The painting *Pardeh* and the movie screen are the most essential parts in both arts in focusing the attention of audiences. However, the role of the cinema screen is

more significant compared to the painting curtain in *Pardeh-khani*. Audiences in *Pardeh-khani* face fixed pictures made to come to life by the narration and acting performance of the *Pardeh-khan* so that part of the audience's attention is directed to the *Pardeh-khan*. In cinema, moving pictures on the screen are the major element for viewers to watch.

II. Functional Similarities

A. Story Narration Style

There is one narrator in *Pardeh-khani* and one director in cinema, both of whom relate the story via the characters and other dramatic elements such as images, sound, music among others. The functions of elements such as picture, character, story, sound and music are the same in both arts, each of which are selected and directed by the *Pardeh-khan*, or the film director. In *Pardeh-khani*, the task of narration and direction is undertaken by the *Pardeh-khan* who prepares a new text by selecting a theme and story commensurate with *Pardeh-khani*. This text is called *Tomar* and is normally prepared by the *Pardeh-khan* himself, usually professional and experienced *Pardeh-khans*, or are copied from famous old *Tomars*. A *Pardeh-khan* generally chooses the story and/or anecdote that a particular group of people would be more interested.

After preparing the *Tomar* and *Pardeh-khani* text relevant to the story, the *Pardeh-khan* orders a *Pardeh* from a painter or he himself paints the characters or turning points of story. However, the *Pardeh-Khan* himself scarcely paints his *Pardeh*. If the *Pardeh-khan* does not do the painting, he oversees the other painter's work and expresses his opinions to the painter. The painter prepares the *Pardeh* according to the *Pardeh-khan*'s will and request, observing the styles and techniques of *Pardeh* drawing. Furthermore, the *Pardeh-khan* also plays another important role as the actor in *Pardeh-*

khani. As explained earlier, heroes and villains are revived on the painting *Pardeh* by the *Pardeh-khan*'s skillful performance.

All of these functions are also carried out by a film director. A director usually chooses a suitable subject and writes it into a screenplay, or somebody else writes the script. In the selection of subject and story, the director works together with a producer, who may be the same person as a director and producer, in choosing an attractive story toward an acceptable commercial output. The director plays a crucial role in selecting the actors (casting) and other film agents. The director is the one responsible for artistic features and the qualitative characteristics of movies, and s/he is the person who undertakes the role of narrator in cinema. The functions of directors and *Pardeh-khans* are nearly analogous. Both create the narration and take on the narrator's role. However, expressive facilities in cinema are technologically more extensive so that the mobility of pictures (moving pictures) in cinema makes this art more impressive. In *Pardeh-khani*, the narrator by himself plays the role of actor, and expresses dialogues and narrations using songs and other musical tunes. It must be noted that some *Pardeh-khans* make use of music in their performances. As such, some *Pardeh-khans* have a composer-musician who accompanies the *Parde-khan*, playing music commensurate with the story, simultaneously with the narrator's storytelling and during particular *Pardeh-khani* intervals. The director in cinema also has the possibility of playing the role of actor, so that some directors act in their own movies as the leading or supporting actor, such as Orson Welles[30] or Alfred Hitchcock[31].

B. Similarity of Performance or Display Time

Pardeh-khani art and cinema are quite similar to each other in terms of performance duration. Normally, each *Pardeh-khani* performance lasts 1.5 to 2 hours. Note that the

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[30] . Best known as the director of Citizen Kane and for the radio broadcast of H.G. Wells's "War of the Worlds," Orson Welles was a polymath who excelled as an actor, writer, director, and producer on radio, film, and television. 20 Nov. 2012 < http://www.orsonwelles.org/>.

[31] . The acknowledged master of the thriller genre he virtually invented, Alfred Hitchcock was also a brilliant technician who deftly blended sex, suspense and humor. 20 Nov. 2012 <http://hitchcock.tv/bio/bio.html>.

Pardeh-khan might lengthen or shorten this duration depending on the story, temporal conditions, or due to audience's timing. The *Pardeh-khan* shortens or lengthens the performance based on time and space requirements, and viewers' interests. A P*ardeh-khani* session that normally lasts 90 to 120 minutes is equal and similar to the duration of a film show that usually lasts 90 to 120 minutes as well. Of course, some movies might last longer, for example 180 minutes, or for a shorter duration i.e. at minimal duration of 75 minutes. Accordingly, both arts are similar and identical in terms of performance or display duration.

C. Recreational and Amusing Means

Both arts are used as a means for entertaining people. The recreational and entertaining aspect has been among the major functions of *Pardeh-khani* art in Iran. Narration of stories and anecdotes by *Pardeh-khans* with pictures painted on the *Pardeh* used to serve as a favorite amusement and leisure activity for ordinary people, especially children and adolescents. Also, *Pardeh-khani* art prevailed as a storytelling and visual medium with the largest number of audiences among the Iranian traditional dramatic arts during periods when media such as radio, television, and cinema did not exist. Cinema serves the same function and holds a similar status as a highly popular, entertaining and recreational medium in the current century.

In fact, after the invention of the cinematograph in 1895, nobody recognized it as a new art. People viewed this invention as an entertaining and recreational tool. Many people went to cinemas out of astonishment and merely for the sake of recreation and amusement. In subsequent years with the development of cinema language and the acquisition of more experience, cinema managed to develop qualities of an art in addition to its recreational and entertaining aspect. Nevertheless, cinema's original feature and identity with its recreational and entertaining characteristics are its dominant aspects for which many viewers go to movies to spend their leisure time. This function

had been formerly fulfilled by *Pardeh-khani* in Iran. Thus, *Pardeh-khani* and cinema have similar functions and identity as entertaining and recreational arts.

D. As Media

Both arts have been used and are used as means of making announcements and notifications. In other words, both arts are media. In addition to the recreational and entertaining function, *Pardeh-khani* had been also used as a medium and a means for announcement. In the past *Pardeh-khans* naturally had the role of transferring the news and events since they used to travel from one place to another. From one city to another city. *Pardeh-khans* possessed diverse information about news and events from different regions so that these pieces of information partly attracted people to these storytellers. The *Pardeh-khan* was capable of using this art as a medium to provide people in different regions with updated information about other people, in addition to his main story. This sort of narration in provided the narrator with the opportunity to hint to daily affairs of others by stopping the main story. Or in other words, the *Parde-khan* could escape to telling about daily life occurrences and of people's favorite issues by interrupting the main narration. This flexibility of storytelling led to greater attention for the *Pardeh-khan*'s story narration due to the eagerness of people for new information, news or novel narrations within the permanent performance.

Likewise, cinema has also been a means for announcement. In addition to aesthetic functions, cinema's notification aspect is still considered among the most important functions of this art. In fact, cinema is regarded as one of the most powerful media of the current century. It can be asserted that cinema and *Pardeh-khani* (in Iran) are the two most powerful media of their periods. *Pardeh-khani* was a powerful medium in the past and cinema is a powerful medium at present. According to Marshal McLuhan's definition of cold and warm media, *Pardeh-khani* art is classified as a warm

medium as is cinema. McLuhan classifies the media into cold and warm categories in Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, saying:

> There is a basic principle that distinguishes a hot medium like radio from a cool one like the Telephone, or a hot medium like the movie from a cool one like TV …A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in "high definition". High definition is the state of being well filled with data. A photograph is, visually, "high definition". A cartoon is "low definition" simply because very little visual information is provided. Telephone is a cool medium, or one of low definition. (McLuhan 22)

According to McLuhan's definition, *Pardeh-khani* can be regarded as warm medium, the same as cinema, because it provides the viewer with ample and complete information and satisfies audiences. McLuhan further writes: "Hot media do not leave so much to be filled in or completed by the audience. Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience" (McLuhan 23).

According to this definition, *Pardeh-khani* is a warm medium similar to cinema since the elements of picture, speech, and representation are applied to narrate a story or event in this traditional art, and therefore, no considerable vacant space remains to be filled by the imaginations of audience members. Hushang Javid, an Iranian art researcher, writes the following regarding the media role of *Pardeh-khani* especially its religious version:

> *Pardeh-khans* literally became mouthpieces to voice the patterns and images (the pictures illustrated on the Pardehs); therefore, a medium was born which was compatible with advancements in artistic expression and religious and traditional principles. Narration of mourning and epic was the first media movement in the Shia-Iranian world represented through

visual art. Moreover, this was the second step in the Iranian art taken towards what later was called cinema. (Javid 14)

E. Political and Propaganda Vehicle

Both arts had been used for propaganda and political goals, encouraging the public to combat against enemies and for other government agendas. As explained earlier, *Pardeh-khani* was used to mobilize people and to create national solidarity and alliance in different eras especially through religious and epic sagas. As such, this art prepared the people for uprisings and battles against foreign rulers in the country and external enemies.

In the west, political and propaganda cinema has always been exploited by politicians and rulers of various countries. For example, Hollywood greatly benefitted from the extensive influence of cinema as a propaganda vehicle. Nazi Germany attempted to preach the ideology of the Nazi party through several propaganda films. Eric Rentschler states: "Adolf Hitler and his propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, were fully aware of cinema's capability in provoking the emotions, crippling the minds, creating effective hallucinations, and captivating the addressees" (qtd. in Nowell- Smith 446). Propaganda movies of Leni Riefenstahl[32] are excellent examples of political and ideological propaganda. During times of war, cinema was utilized and is still used as an effective vehicle and medium for propaganda purposes and mobilization of people against perceived enemies. Example could be clearly observed in the First and Second World Wars as well as during the Cold War between the Western and Eastern blocks.

F. Instructional Means

Both arts, Cinema and *Pardeh-khani*, have been and are widely used as an instructional means. *Pardeh-khans* as mentors and religious trainers did their best to instruct audience members with ethical concepts as well as religious affairs through narrations

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[32] . Leni Riefenstahl was a German Film director and actress, she is well known for her propaganda films in support of Nazi (Rother 11).

of original stories and/or stories within stories. Therefore, from this point of view, *Pardeh-khani* was used as a means of instruction. The performance and role of cinema in this regard with its instructional capability and influence is undeniable as well.

G. Economic Aspect

Above all, both Cinema and *Pardeh-khani* are and were ways to earn revenue. *Pardeh-khani* art held a reputable and honored position as a permanent career in Iran among various domestic jobs and crafts occupations. Many *Pardeh-khans* earned their incomes as storytellers as their primary or auxiliary job. This economic aspect is by far more remarkable and essential in cinema due to its technological and economic nature. The commercial aspect of cinema is one of the most important dimensions affecting the growth and development of this modern art. Many filmmakers and cinema experts recognize the economics of filmmaking as its most important dimension, so that commercial cinema is the most significant cinema genre.

H. Popularity among the Audiences

Another similarity of *Pardeh-khani* and cinema is the extent of popular interest and acceptance of this art compared to other arts in Iran (Mohandespour). This popular attention and acceptance can be also compared similarly to global interest in the art of cinema in modern times. *Pardeh-khani* was the only folklore art familiar among Iranian people. Nearly the entirety of the Iranian nation was familiar with *Pardeh-khani* due to the significant presence of *Pardeh-khans* extending from the closest to the farthest cities and villages. This art was more well-known and popular among the Iranian people compared to other traditional and native arts such as painting, and religious and ritual performances. Furthermore, the attention and acceptance of ordinary people in different villages and cities across Iran was provided economic support. Donations of ordinary people were a source of income for the *Pardeh-khans*. The major customers of *Pardeh-khani* art were ordinary people, the general public similar to ordinary people as ticket-

buying customers upon whom the cinema relies on for its survival. Thus, both arts are similar to each other in terms of audience dependency.

I. Pardeh-khani and Cinema as Holy Traditions

Both cinema and *Pardeh-khani* feature ritual and sacred aspects. As discussed earlier, *Pardeh-khani* was respected in Iran as a holy art. Iranian people attended *Pardeh-khani* sessions where particular performances were especially treated as a sacred and religious practice contributing to spiritual benefits. This fact also satisfies for cinema. Some researchers and experts consider cinema and cinema-going as a sacred practice. Marsh argues:

> Going to cinema is not merely for watching a movie. For most cinema-goers, this practice is a regular habit in the life like working, eating, sleeping, shopping, and making relationships with family and relatives… Going to cinema as an obligatory commitment in the life of such persons plays the role of a religious ritual; a regular and permanent habit which helps the structure of a disciplined lifestyle. (Marsh 16)

Marsh adds: "In my opinion, going to cinema is considered as a substitute or alternative for traditional religious activities" (Marsh 23).

J. Learning the Principles

Learning methods, principles and procedures for novice *Pardeh-khans* and filmmakers is another analogy between *Pardeh-khani* and cinema. As explained in chapter 4, in *Pardeh-khani* art, apprentices are required to work for a while under the supervision and instruction of the experienced mentor. After some time, the mentor gives the pupils small pictures and sends his pupils out by themselves into neighborhoods and streets to practice narrating the story of the picture. Ashourpour uses the old narrators term for this method Zareh-Parvarei. Ashourpour describes the subject more meticulously as follows:

> Each *Pardeh* contains 700 anecdotes and religious narrations concisely painted on the *Pardeh*; a story or narration was performed by the mentor relevant to the situation, atmosphere, and cultural-social status of audiences…this was not the case in pictorial storytelling by the apprentice [pupil-nurturing] where only one painting of 700 images of the *Pardeh* was mounted on the board, referred to as *Shemayel* (Icon). The mentor (*Pardeh-khan*) used to teach the story related to the selected picture to his pupil (apprentice) dispatching him to the streets…This procedure would be continued until the pupil thoroughly learned the respective story. (Ashorpour 157)

The same method is also applied to the inexperienced filmmaker. Normally, a young filmmaker starts his or her career as an assistant to a professional director. A novice filmmaker would then add to their experience by producing short-duration movies. In subsequent steps, a novice might take steps toward making long-feature films after achieving sufficient technical knowledge. These procedures are also followed in cinema academies.

K. Benefiting from Other Arts

Pardeh-khani art similar to cinema largely benefits from other arts such as painting, literature, theatre and music. The absence of each of these arts causes an imperfection in *Pardeh-khani* art and no substitution can be found for them. In fact, *Pardeh-khani* will turn into another art if any of these arts are not present. For example, the omission of painting changes this art into narration, which is not as attractive and impressive as *Pardeh-khani* and represents another form of art. Also, the elimination of dramatic motions and acting impairs the impressiveness of *Pardeh-khani* turning it into a modest narration or simple storytelling. However, *Pardeh-khani* will be a less impressive art if the music (melodic expression, songs and the occasional use of traditional musical

instruments) is taken away. The omission of any of these arts would change *Pardeh-khani* from a warm art into a cold art, based on McLuhan's definition.

The presence and utilization of different arts makes this *Pardhe-khani* analogous to cinema. Cinema also benefits from other arts in its artistic expression. Concerning the relationship between cinema and other arts, James Monaco in <u>How to Read a Film mentions</u>:

> In short, the art of film developed by a process of replication. The neutral template of film was laid over the complex systems of the novel, painting, drama and music to reveal new truths about certain elements of those arts. In fact if we disregard for the moment the crudity of early recording processes the majority of the elements of those arts worked very well in film. (Monaco 20)

These two arts can be presumed as the result of other arts. What has been discussed so far are the major similarities of *Pardeh-khani* and cinema indicating the proximity and analogy of these two arts to each other from aesthetic and functional aspects and in terms of its abilities to express. The findings confirm that *Pardeh-khani* art can be assumed as a traditional and technology-free sort of cinema. It seems that the only difference between this traditional art and cinema is the absence of technological facilities in *Pardeh-khani*. Cinema leaves a greater impression on audiences due to its technological capabilities such as consecutive and moving images, possibility for replication of abundant film copies, and using more imaginative attractions. Accordingly, *Pardeh-khani* can be known as a "technology-lacking cinema."

However, this major difference helps *Pardeh-khani* preserve and maintain its identity and originality as an ancient and traditional art. According to Rudolf Arnheim who believes that limitation causes a medium to become an art, this technological limitation

contributed to the maintenance of identity and survival of *Pardeh-khani* as a special and unique art (Andrew 69).

Thus, the numerous similarities and common points between cinema and *Pardeh-khani* prove the research hypothesis that patterns and achievements of this traditional art can be used and benefitted from in cinema. And, achievements and features of this ancient art can form Iran's national cinema as an authentic model to pave the way to achieve the goal of a national cinema because *Pardeh-khani* is a specific, Iranian art. But, how would it be possible to do so?

By using *Pardeh khani*'s achievements and narrative style based on two parts of Bela Balazs' theory, *Pardeh-Khani*'s achievements and features would be transferable to the cinema as investigated in the following section.

6.3. Work Materials (Subject) and Style in Pardeh-khani and Cinema

6.3.1. Work Materials (Subject)

Bela Balazs holds the opinion that work materials or content can be adapted from one art into another. In his book Theory of the Film, Balazs says in this respect:

> There can be no doubt that it is possible to take the subject, the story, the plot of a novel, turn it into a play or film and yet produce perfect works for art in each case from being in each case adequate to the content. How is this possible? It is possible because, while the subject, or story, of both works is identical, their content is nevertheless different. It is this different content that is adequately expressed in the changed form resulting from the adaptation. (Balazs 260)

Various analyses of subjects and stories in *Pardeh-khani* narrations imply that themes of these narrations are epic-national (heroic) and religious. Non-epic themes are seldom found nor expressed with an epic style. From this standpoint, Iran's *Pardeh-*

khani can be recognized as the art of "epic narrations." The thematic feature of this art is epic expression of subjects and stories.

Epic subject and narrations in *Pardeh-khani* are reflective of the fact that this art is compatible with Iranian ideology along with historical, cultural, and geographical requirements and circumstances of Iran's civilization and represents the identity of Iranians. Different reasons have been mentioned for the epic feature of stories and narrations in *Pardeh-khani*. First however, it is necessary to provide definitions of "epic" and "epic stories" based on reasons for the dominance of epic saga and narrations in *Pardeh-khani* art. Mokhtari comments about epic as follows:

> Epic is a long narrative poem about the behavior and manners of the heroes and heroic and glorious events in the ancient life of a nation…This narrative poem is a huge and multi-dimensional collection of mythology, history, legend, and folklore. Generally speaking, epics take their origins initially from stories, poetry and heroic, ethnical and tribal oral traditions. And in their final stage or their artistic edition, the epics are turned into unique collections with national identities. (Mokhtari 23)

According to this definition, epics are stories or poetries originating from history and the social-cultural background of each civilization, regarded as a part of oral and written treasures of each culture. By this definition, many human societies especially those of ancient periods, possessed epics constituting some part of the spirit, attitude and ideology of those societies with roots in the history, mythology and beliefs of ancient peoples.

In the same way, the auxiliary stories narrated with the main story in *Pardeh-khani* also feature an epic theme and tone. This is indicative of the fact that all Iranian sagas, stories and anecdotes are essentially and originally epic. Mythological and epic

stories and anecdotes are a portion of that which has been preserved and maintained through *Pardeh-khani*.

Various reasons have been proposed by researchers such as Safa, Mokhtari and Yari for the dominance of epic Iranian anecdotes and stories, including:

I. Iranian philosophy and ideology founded on the perpetual fight between good and bad, or darkness and light.

II. Justice-seeking (egalitarianism), pacifism and amity revealed in the beliefs and thoughts of Iranians.

It must be remembered that chapter 4 fully discussed the features of Iranian stories and narrations, particularly *Pardeh-khani*.

The epic stories and anecdotes in *Pardeh-khani* can be divided into two general categories of national or heroic epic narratives, and religious epic narratives. Each of these categories has its own references and resources mentioned in the following discussion.

I. National and Heroic Epic Narratives

National and heroic epic narratives have been among the favorite and popular themes of Iranian people throughout history. The main source of these stories and narratives is Ferdowsi's <u>Shahnameh</u> that holds a highly significant role in Iran's *Pardeh-khani* art. The stories in this epic book have always been adored and respected by Iranian people. Taking a glance at paintings on *Pardehs* and *Pardeh-khani* narrations, one can easily figure out that all *Pardeh-khani* stories and narratives contain an epic aspect because nearly every *Pardeh-khan* prepared his scrolls based on Ferdowsi's <u>Shahnameh</u>. It must be noted that besides maintaining the original story and events in the scrolls and narrative adapted from <u>Shahnameh</u>, *Pardeh-khans* also created additional narratives from the popular ancient oral anecdotes commensurate with the expressive facilities of *Pardeh-khani* art brought to life via each *Pardeh-khan*'s narrative capabilities and

enthusiasm. For this same reason, the narrations of various *Pardeh-khans* differ from each other. These differences are mainly attributable to the sub-stories used. *Pardeh-khans* and scroll-writers, in addition to their commitment to the original subject, used their imaginations and interpretations proportional to the circumstances and social daily affairs and interests, and willingness of audiences to accept their performances. Such modifications led to diversity and sometimes novel displays of the original saga or epic. Accordingly, national epics and heroic sagas are suitable subject and work materials for Iran's national cinema.

II. Religious and Epic Narratives

Religious themes are another important subject category in *Pardeh-khani* extracted from Islamic teachings and historical events. Religious themes in *Pardeh-khani* art consists of two general subjects: The Quran and the Karbala Incident:

Religious themes have attracted the largest number of audiences among Iranian people especially during the last few centuries. Comparatively, the Karbala Incident has been the most widespread religious theme in different Iranian cities and most of the remaining *Pardehs* pertain to the Karbala Incident.

The abundance of religious *Pardehs* in Iran suggests that religious themes enjoy greater popularity and public acceptance among Iranian audiences. Religious themes can therefore be adopted by domestic filmmakers as a reliable subject for achieving a national cinema out of recognition that the Iranian viewer is a religious and faithful follower of his or her beliefs. Iranian viewers possess religious and mythological attitudes and ideologies. Religious themes have always been welcomed by Iranian people. As an example Iranian viewers have paid great attention to religious serial broadcasts from State television revealing the popularity of this kind of programming, demonstrating Iranian people's preferences for such themes and visual stories.

Thus, a religious-based approach might be one of the essential attributes of Iran's national cinema, which can mitigate the economic risk of Iran's cinema, therefore guaranteeing financial success while transforming movie making into a special cinema with its own themes and Iranian content.

Iranian cinema directors can organize their movie subjects through simulating the themes and contents of *Pardeh-khani* narratives that have been enjoyed vast audiences throughout the country's history and are relevant to the tastes and emotional traits of Iranian people. This will undoubtedly be effective in the formation of a cinema with national themes and content whose main characteristic is the inclusion of "epic themes."

6.3.2. Style

Another aspect that can enable the paradigm of *Pardeh-khani* in Iranian cinema is the style and stylization type of this traditional art. Concerning style and stylization, Bela Balazs expresses noteworthy comments that demonstrate the possibility of utilizing style and stylization features of *Pardeh-khani* art in cinema. Balazs defines "style" as:

> We designate as style the formal characteristics of every art the peculiarities of the artist's personality and those of his people, his class and his time are all reflected in the formal style of the work of art. As there is no work of art in which the personality of the artist, the ideology of his class, the traditions of his people and the taste of his time is not to some extent reflected, there is no work of art without style, even if the style is unconscious or insignificant. (Balazs 269)

By this definition, Balazs assumes a special style for each artistic work that is significant and remarkable. On the other hand, Balazs differentiates between stylization and style. He regards stylization as a subjective process and believes that the rules and realities in nature are possible to be reflected only through stylization whose specific

feature is exaggeration and enlargement of the respective points and concepts, not through mere imitation of nature. He believes: "The natural presentation may perhaps reproduce reality but the stylized image expresses the truth" (Balazs 270).

From this viewpoint, stylization has a special position in Balazs' theory. Balazs also argues for a remarkable significance for ethnical-traditional styles holding the opinion that traditional styles are greatly effective in objective, general, and historical validity of artworks. Emphasizing the point that style and stylization both originate from an artist's objective interpretation, Balazs recognizes a significant and substantial role for the artist in the creation of style and stylization of artistic works. Balazs states that artistic works are not created by the general public but by special and independent individuals among those nations or culture. Nevertheless, he adds:

> The most original and ancient folk style can manifest itself only as the personal taste and artistic intention of some individual. And yet this personal taste and artistic intention will not be merely individual. Every artist who is vitally bound up with society in which he lives will consciously or unconsciously represent in his ideology and feeling the people whose super personal traditional style he quite naively regards as his own. (Balazs 272)

Balasz thinks highly of traditional-ethnical styles that are formed in each culture and region, arguing that these styles and their traditional and ethnical stylization characteristics contribute to the enrichment, credibility and especially identity of new artworks. He states in this respect:

> Traditional folk styles are objective historical facts although stylization itself is a subjective process. If an artist can live and express in his works, as his own subjective experience, this historical tradition transformed unto objective phenomena, the result will be that happiest of

coincidences, when the artist can create objective, general works of historical validity through his own most subjective, personal manifestations. This is one of the rare cases when an art may be stylized to the limit and yet not be arbitrarily subjective. (Balazs 273)

Balazs' emphasis on traditional style and stylization reflects presence of style and stylization in the traditional art of *Parde-Khani*. Taking into account the similarities between cinema and *Pardeh-khani*, it is possible to deploy style features of this traditional art in cinema.

The analysis of *Pardeh-khani* art indicates that narration or narrative style is the most important and fundamental element of style and stylization in this art. This fundamental element can create the foundation for a special, national cinema in terms of style and stylization and differentiate Iranian cinema from the national cinemas of other countries, which have their own characteristics. For example, Japanese cinema or Indian cinemas have established their artistic and cultural achievements in cinema. The narration style in *Pardeh-khani* art as the most important style and stylization element that can be used in cinema will be investigated in the following section.

I. Narration Style in Pardeh-khani

The narration method in *Pardeh-khani* is completely dependent on and affected by the type of theme and content. Shahabadin Adel defines narration from a constructivist standpoint as follows:

Constructivists divide each narration into two parts:

I. First part: story, content, or chain of events (action-events) plus the background, and finally, the characters

II. Second part: plan i.e. expression style by which the contents are transferred. (Adel 68)

Based on this constructivist definition of narration, it must be accepted that the expression style or narration plan in *Pardeh-khani* must have an epic and mythological feature because the story or content in this art is mainly epic and mythological as mentioned earlier. The narration style in *Pardeh-khani* is in line with a structure and foundation of stories featuring mythological and epic content so that theme and content also influences the narration style of this art. The epic enjoys a considerable and peerless totality and comprehensiveness among literary varieties with its blend of mythology, legend, folklore and history. Mokhtari identifies common features and aspects among epics of different nations, including:

> I. There exists in every epic a central heroic group and as in our national epic [Ferdowsi's Shahnameh] a "World Hero." This character is the sum of a "heroic nature" which rises and aspires to the state of a superhuman, such as: Rostam, Achilles, etc.
>
> II. In all the epics, there is a subjective and powerful force that could be religious, metaphysical, moral, political, and even historical which bestows a special sense to the epic. For instance, Iran's national epic integrates goodness and badness in its main structure based on its subjective elements i.e. perpetual battle between Hormuz (God) and the Ahriman (Devil). And it [Iran's national epic] deals with history of the Iranian nation.
>
> III. Adventurous and dangerous travels are narrated in every epic. Such travels are either the basis of the hero's inspiration and campaign and/or are responsible for organizing the internal events of the epic. However, parts of the events in the life of hero/es are related to these adventures, such as Rostam and Esfandiar's Seven Stages or dangerous and fight-full return of Odyssey to Ithaca.

IV. Unpleasant, perilous, heroic and romantic incidents pervade all epics. These incidents reflect the hero's morals and manners, and form the foundations common to all great epical masterpieces. (Mokhtari 22-23)

The features and attributes Mokhtari mentions for epics in terms of theme and content indicate the comprehensiveness of an epic. These features can be detected in new writing styles of dramatic texts such as story and screenplay. The mythological writing style is based on theories of Joseph Campbell, the prominent American mythologist and philosopher, in his famous book The Hero with a Thousand Faces. This style was depicted and introduced by Christopher E.Vogler in The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters that is currently used in Hollywood studios and world's cinema schools and by many scriptwriters. Also, many well-known filmmakers benefit from this style in producing their movies. In this respect, Christopher E.Vogler writes:

The ideas expressed in Campbell's book are having a major impact on storytelling. Writers are becoming more aware of the ageless patterns which Campbell indentifies, and are enriching their work with them. Inevitably Hollywood has caught on to the usefulness of Campbell's work. Filmmakers like George Lucas and George Miller acknowledge their debt to his influence can be seen in the films of Steven Spielberg, John Boorman, Francis Coppla, and others. (Vogler 9)

Vogler in the introduction of his book writes: "All stories consist of a few common structural elements found universally in myths, fairy tales, dreams, and movies. They are known collectively as The Hero's Journey." (Vogler 1)

In The Hero with a Thousand Faces Campbell describes the ancient route line of heroic model:

I. Ordinary World.

II. Call to Adventure.

III. Refusal of the call.

IV. Meeting with the Mentor.

V. Grossing the First Threshold.

VI. Tests, Allies, Enemies.

VII. Approach to the Inmost Cave.

VIII. Ordeal.

 IX. Reward (Seizing the Sword).

 X. The Road Back.

XI. Resurrection.

 XII. Return with the Elixir. (qtd. in Vogler 14)

This ancient route of the heroic model can be well observed in a majority of *Pardeh-khani* narrations. For example, the story of Esfandiar and Rostam Battle, a famous story in Shahnameh, exactly follows the same style.

Epic stories of *Pardeh-khani* originated from mythologies and legends with the features of mythological structure where the significance of the hero in *Pardeh-khani* narrations is evidently observable. The hero is the most important element in *Pardeh-khani* narratives because the heroes give rise to the events. The crucial role and presence of characters and heroes as the most important element in *Pardeh-khani* paintings is due to the pivotal function of hero in this art. Thus, the structural model of *Pardeh-khani* narrations, resemble the mythological structure based on the hero's adventure. This style and structure has been used in Iran's *Pardeh-khani* art in the periods before the advent of the modern cinema. Therefore, epic themes of *Pardeh-khani* art can be utilized in cinema both in terms of content and structure. An example is the application of the mythological style of ancient stories and legends in the modern cinema of the western world.

Epic and mythological content and theme logically require epic and mythological narration form. For the same reason, the narration style in *Pardeh-khani* art is mythological and epic. This narrative form characterizes storytelling and narration style in Iran. Jean Claude Carriere, the French theorist, playwright and scriptwriter, states: "There are two narrative forms in cinema: first, dramatic which mostly relies upon triple alliances of struggle, hero (protagonist), and anti-hero (antagonist), and the second type is what is called "the eastern form" in Europe and resembles eastern tales and romance" (qtd. in Yari, *Sakhtar* 188)

In this regard Carriere specifically mentions <u>Mantegh-ol-Teyr</u> and "The Conference of The Birds." Claude Carriere says: "Someone leaves home and travels a linear route and encounters different adventures, and ultimately, goes back home" (qtd. in Yari, *Sakhtar* 194)

Hence, since epics and the saga used in *Pardeh-khani* art are an amalgamation of myths, legends, and folklore tales, the creation of such themes and stories are based on Iranian thought and ideology, and not separate from the narrative style of Iranian tales and stories; a mythological style and model different from Aristotle's style.

Aristotle's style is preponderant in the west, popularly adopted by western and eastern novelists, playwrights and scriptwriters since the time of Aristotle up until the present. This style is different from mythological narration style aspects that are explained by Yari, author of <u>Sakhtar Shnasye Nemayesh dar Iran</u>: "Compared to Aristotle's style of 'introduction-confrontation-problem solving' or 'culminating space-climax-alleviating action,' the Iranian dramatic style is 'selection-travel and adventure-return and narration' or 'selection-martyrdom-narration'" (Yari, *Sakhtar* 187). The mythological style is circular in comparison with the linear narration of the Aristotle style.

II. Nested Stories Narration Style

This narration style is unlike the Aristotle structure that is organized around a specific story or event and causal relationships. The narrative style in *Pardeh-khani* art is based on "nested stories narration." In this kind of narration, events are not constructed based on causal links and are apparently not related to each other. In *Pardeh-khani*, the narrator creates suspension using nested stories as a digression from one story or event to another as sub-anecdote. Thus sub-plots and stories within stories play significant roles in *Pardeh-khani*; this is, however, contrary to Aristotle approach in poetics. Aristotle thought of consequential and sub-stories as unnecessary and excessive events. For Aristotle, the presence of these kinds of elements indicates immaturity and a lack of experience of the writer. However, sub-stories have a significant and determining role in eastern narrations and in *Pardeh-khani* art in particular. Perhaps, the following definition by Kundera reflects the actual and substantial role of sub-stories in such narratives: "No minor event is destined to remain as minor event forever, because any event, though minor, bears the possibility to become the cause of another event sooner or later turning into a new story or adventure" (qtd. in Yari, *Sakhtar* 187). The existence of sub-events in a dramatic artwork signals its weakness from Aristotle's point of view. Aristotle greatly emphasizes causal links of events in the <u>Poetics</u> and comments that:

> Of all plots and actions the 'epeisodic' are the worst. I call a plot 'epeisodic' in which the episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence. Bad poets compose such pieces by their own faults good poets, to please the players; for, as they write show pieces for competition they stretch the plot beyond its capacity, and are often forced to break the natural continuity. (Aristotle 39)

As discussed before, narration structure in *Pardeh-khani* does not follow along a linear route but that different narratives together determine the meaning of the main

story. The feature of the narrative style in *Pardeh-khani* art can be deduced from the words of Kundera: "The novel shall not resemble a cycling race (chasing a single route); it must instead look like a company with abundant foods" (qtd. in Yari, *Sakhtar* 187). As explained in previous discussions, a story has a nested structure in Iranian narrations. Yari comments:

> This structure is the style of our nation and culture, too. It is the structure of the collective unconscious of Iranian culture. This complex structure of the spirit of our nation could digest and integrate the foreign invasions of Alexander and the Arabs and their attempts to Hellenize and Arabize us… this structure is semantic not story-like [sequential recounting of events]. Semantic structure is a mythological structure. (Yari, *Sakhtar* 187)

Narration style and structure in *Pardeh-khani* is also different from the Aristotelian style and structure. As explained, Aristotle's structure is a model for classic Hollywood movies so that a majority of classic cinema works has been produced based on Aristotle's structure. This style is still being used in cinema and other dramatic works. The narrative style and structure in *Pardeh-khani* art corresponds to the mythological structure and can be assumed relevant to narration style in the modern cinema because narration in the modern cinema neglects Aristotle's rules. This Iranian narrative style is based on the mythological framework that is commensurate with the narrative style and structure in *Pardeh-khani* art. Accordingly, narration style and structure in *Pardeh-khani* art can serve as an ethnical model relevant to epic themes used in Iran's national cinema due to its antiquity as well as popularity among Iranian people.

III. Combined Narration

The combined narration in *Pardeh-khani* can be considered a unique narrative style in this traditional art. In combined narration, the narrator (*Pardeh-Khan*) sometimes relates the story as the original speaker and sometimes on behalf of the characters painted on the *Pardeh*. The roots of this narrative style must be traced to the mythological and epic nature of stories and narrations of *Pardeh-khani* art. Mokhtari in Hamase dar Raz -o Ramz-e Melli explains the difference between epic and drama:

> From another point of view, language has been one of the distinctions between drama and epic since Aristotle's time as of today. In epic poem, the poets speak in "combined narration" style. They express a part of the story from their own words, and for other parts, get the characters to speak. But, in drama, the poets are hidden behind their characters. (Mokhtari 24)

According to Mokhtari's definition of "combined narration" style, one can assert that *Pardeh-khani* features a combined narration style in which the narrator (*Pardeh-khan*) partly relates the story from his own words and partly on behalf of story characters, the style for which Bela Balazs promises a brilliant future in his Theory of the Film. In the section devoted to "Film Narrator," Balazs writes:

> I believe there is a great future for the narrated film, in which the story is narrated by an invisible author-narrator. This device would free the visual presentation from having to show unimportant details merely in order to render the story intelligible for we shall hear the words of the narrator telling us what has happened. While he is doing so the pictures can show the internal happenings in a counterpointed association of ideas and thus open a depth-dimension to the film which it did not possess before. (Balazs 241)

Balazs' prediction can be easily realized and implemented through the use and transfer of the narrative style of *Pardeh-khani* art into Iran's national cinema so that this style could become one of the characteristics of Iranian cinema. The movie <u>Gheseha va-Vaghiet</u>, with this kind of narration style was produced in 2011 for Iran's national television. This film can be demonstrated as a unique work extremely close to the narration style of *Pardeh-khani* art. However, Ghasemzadeh, writer and director of the film, admitted that he did not deliberately use the narration style of *Pardeh-khani* art. When asked by researcher, "to what extent was the use of *Pardeh-khani*'s narrative style deliberate?" Ghasemzadeh Asl replied: "To be honest, I did not use this narration style deliberately. But since you mention this similarity, I think that my academic education majoring in drama, my studies of narration style in Nezami Ganjavi's poetries along with my acquaintance and experience in *Tazieh* performance are unconscious factors in using this narration style of *Pardeh-khani* art" (Ghasemzadeh Asl).

The Film <u>Gheseha va Vaghiet</u> narrates life stories of many people, each of whom influences the fate of others despite each character's independent story. All characters played a role in the occurrence of a bitter disaster such as the fatal accident and death of one of it characters, Mr. Ahmadi. This film has a central story. Its sub-stories and embranchments serve to complete the main puzzle of the story in order to reflect the cyclic currents of life and the individual and social destinies of people in this complicated structure and framework. As such, the role of people's mistakes determining the fate of others can be extracted from the unconscious spirit of society. In <u>Gheseha va Vaghiet</u>, the director, in addition to narrating stories of different characters using their own words, also benefits as narrator-total knower who relates the story and explains the reasons behind events and incidents for the audience. <u>Gheseha va Vaghiet</u> is a perfect example confirming the possibility of using the narrative style of *Pardeh-khani* art in Iran's national cinema.

IV. Visual Stylization

Picturing or painting is another feature of stylization in *Pardeh-khani* that can be used in cinema. As mentioned before, *Pardeh-khani* painting is a special and exclusive style of painting influenced by Iranian thought and ideology. This painting style also referred to as "Coffeehouse or visualization style" is the only popular, commonplace painting model in Iran among ordinary people that reflects the imaginations and culture of the general public. Abbas Blokifar, a prominent painter of this style, comments: "This painting has thoroughly Iranian features, directly originating from the Iranian painter's mind without using foreign concepts and themes and by means of the special technique thatis lack of concentration and precise attention to anatomy and perspective" (Blokifar 202).

Pardeh-khani painting has been formed according to the contents of national epic and religious narratives, partially undertaking the role of story narration. This painting is complementary to narrative mechanism in *Pardeh-khani* art. As discussed in previous sections, the painting in *Pardeh-khani* highlights the position of main heroes such as Rostam and Sohrab in national narrations, and the Prophet Mohammad, Imam Hussein, and other holy characters and their enemies in religious epics. The presence of these characters in the pictures is regarded as the most important theme of *Pardeh-khani* paintings. In fact, *Pardeh-khani* painting is the confrontation place between protagonist and antagonist characters. Mostafa Mohajer in the paper titled "Merdan-e Khiali Negar," writes about the significance of heroes in *Pardeh-khani* paintings:

> Coffeehouse [and Pardeh-khani] painters are not loyal to the exact representation of nature in describing the heroic [epical] scenes. In their opinion, although humans, and especially heroes are parts of nature, they are valuable assets of nature; [therefore, the character] could be the main focus the main purpose of in the totality of the painting. It is a character.

It is the human which gives meaning to the nature and shapes the history.

(Mohajer 159)

Note that the presence of heroes in *Pardeh-khani* pictures result from the mythological structure of narration in this art. The hero constitutes the principal element in these paintings due to the hero's key role in this kind of structure. The portrayal and facial representations of protagonists and antagonist in *Pardeh-khani* is another style element in this painting.

The portrayal and representational style in *Pardeh-khani* painting also corresponds to the epic and mythological features of heroes. In this sort of portrayal, the visage of national and religious heroes is normally portrayed as tranquil and confident. Heroes have no fear or dread of battle reflecting an awareness of their destiny, regarding it as divine providence so that their choice to participate in battle is made intentionally and knowingly. This portrayal style is indeed influenced by characteristics of Iran's epic heroes that Mokhtari depicts: "An epic hero has his own formerly planned special destiny in which he himself has a share. The things that happen to him are what must happen. The events take place obligatorily; the obligation that the hero has no choice but to accept" (Mokhtari 20). With the same approach, *Pardeh-khani* painting represents the characters and heroes of its epics in a confident expression and with a particular tranquility making them appear as primordial heroes. Mohammad Reza Aslani comments regarding the portrayal of positive characters as follows:

> [Our] painting, unlike the Western painting, has no intention to illustrate the state or mode, but is meant to represent the situation… That which is bound by time is expressed in words. And that which is bound by place is expressed in images…. Our painting does not illustrate the passions of Christ or Prophet Mohammad, because these passions [or] the temporaneous are expressed in words. [In Iranian painting,], instead, the

situations wherein Jesus, Prophet Mohammad, Imam Ali are placed or the situation of Abraham are portrayed. It is because these characters and the symbols are illustrated each in a situation at a moment of its own. That is a reference to the situation and not to their history. [That is] the characters and the symbols are not bound by their time and history and, [therefore], are made timeless [with no references to the place and history of the situations]. (Aslani 49)

However, this kind of portrayal and visualization style is not observed for illustrating negative characters. The *Pardeh-khani* painter portrays the visage and expression of antagonists. Unlike the protagonists, traces of fear, wrath, violence, brutality and anxiety are imaged in the portrayal of villains and antagonists in order to make a contrast.

Furthermore, time does not affect the changes in facial expression and bodies of national and religious epic heroes. For instance, Rostam is portrayed with the same stature and visage in different stories and anecdotes and at different stages of his life, from the beginning of his epic career up until his demise. This portrayal style is also applied to the other positive characters.

It seems that the painter illustrates epic heroes along their lives and campaigns across historical eras with the same stature and visage out of the fear that chronological realism in visualization and portrayal of epic characters might cause people to doubt the eternality of heroes. This portrayal style in fact originates from mythological and epic attributes of Iran's epic stories. Nowadays, the cinematic example of this kind of illustration and portrayal of heroes can be found in Hollywood. For example, the hero appears with an idealistic stature in the movies Spiderman and Batman, as two examples. This stature and portrayal remains fixed in different stories and different times in past, present, and future.

The configuration of *Pardeh-khani* painting mainly emphasizes characters. The protagonists and antagonists occupy the largest space of the frame. Iraj Navabi states in this regard: "Coffeehouse painters unconsciously reveal their interest in the hero with the percentage of surface area allocated to the protagonist character…When looking at Rostam and Sohrab paintings, it is seen that Rostam's image occupies the largest part of the picture, owing to the painter's interest in the protagonist character" (Navabi 66).

Note that presence of heroes in *Pardeh-khani* paintings is not solely due to the painter's willingness or interest of ordinary people but also results from the fact that heroes play the leading and essential part in epic narratives, and are accordingly the most highlighted. Mokhtari opines that "[t]he glory of Iran's national epic is crystallized more than anything in the heroic spirit and its events are concentrated around a heroic focus" (Mokhtari 33).

Other noteworthy points of stylization in *Pardeh-khani* painting is the absence of perspective in the scientific form and the lack of optical effects and light shadow techniques. These features are major characteristics of Iranian painting and miniatures there is no shadow and shade resulting from light distribution in Iran's paintings, and perspective is not observed. In this respect, Mohajer writes: "In coffeehouse works [Pardeh-khani paintings], perspective is applied more sensually rather than scientifically. Light shade does not have any special form in such artworks. The portraits are also light and shade-free. It is not clear from which direction the light is emitted to generate shadows along its line" (Mohajer 159).

It is clearly understandable that this pictorial tradition and stylization of *Pardeh-khani* painting of protagonist characters is in alignment with the main spirit and theme of the story that can be used in cinema. For example, the absence of shadow for heroes can represent their epic character, and conversely, the application of harsh shades for villains might be suggestive of their sinister soul and unfavorable fate. Additionally,

the lack of scientific perspective causes a mitigation of realistic, terrestrial, and material aspects in portrayals of protagonists and other characters emphasizing instead their primordial and ultra-chronological feature.

V. Structural Configuration

Analyzing the structural configuration of *Pardeh-khani* paintings indicates an alignment of the general configuration of these paintings with themes and content commensurate with Iranian ideology and the mythological view of the world. The configuration of *Pardeh-khani* painting is also derived from the holistic Eastern culture and attitude. This kind of configuration is demonstrated by Chavari in "Structural comparison of The day of the last Judgment painting by Mohammad Modaber [A famous Pardeh-khani painter] and The Last Judgment fresco by Michelangelo." Both art pieces i.e. The day of the last Judgment and The Last Judgment represent the same topic but with two different arrangements In his analysis, Chavari concludes:

> Mohammad Modaber has used an all-over, vast and multi-dimensional arrangement in his work so that the whole painting *Pardeh* is filled by visual elements and patterns [portraits and persons] and there is almost no negative and empty space. But, in The Last Judgment by Michelangelo, the painter has utilized a pivotal arrangement using mathematics and a fully computed configuration placing Christ with an odd stature and young visage in the central axis and on the top of fresco while the other portraits are under his influence suspended around him. (Chavari, "Structural" 164)

Figure 6.4. The day of the last Judgment, from Hadi Saif. Naghashi Ghahveh Khaneh. (Tehran:

Sorosh Press,1989) 46.

Michelangelo used a pivotal and point-based perspective that has no application in *Pardeh-khani* paintings. Chavari writes on this matter:

> The viewer has no restriction and can start watching from any point to comprehend Mohammad Modaber's painting [The day of the last Judgment]. In Michelangelo's work [The Last Judgment], the first thing that fascinates viewers is the naked and large stature of Jesus Christ in the upper central part of the frame. The illumination and the nebula formed by angles intensify this section. (Chavari, "Structural" 166)

Figure 6.5. The last Judgement by Michelangelo, from 20 May 2012 <http://www.italian-

renaissance-art.com/Last-Judgement.html>.

The analysis of these artworks reveals that the *Pardeh-khani* painter has pictured different subjects and stories on the *Pardeh*, influenced by eastern and Iranian storytelling style. In the The day of the last Judgment painting, sub-stories and subjects are illustrated around a central axis or main story (The day of the last Judgment) and this painting expresses mankind's story from Adam's dissension on Earth until Doomsday. The painting contains pictures of Cain and Abel, prophets including Abraham, Moses, Noah, Christ, and Mohammad as well as Shiite Imams illustrating the general process of creation from Adam's time up to the day of resurrection. This display originates via comprehensive views and attitudes toward universal affairs, an eastern and Iranian attitude.

In contrast, the painting of The Last Judgment by Michelangelo is limited to displaying the story of the Resurrection day based on particular gospels in the Bible with the representation of Jesus Christ and his followers on the day of Resurrection without auxiliary stories. This painting style can be attributed to the western partial, detail-viewing approach.

6.4. Editing in Pardeh-khani

Referring back to composition type, *Pardeh-khani* paintings feature distributed, extensive and multidimensional configurations. Paintings in *Pardeh-khani* art exhibit a dense combination of different scenes and events with various subjects usually encompassing a long historical span. In *Pardeh-khani*, the narrator links the scenes in the way he wishes to commensurate with the prevailing circumstances and atmosphere of society through the selection of scenes on the *Pardeh*, creating a new narration of different events. This narration is neither linear, nor historical but has qualitative and mythological features. Javid comments about the transition between and merging of various *Pardehs*: "The *Pardehs* and portraits are configured to easily enable transition from one scene to another. This was among the techniques of *Pardeh-khans* and

pictorial narrators. As a matter of fact, one image was cut into (or linked to) another image through narration [by the *Pardeh-khan*]" (Javid 35).

The combination of different events and scenes in *Pardeh-khani* painting by the *Pardeh-khan* makes his narration seemingly fresh each time because he has the skills to digress from one story to another depending on what is needed for each performance. This flexible feature of *Pardeh-khani* art is similar to the art of editing in cinema, and hence, the *Pardeh-khan*'s job resembles that of a film director or editor. As turning points of a story, scenes and events in cinema are selected by the director or the editor and linked together through editing to narrate a story.

Figure 6.6. Narration of Moslem's trip to Kufa, from Hadi Saif. Naghashi Ghahveh Khaneh. (Tehran: Sorosh Press, 1989) 66.

Accordingly, the selection of events and narrations in the *Pardehs* by the narrator to tell a story is regarded as a sort of editing, and for this reason, the mechanism and technique of selecting events in *Pardeh-khani* can be presumed as a pattern and model for Iran's cinema.

6.5. Mise-en-scene in Pardeh-khani

Mise-en-scene

Before addressing the characteristics of mise-en-scene in the art of storytelling, it is necessary to define mise-en-scène so that based on this the characteristics of mise-en-scène in *Pardeh-khani* can be studied. In <u>Film Art, an Introduction</u>, David Bordwell defines mise-en-scène in this way:

> In the original French, mise-en-scene (pronounced meez-ahn-sen) means "putting into the scene," and it was first applied to the practice of directing plays. Film scholars, extending the term to film direction, use the term to signify the director's control over what appears in the film frame. As you would expect, mise-en-scene includes those aspects of film that overlap with the art of the theater: setting, lighting, costume, and the behavior of the figures. (Bordwell, *Film* 112)

Bordwell lists four fields which mise-en-scène provides for the director: "Staging-staging and clothes, lighting, and gestures and behavioral figures" (Bordwell, Film 112). According to this definition, the art of *Pardeh-khani* can provide Iran's cinema with two general styles of mise-en-scène and these two are selected in accordance with the kind of theme and story. As mentioned, the epic stories and narratives vary in *Pardeh-khani* and the narratives could be classified in two general categories: narratives of national and heroic epics and narratives of religious or spiritual epics, each of which has its own peculiar characteristics in relation to the kind of staging and the performance style of storytellers. They are examined here based on the definition of Bordwell.

I. Staging

Staging of epic canvases whose original source is <u>Shahnameh</u> is a good model for mise-en-scène in cinema. In the staging of these canvases, there are many features which

distinguish it from the type of staging in religious canvases and quite fit into the narrative and serve it. In epic canvases, the painter of the canvas usually uses wide backgrounds and places are portrayed concretely and with broad and deep depth of field. In most cases, the heroes are depicted on the right and anti-heroes on the left of the picture. There are two reasons for this. First, in Farsi, letters and words are written from right to left, quite unlike English. As such, the Iranian audience makes a faster and simpler communication with the visual information on the right, and second, according to religious and folk beliefs of the Iranian people, the right side is the position of the Angel of goodness and the left that of the evil. Natural landscapes such as vast plains, mountains and sky have a special place in this type of staging. Moreover, the painter pays particular attention to the smallest natural elements and at the same time uses them seamlessly and in a disciplined and organized way in order to convey his intended meaning, and this is in fact inspired by Ferdowsi's exact and dramatic use, the poet of Shahnameh. As a result, broad and deep depth of field, framing and placement of the characters based on positive or negative roles, the presence of nature and its elements in staging and focusing on a specific action are characteristic attributes of this type of mise-en-scène. This style of mise-en-scène can be used in cinema and fits into epic stories.
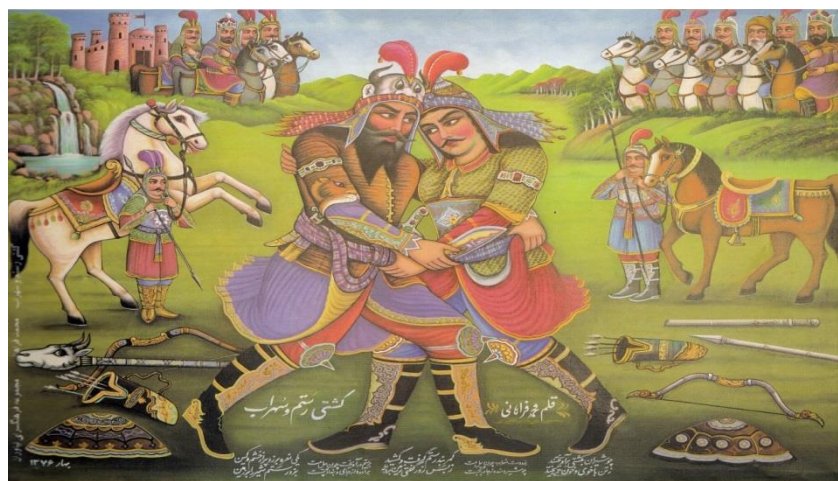
Figure 6.7. The combat between Rostam and Sohrab, from Hadi Saif Sote-h delan-e Naghash.

(Tehran: Kanoonaparvarsh, 2004) 53.

But in mystical and religious narratives, staging is different from epic and heroic narratives. In this type of narratives, the canvas painter makes use of a different staging. In this kind of painting, unlike national epic canvases, vast sights and landscapes with deep depth of field are less used. In such narratives, scenes have less depth of field and the whole canvas is filled with marginal narratives. In fact, in these narratives, the depth of field either cannot be seen or is less visible and the main narrative is placed in the middle of the frame and the marginal narratives around the frame. Unlike epic narratives, in these narratives the focus is more on the characters than on the surrounding space. In fact, the characters' action is important in these narratives and space and ground are of second priority. That is why the religious canvases have fewer varieties of natural landscapes and visions. This kind of mise-en-scène can also be used in films with religious and ethical themes.


Figure 6.8. Ashora event, from Hadi saif Sote-h delan-e Naghash. (Tehran: Kanoonaparvarsh, 2004) 61.

II. Clothing

In canvas painting, dress and clothing mainly represent the characters in terms of their thinking and social position. The characters' clothing has an important function and fits the character and needs of the narrative. The importance of clothing in canvas painting

is due to the fact that the painter has depicted all its details and used it as an important expressive element. The canvas painter uses clothing in order to give historical and cultural identity to the characters. So, clothing and dress have a dramatic function in this sort of painting. Also, the type of dress and its details represent national identity.
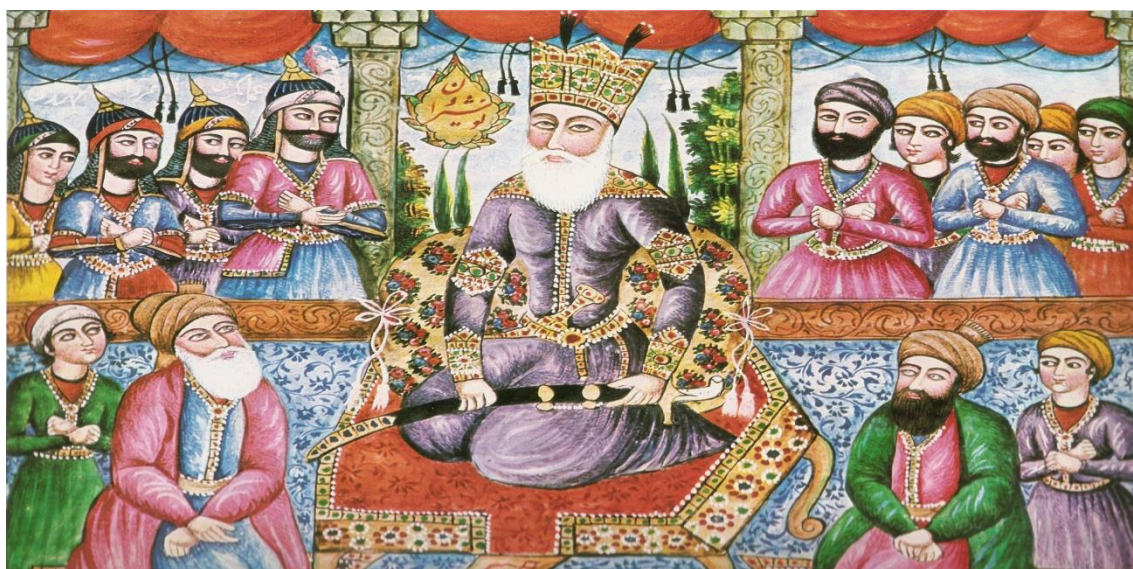
Figure 6.9. Anushirvan ascends to the throne, from <u>Mejalas-e Shahnameh</u>, (Tehran: Tos, 1975) 45.

III. Color

As mentioned, color is a very important element in *Pardeh-khani* and the canvas painter uses color as a dramatic and symbolic factor. In epic narratives, color plays an important role in dressing and staging. The use of bright and specific colors has symbolic implications in Iranian culture. For instance, green is used for the holy people and dark colors for sinners and bad-natured persons. Also, color is used in staging and spatialization representing the painter's clever use in mise-en-scène of each scene. The color also has a very important role in staging mystical and religious narratives and its symbolic use is much greater in heroic and epic narratives. Color as well as characters' faces are more abstract than concrete in religious narratives.

IV. Makeup

Characters, in canvas painting, are portrayed in appropriate and accurate ways. This feature, serving dramatic expression of the narrative, very well narrates the characters of the narrative and all details such as skin color, hair, makeup, wounds, and size of facial elements are at the service of dramatic expression of the narrative, depicting certain scenarios. In fact, makeup in canvas painting is in accordance with the definition given by David Bordwell on the function of makeup in cinema. He says: "Up to the present, it has been used in various ways to enhance the appearance of actors on the screen" (Bordwell, *Film* 122). The perfect beauty of the face of positive characters and heroes and ugly faces of antiheros is one of the models used by painters of canvases in their work. And this function, along with other dramatic functions, has been used in *Pardeh-khani*.

Figure 6.10. Killing of gaint sefid (White devil) by Rostam, from Hadi Saif <u>Sote delan-e Naghash</u>. (Tehran: Kanoonaparvarsh, 2004) 61.

V. Actors' Gestures and Poses

As stated in Chapter 2, the acting style of storytellers who are responsible for acting besides narrating the story is of two kinds:

A. Realistic Acting and Gestures

Storytellers present realistic acting especially in epic narratives and in line with the narrative which has an epic tone; they use a heroic style of acting in keeping with realistic principles. The acting of the storyteller is in line with the form and modes of the characters portrayed on canvas. As such, the storyteller responsible for acting out the roles of the main characters on the canvas uses more mobility and presence than when playing the marginal roles. Essentially, the storyteller usually plays the roles of main characters on the canvas and narrates those of the marginal ones.

B. Symbolic and Abstract Acting and Gestures

The storyteller's style of acting and performance is more based on the second type of acting in religious and mystical narratives, hence being symbolic and abstract. In the second type (religious), the storyteller is usually affected by the inner feelings, and peculiar religious and spiritual moods and uses certain abstract gestures. Of course, the storyteller's style of acting in these narratives is affected by the painter's style of visualization on canvas. In this type of narratives, following tradition, the painter usually portrays faces with no specific emotions, deep and mysterious looks, or grief-ridden smiles and full of ambiguities. Religious characters in this particular kind of painting do not have specific moods or expressive modes but only the faces of evildoers do. In fact, religious and mystical characters have a dignified and assured quality while negative characters are filled with fear and horror, hence affecting the storyteller's way of acting as he is the one who plays the characters' roles.

6.6. Acting in Pardeh-khani

Types of acting and gestures of storytellers in the art of *Pardeh-khani* can serve as a model for Iran's national cinema. As mentioned previously, in the art of storytelling, acting is presented in two ways: realistic and non-realistic (abstract). Since most narratives and stories of *Pardeh-khani* are epic, the figures and gestures of storytellers

take on epic-like and heroic qualities when playing the roles of story characters. This feeling and mood is observed in both realistic and non-realistic acting styles. In addition, the main pillar and special characteristic of acting in the art of storytelling in both styles is improvisation. Essentially, the actor (storyteller), though enjoying realistic movements and acting in realistic style, and given the position and conditions of place and time and sense of the scene, if necessary, shows gestures and behaviors improvised and created in the spur of the moment that can sometimes be non-realistic. Actually, a storyteller previously grasps the main principles and procedure of a narrative based on the character, but given the circumstances of time and place, and especially the mood of the audience during each new performance, he/she presents novel, distinctive acting that fits the character of the narrative. The storyteller may add nuances and decorations created at a specific moment when performing. This is true of the non-realistic technique as well. However, the modes and gestures in this style are symbolic and conventional, and the storyteller makes use of improvisation here too. Subtle nuances may be added to the conventional modes and features in order to have greater impact on the audience. Therefore, it is suggested that the national cinema can present a new style of acting based on tradition and the realistic and symbolic acting styles of the art of *Pardeh-khani* along with improvisation together. And, since this kind of acting is in accordance with the dramatic traditions of Iran that audiences are familiar with, the Iranian audience will comprehend this style, which is deemed one of the characteristics of Iran's national cinema.

6.7. Pardeh-khani as a Model for Iran's National Cinema

So far, it is clear that Iran's *Pardeh-khani* art holds exclusive and specific artistic and expressive achievements and features developed over many centuries. Based on Bela Balazs' theory of "Cinematic Adaptation," it was also mentioned that these achievements and features can be transferred to the modern art of cinema from this

traditional national art. Therefore, the achievements and features of *Pardeh-khani* art can be considered and utilized as a model for Iran's national cinema. Jinhee Choi's views concerning the definition of national cinema can be referenced to confirm this assertion. In Choi's paper titled "Notion of National Cinema" Choi proposes a definition of national cinema by taking a "relational approach": "A relational approach to national cinema underlines the fact that national cinema is not a given, but is classified as such only when there exists a set of identifiable characteristics that mark itself from other national cinemas" (Choi 315). Then, in answer to this question that "How, then, do we as viewers acquire the concept of national cinema?" and, "what is the relation between national cinema and national identity?" Choi states: "I wish to argue that we form the concept of national cinema *via prototype or exemplar*" (Choi 315).

Choi defines prototype or model as a set of specific and unique features that differentiate a group from other groups. This model leads to the recognition of a country's national cinema and distinguishes it from other national cinemas. In this respect, Choi states:

> A national cinema is often aimed at product differentiation in a film market. However, "national cinema" as a filmic category is more than a mere brand name. In order for a body of films to form a category of "national cinema" they should manifest common characteristics-narratively and/or stylistically- that significantly depart from those of Hollywood and other national cinemas. (Choi 314)

Furthermore, as discussed earlier, elements of a national identity called "Iranian" that includes homeland (territory), history, and political and cultural heritages are present in *Pardeh-khani* art narrations and constitute structural and content elements of this art. Since a focus on national themes and elements of a society are among the

fundamental interpretations of the term "national cinema," it seems that identity features and elements of "Iranian" can also serve as a model and pattern for expressing the national identity in cinema. Choi holds the following view in this regard:

> A relational approach to national cinema does not conceive of national cinema as a means to an end: i,e., a vehicle to embody national identity or cultural heritage. A national cinema's association with its national history or heritage is only one of the many ways in which a national cinema can assert itself. (Choi 314)

Consequently, as a model, features and achievements of *Pardeh-khani* art that have been acquired and recognized by Iranian people over the centuries, provide filmmakers with the opportunity to identify the requirements and tastes of audiences and toward producing considerable works with their own specific characteristics within a short time and at a much lower cost. The role of *Pardeh-khani* art as the model for Iran's cinema would result in a repetition of features and achievements of *Pardeh-khani* art as well as assert an Iranian sense of national identity via a collection of films. This collection of numerous films each with particular Iranian elements would play a substantial part in the formation and building of Iran's national cinema. This subject has also been accentuated by Choi: "The more frequently filmmakers of a given nation-state adopt and rely on elements specific to their nation the greater chance for such elements to be associated as prototypical features of that national cinema" (Choi 319). The features and achievements of *Pardeh-khani* art can serve as a suitable and realistic model for Iran's national cinema.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The current research argues that Iran's traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* can be utilized as the practical and suitable model for Iran's national cinema due to numerous similarities between *Pardeh-khani* and the modern art of cinema.

As discussed in the first chapter, Iran has not been yet able to establish a national cinema with components and features of Iranian identity owing to the use of and imitation of cinema styles and thematic techniques of other countries especially Hollywood, U.S.A. In this thesis, what was discussed is that eye-catching successes of Iran's cinema in international festivals do not result from the presence of a deep-rooted trend or compatible current with Iranian native and national patterns, and seemingly, these successes to a large extent originate from the personal creativity and cinematic talent of Iranian directors. These aspects were discussed in the literature review section along with discussion of the necessity for a national cinema in Iran that can represent cultural, artistic, and expressional features of Iran's culture and arts as pointed out and emphasized by experts and artists of Iran's cinema.

In the second chapter, Iran's *Pardeh-khani* art was structurally and artistically studied for the first time. Based on historical documents and evidences placed in this chapter as well as in another section, the roots and transformation of this art were analyzed. According to the referenced historical documents and reports, the origin of Iran's *Pardeh-khani* could be attributed to pre-Islamic eras and to Mani the prophet during his time during the Sassanid dynasty. It was also stated in the same chapter and the section entitled "*Pardeh-khani* art and national identity" that this traditional art can be recognized as the most important Iranian art that reflects the national identity of Iranian people: all elements of Iranian national identity i.e. territory, history, cultural

heritage, and political heritage have always been clearly and distinctively manifested and emphasized in this art. Each of the aforementioned elements play a crucial role in *Pardeh-khani*. The second chapter also incorporated discussions about the influence of *Pardeh-khani* art on other Iranian national and traditional arts including miniature, *Tazieh*, fresco (murals), and coffeehouse painting. The summary of arguments was indicative of *Parde-khani*'s richness, capabilities, cultural and artistic achievements, and influence upon other Iranian national arts.

Since *Pardeh-khani* consists of three art elements, namely painting, story and narration, each of these was studied in separate chapters for their key roles and significance. Accordingly, painting in *Pardeh-khani* was investigated in the third chapter. A historical review of Iran's painting and narrative picturing was initially presented, with inferences drawn suggesting that Iranian painting features a narrative aspect and that Iranian painters always tended to express epic and mythological narrations through pictures. This art was gradually was stripped out of its national and western features since the Safavid era owing to the decline of Iran's classic literature coupled with the influence of western art and literature leading to painting inclinations toward western styles.

In the second part of the same chapter, *Pardeh-khani* painting was thoroughly analyzed in drawing inferences that this is a dramatic painting based on the idea of the eternal battle between good and bad originating from an Iranian ideology of what it means to be human. It was also hinted that this art was influenced by the religious thought of Mani and his painting tradition. Additionally, the analysis of the specific painting style of *Pardeh-khani* indicated certain technical features and achievements. These include color type, type of states and position styles of characters within the composition of scenes that can be proposed as a pictorial model and paradigm for Iran's

cinema. Furthermore, other evidences were presented corroborating *Pardeh-khani's* antiquity and historical roots as remarkable and significant information.

Storytelling and narration as another element and art in *Pardeh-khani* was investigated in the fourth chapter. Including a background of storytelling and narration in Iran was presented at the beginning of that chapter, indicating the significance and status of storytellers and narrators in Iran's culture and civilization. This discussion revealed the admired position of *Pardeh-khans* and the great significance of this group of Iranian artists among Iranian people throughout history. The conclusion determind that *Pardeh-khans* served as people who carried news, and possessed religious knowledge and moral virtues playing the role of teacher and guide in Iranian culture while enjoying remarkable stature and respect among Iranians. In the narration section of the same chapter, different types of narration and story-telling in Iran were introduced providing a clear difference between *Pardeh-khani* and other narrative customs in the country. Additionally, technical and moral features of traditional narrators were depicted. The last section of the chapter analyzed and described the role of *Pardeh-khan* (narrator) in *Pardeh-khani* art as well as their technical skill features. The *Pardeh-khan* plays the major and key function in *Pardeh-khani* art and functions similarly to the director in cinema. Two other elements i.e. painting and story (narration) are selected by the narrator.

The fifth chapter of the present research was devoted to the third constituting element of *Pardeh-khani* art, the story and text of narrations. The historical background of tale-composing and story-writing in Iran and their features were studied at the beginning of this chapter. It was asserted and verified that Iranian stories have mythological and epic themes and that mythological concepts and epic spirit originate from social-historical circumstances and unique ideologies of Iranian people. For the same reasons, the text of narrations and stories are valued as sacred words and writings.

Ferdowsi's Shahnameh as the main source of inspiration for *Pardeh-khans* and other pictorial narrators was also analyzed in the same chapter. It was stated that expressive and content features of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh as a great epic (a result of Iranian people's thoughts and ideology) were brought into Iran's epic and *Pardeh-khani* arts. In addition, Ferdowsi's Shahnameh has played a crucial role as model in the formation of religious epics in subsequent historical eras leading to the emergence and development of religious and ritual *Pardeh-khani* in Iran. Features of tale-composing and story-writing in Iran were also discussed in this chapter leading to the assertion that narrative techniques in Iran's stories differs from the western and Aristotelian style outlined in the Greek sage's Poetics. Style in *Pardeh-khani* is instead influenced by Iranian and eastern ideologies and cultures, with non-linear, nested stories and mythological narrations. This narration style is also incorporated in the Iranian stories and *Tomars* [scrolls] of *Pardeh-khani.*

The sixth chapter is the main chapter of the research. In this chapter, a brief history of cinema in Iran was provided. This historical review assumed a novel approach to the history of cinema in Iran and is a pioneer attempt in this field. Having presented historical documents and reports that include comments of selected historians, the attempt in this chapter was to attribute Iranian efforts and origins of cinematic expression within the eras before the Twentieth century and before the time of cinema's importation into Iran. This historical review also explained reasons for cinematic narrative styles of other countries to influence Iran's cinema. In another section of the same chapter the similarities of between the traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* and the modern art of cinema were discussed.

For the first time, it is this investigation that conducted research on Iran's art history. This process leads the researcher to the conclusion that the features and achievements of *Pardeh-khani* art can be utilized in cinema. Based on Bela Balazs'

theory of cinematic adaptation these two arts are very similar structurally and functionally. The research claims that the achievements and expressive style of *Pardeh-khani* art are adaptable and applicable in cinema via its constituent parts, or theme and style. In this regard, the constituting elements and themes in *Pardeh-khani* art primarily investigated leads to the deduction that virtually all *Pardeh-khani* stories and narrations are epic. Non-epic themes are rarely ever found in these narrations and if any are found, their tone and style is also epic. Hence, Iran's *Pardeh-khani* art could be presumed as the art of "national and religious epic narrations". The adaptation of literary works and especially epic masterpieces has commonly been practiced in cinema since the very beginnings of its earliest productions, for example the famous <u>*The Birth of a Nation*</u> by D.W. Griffith uses epical features in its narrative to account for how American society shapes itself Iranian epic stories and themes with their own specific features and attributes can also be proposed as the index for Iran's national cinema in terms of theme and concepts.

This chapter also asserts that *Pardeh-khani* can be proposed as a suitable model for Iran's cinema in terms of style. It is inferred that narrative style in *Pardeh-khani* is based on and commensurate with the theme and content, and this style is mythological which differs from Aristotle's model. Aristotle's model developed by Christopher Vogler in the western cinema and based on Joseph Campbell's <u>The Hero with A Thousand Faces</u> is currently applied by many renowned directors in the world's cinema. It is thus proven that the narrative styles of *Pardeh-khani* present in the mythological and epic stories of this art over centuries can be perfectly utilized in Iran's national cinema. Narration style in Iran's national cinema can be founded on the mythological and epic style with its nested story structure.

Pardeh-khani offers another narrative style in Iran's national cinema. The development of this narration style was forecasted many years ago by Bela Balazs in his

<u>Theory of Film</u>. This type of story-relating specifically belongs to *Pardeh-khani* art and is perfectly applicable in Iran's national cinema. Fortunately, a sample of this narration style termed "combined narration" was unconsciously and accidentally used by an Iranian filmmaker in an Iranian Tele-film in 2011. This film entails the hypothesis and objective of the current research. It can be contended that the traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* is manifested in the modern art of cinema through combined narration, and furthermore that cinema art can be called the technologic version of *Pardeh-khani*.

In addition to theme and narrative style, the narrator (*Pardeh-khan*), rather than absent in cinema, is conspicuously present. The narrator instantaneously informs viewers about his role through narration of the story that includes moral judgments and expressions of ideas about the story characters. As such, the audience is accompanied by the narrator, his story and continual comments on the characters throughout.

In this section it was also asserted that the visualization style and technique of *Pardeh-khani* can be also employed in cinema. Having emphasized what comprises the composition of painting in *Pardeh-khani*, its visualization and picturing style is asserted to be in accordance with epic and mythological features of the story and its heroes. Due to the importance of heroes in epic and mythological stories, picture composition in *Pardeh-khani* is based on how heroes are presented. Through comparison of two types of configurations in western and *Pardeh-khani* paintings it was argued that the type of configuration in *Pardeh-khani* art might also be a convenient guide for editing procedures in Iran's cinema. Additionally, the spread and compacted combination of different scenes and events in *Pardeh-khani* is suggested as a model for developing an editing style particular to Iran's national cinema.

Using Jinhee Choi's "relational approach" for the definition of "national cinema," attributes and achievements of the traditional art of *Pardeh-khani* can be proposed as an acceptable and actual model for Iran's national cinema. Iran's cinema

experts and filmmakers are able to establish a national cinema via its own features and achievements. It was also mentioned that the adaptation and use of *Pardeh-khani* could grant a national identity to Iranian cinema via Iranian identity elements present in the theme and style of *Pardeh-khani* art. This cinema can hence be identified as distinct from other national cinemas possible via Iranian identity elements developed over time. Last but not the least, the researcher holds the opinion that Iran's national cinema must have an "epic spirit" similar to the model of *Pardeh-khani* art. The major component and pivotal index of Iran's national cinema must be based on the model of *Pardeh-khani* art and its "epic spirit" that embraces both content and form. Accordingly, Iran's cinema must be named the "Cinema of Epic." Based on this definition, Iran's national cinema or Cinema of Epic is founded on the following components:

I. Idea of Primordial Battle

Iranian notions are based on the eternal fight between good and bad, between light and darkness. According to Iranian ancient thought, the battle between light and darkness is a historical and perpetual fight in which light will finally defeat darkness at the end of time and that darkness will be eliminated forever. This is different from the idea of circular battle, in which the fight between good and bad continues forever, with an ending of the confrontation, the devastation of bad and victory of goodness and wisdom. This fight is an epic battle in Iranian culture and ideology and occurs in each period and time in a particular way. Humans have the duty to fight the darkness of their souls and the darkness in their surroundings to rescue their souls toward salvation through luminous particles of their entities joining the ship of light and salvation (Klimkeit 47). Thus, the human's battle with the darkness of one's soul and in society is an epic action in Iranian thought. Accordingly, Iran's epic cinema features a sacred aspect that will be very successful in attracting faithful, religious audiences. Epic subjects must not be

limited to the historical, national and religious themes of the past, nor should they be confined to descriptions which view mythological themes as having lost their significance and function in the face of modernity.

Iran's "Epic spirit" is not limited to the past but flows along over time. Iran's cinema can create its epic commensurate with its culture, past and needs of the modern world. At the same time, the interest of Iranian people in their national heroes and chevaliers has its roots in myths and the history of Iran. This interest and enthusiasm never faded away but intensified within historical junctures when the territorial integrity and identity of the nation was endangered. Therefore, two sorts of epics can be assumed for this cinema.

A. Internal Epic

This kind of epic would deal with heroic actions of leading characters struggling with his/her own internal (personal) bad traits and problems. Such epics can illustrate the struggles of the hero with himself/herself and fighting with his/her personal weaknesses and evils by relying on ancient moral teachings and numerous religious instructions especially via Islam. This theme is time-independent as well as attractive, and can provide ethical and religious guidance for human concerns.

B. External Epic

External epic subjects can be divided into domestic and foreign categories.

1. Domestic Subjects

Domestic subjects deal with a hero's fight against social and political injustices. Representations of a hero challenging injustices are widely welcomed by Iranian viewers, confirmed by popular receptions of Iranian films such as *Ghesar* by Masoud Kimiai.

2. Foreign Subjects

Foreign subjects pertain heroes and chevaliers battling against foreign forces who trespass upon the country's territory. Such themes simply indicate a national alliance in order to resist foreign invaders. These are always fresh and interesting topics for Iranian people. The people are aware of Iran's geopolitical situation and the country's enormous wealth due to huge oil, gas and mining resources. These realities coupled with other attractions have constantly tempted Iran's neighbors and extra-regional countries to invade the country throughout history. Iran therefore has been and will be continue to be subject to invasions.

The above-mentioned discussions show the range of themes that be implemented to create different genres as Epic Cinema. Iran's cinema can be consequently called "Epic Cinema" following the aforementioned features.

II. Iran's National Cinema and Style-Form

As Iran's cinema contains epic and mythological themes, the narrative form in this cinema is commensurate with epic and mythological concepts. Thereby, this narration style aligns with the ancient storytelling techniques of Iranians that utilize nested stories and anecdotes, different from the Aristotelian style used in classic cinema. Hence, Iran's national cinema can benefit from Mythical's style in the writing of screenplays while establishing the story and narration based on the Iranian epic and mythological storytelling and drama. Furthermore, as indicated earlier, this Epic Cinema could also take advantage of the "combined narration" technique in which the director leads the story as narrator, and describer of a film's characters. This technique is in alignment with epic themes because the subject of a film would comprise a greater range of stories compared to tragedy and drama. The combined narration technique is capable of reducing the intervals in the stories and alleviating ambiguous points for viewers.

The presence of exaggerated and imaginary scenes is among the characteristics of epic stories. All events that occur and are narrated in the epics are by far larger and more exaggerated than what occurs in the normal dimension of real life.

The creation of action and real world and exiting scenes is also possible in and the today world, thanks to the advances in computer technology.

Technological advances help to provide possibilities for producing epic and mythological works which have high potentials to attract domestic and foreign supporters.

Styling features in *Pardeh-khani* art are highly usable in Iran's national cinema. The styling of *Pardeh-khani* paintings with its picturing and painting techniques are compatible with film concepts. This styling follows its own specific features and technique in the composition type and framing, as well as location of depicted characters. By following this styling, Iran's national cinema will have its own national style and technique for picturing its themes and concepts. Moreover, the method of narrating stories based on scenes painted on the *Pardehs* as an editing process and prioritization of events could be used as a template and paradigm for Iran's national cinema. This feature would serve as the model for editing in Iran's cinema based on the method of linking various *Pardeh-khani* events performed by the narrator.

Lastly, the researcher as a filmmaker with two decades of experience in producing movies is confidently that *Pardeh-khani* is a viable and practical model for achieving Iran's national cinema. The author of the present research will indeed benefit from the achievements and findings of the present research in his future cinema works.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Filomography

Abi and Rub. Dir. Avanes Oganians. Perf. Sakowar Lidzeh, 1930.

Dokhter-e Lor. Dir. Abdolhossein Sepanta. Perf. Ardeshire Irani, 1933.

Chashman-e Siyah. Dir. Abdolhossein Sepanta. Perf. Patal, 1936.

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Haji Agha Actor Cinema. Dir. Avanes Oganians. Perf. Avanes Oganians, 1932-1933.

Kialisazi. Dr. Ramine Mohsseni. Perf.Iran's Channel TV2, 1996.

Leyli va Majnoun. Dir. Abdolhossein Sepanta. Perf. B. L. Lumka, 1935.

Naghle Gordafrid. Dir. Hadie Afriedeh. Perf. DEFC, 2008.

Qeysar. Dir. Masoud Kimiai. Perf. Ariana Film, 1969.

Sharmsar. Dir. Esmaiel Koushan. Perf. Pars Film, 1950.

Shirin and Farhad. Dir. Abdolhossein Sepanta. Perf. B. L. Lumka, 1935.

The Birth of a Nation. Dir. D. W. Griffit. Perf. Epoch Producing Co, 1915.

Tofan-e zandegi. Dir. Ali Daria Begi. Perf. Esmaiel Koushan. Mitra Film, 1947.

Variety-e Bahari. Dir. Esmaiel Koushan. Perf. Pars Film, 1949.

Zandani-e Amir. Dir. Esmaiel Koushan. Perf. Pars Film, 1948.

Appendix B: Questionnaire

B.1. Pardeh-khans' Questions:

1. How many years is it that you are performing?

2. What makes you interested in storytelling?

3. Have you specifically trained in storytelling?

4. How do storytellers usually learn dramatic movements?

5. How many storytellers do we have these days and what are they doing?

6. Do the storytellers just narrate the stories in Shahnameh or other stories as well?

7. Do storytellers have the same performing style everywhere?

8. What is roll?

9. Are the rolls all in prose? Is there any in verse?

10. Heroic stories aside, do we have religious stories in rolls as well?

11. Do all storytellers have roll?

12. Who wrote the rolls?

13. So, improvisation is an important element in storyteller's job?

14. Have you written any rolls?

15. Do storytellers refer to their rolls while performing?

16. Do we have any access to the important rolls of famous storytellers?

17. What skills does a storyteller need to be able to play different roles?

18. Do all storytellers choose *Pardeh-khani* as their second job? Or it has been their main job and the way of making income?

19. How do the spectators affect your job?

20. Who paints the canvas?

21. How do you choose your stories and narratives?

22. What caused storytelling to lose its market?

B.2. Scholars' Questions:

1. To what time does the history of art of *Pardeh-khani* date back to?

2. Is the art of *Pardeh-khani* limited to Iran, or do we have it in other countries as well?

3. What was the position and role of the art of *Pardeh-khani* in Iranian culture?

4. What are the characteristics of the art of *Pardeh-khani* in your opinion?

5. What element is more important in the art of *Pardeh-khani*?

6. What is the role of the story in *Pardeh-khani*?

7. Can we say that the *Pardeh-khan* has the main and most important role in Pardeh-khani?

8. What is the role of the painting in *Pardeh-khani*?

9. Can we use the capacities of the art of *Pardeh-khani* in modern arts, such as the cinema**?**

Appenix C. The Samples of Interviews

C.1. A Sample of Interview with Pardeh-khans

Interviewee: Morshed (Master) Abo Torabi

Pardeh-Khan

Born in: 1936

Birthplace: Tehran

Date of interview: 05/12/2009

How many years have you performed? It is almost 20 years, since I was 18. Tough now I perform not as much.

What makes you interested in *Pardeh-khani*? I loved it since I was a child because it spoke of heroes, generosity and self-sacrifice for the country.

Have you specifically been trained in *Pardeh-khani*? Yes, when I was a child, there was an old and experienced storyteller in our neighborhood. I learned a lot from him. When he was performing I watched him carefully.

How do *Pardeh-khans* usually learn dramatic movements? Most of them have learned it from the older ones. Like I said, I myself learned these movements from an old and experienced storyteller.

How many *Pardeh-khans* do we have these days, and what are they doing? Not as many as what we had in the past. They are much fewer now. I cannot tell exactly how many. The thing is no one is after such things anymore.

Do the *Pardeh-khans* just narrate the stories in Shahnameh, or other stories as well? Usually they narrate both stories of Shahnameh and religious ones, in particular Karbala's, depending on the situation. In Muharram, the Karbala's even and other religious stories are narrated and in other days, those of Shahnameh.

Do *Pardeh-khans* have the same performing style everywhere? Usually every storyteller has his own unique ways and stories, but their basis is the same. For example, everyone uses Shahnameh or religious stories from Qor'an and hadith and their acting is realistic and understandable for common people. Of course, some have their own unique dramatic movements.

What is Tomar? Tomar is the text based on which the storyteller narrates his story and since it is small, pocket-sized, and rolled, it is called roll.

Do all *Pardeh-khans* have Tomar? Not all of them, but those whose work is important to them. They have some rolls which are either written by themselves or copied over from those of the famous storytellers.

Heroic stories aside, do we have religious stories in Tomars as well? I have not seen no such thing. The rolls are more used for heroic stories and those from *Shahnameh*. There might be religious rolls too, but I have not heard of any.

Are the Tomars all in prose? Are any in the verse? What I know of are all in prose, but in some cases some verses are used in them.

Do we have any access to the important Tomars of famous *Pardeh-khans*? Very little. Of course, a book has come out about it like *Moshkin Nameh*.

Who wrote the Tomars? The storytellers and narrators wrote them, those who knew Shahnameh very well and had a taste for storytelling.

Have you written any Tomars? No, but I have copied and used those of others.

Do *Pardeh-khans* refer to their Tomars while performing? It is not usual. They memorize the roll and sometimes just have a look at before performance. The painted canvas is the best guide.

Is improvisation an important element in a *Pardeh-khan*'s job? Yes, it is very important in storytelling because there are times the storyteller has to add or remove

something from the story regarding the situation and the moods of the spectators. So, in my opinion, improvisation is very important in *Pardeh-khani*.

What skills does a *Pardeh-khan* need to be able to play different roles? Beside knowledge of techniques, he has to have verbal proficiency and know music well. Moreover, he has to be a good actor and be familiar with painting so that he can represent the story in a lively way and act out the characters on the canvas through his proper play, and present the narrative truly.

Do all *Pardeh-khans* choose *Parde-khani* as their second job? Or has it been their main job and their main source of making income? *Parde-khani* was a respectable and acceptable job in the past and many storytellers made a living from it. But no one can make a living from it now or choose it as his main or even the second job. It was the main or the second job in the past, but not now.

What caused *Pardeh-khani* to lose its market? Well, the science has advanced-television caused people not to be attracted to *Parde-khani*.

Who paints the canvas?

Many of the storytellers give their canvases to painters, though suggesting their own preferences. Yet, I have heard that in some cities, storytellers paint their own canvases. I have ordered my canvases to be painted since I could not paint any.

How do you choose your stories and narratives?

We do it ourselves. Of course we choose the ones which are appealing to people or the ones with religious, didactic, and moral messages.

How do the spectators affect your job?

The people and those who watch our job play an important role in our performance. In fact, we present a good or bad job based on the interest and attention of the people and our spectators, meaning that if they show attention and interest, we get excited too and present a good performance, that aside, our provision is in their hands.

C.2. A Sample of Interview with the Scholars

Interviewee: Dr. Farhad Mohandespour

Professor and Director of Theater

Born in: 1959

Birthplace: Tehran

Date of interview: 04/24/2009

To what time does the history of art of *Pardeh-khani* date back to?

The dating and history of the art of *Pardeh-khani* is not exactly clear, that is unfortunately no one has conducted a precise and significant research on it. There are some limited sources which date it back to before the advent of Islam and some others to before the Safavid era.

Is the art of *Pardeh-khani* limited to Iran, or do we have it in other countries as well? Our information in this respect is limited. Unfortunately, as I've studied, there has also been this tradition in India. But it seems that we don't have it as in Iranian form in other countries.

What was the position and role of the art of *Pardeh-khani* in Iranian culture? Without a doubt, it had an important position in the past and was the most important informational tool. Some historical reports have point out that the art of *Pardeh-khani*, in addition to entertaining people, gave the needed information to people. Thus, the storytellers were narrators of news and hence were respected by people.

What are the characteristics of the art of *Pardeh-khani* in your opinion? Integration of three arts of narration, painting and story has made this art particular among Iranian traditional arts. Because, for instance, unlike Tazieh, it has more dramatic aspects and is an art which can be performed at any time and with any themes. And moreover, it is visual. In my opinion, among Iranian arts, it is an outstanding perfect art.

What element is more important in the art of *Pardeh-khani*? In my opinion, all three elements of the story-narration and painting have equal role. Without any of them, in fact, the art of *Pardeh-khani* will lose its essence. But as I said, the human factor meaning storyteller is more important.

Can we say that the *Pardeh-khan* has the main and most important role in *Pardeh-khani*? Yes, for sure. This is the storyteller around whom this art revolves and he is the one who chooses the narrative and even orders the painting canvas. In fact, it can be said that the storyteller is the director and the main factor in the art of *Pardeh-khani*. Storyteller has an important and key role. This is the storyteller who is responsible for implementing the art of *Pardeh-khani*. He is the one who chooses the narrative and even orders the painting canvas. In fact, it can be said that the storyteller is the director and the main factor in the art of *Pardeh-khani*.

What is the role of the story in *Pardeh-khani*? Story and narrative are of main elements in the art of *Pardeh-khani*, because they affect both the way we the storyteller performs and the way the painter portrays the images. Therefore, story and narrative play an important role in *Pardeh-khani*.

What is the role of the painting in *Pardeh-khani*? One of the characteristics of this art is its being visual. In fact, the art of *Pardeh-khani* is a narrating and visual art. And as is evident in the style of paintings in this art, visualization is very popular and typical, that is unlike miniature which is an official and library art, the style of painting in this art is popular, and has a significant role in the communication this art established with the spectator. In fact, the grace of the art of *Pardeh-khani* lies in its painting and style of imaging.

Can we use the capacities of the art of *Pardeh-khani* in modern arts such as the cinema? In my opinion, yes. Especially as you mentioned in the art of cinema the

subjects and expressive modes of the art of *Pardeh-khani* can be used, as it is very much

similar to cinema.

Appendix D: Glossary of Research Terms

Ahle Bazi (Men of Plays)

Ahl-e-Bazi is a group of people whose main work is to perform traditional plays in order to entertain audiences. In fact, similar to circus entertainers and itinerant actors, they act out performances - similar to plays- for the people, and in return, they receive monetary compensation.

Ahle sokhan (Men of Speech)

Ahl-e-Sokhan is a group of people who give speeches to an audience; the most important members of these groups are narrators (Naghal), who tell people literary stories and folktales. In return, people monetarily tip them. These storytellers earn a living through narrating stories and reciting poems to an audience.

Ahle Zoor (Men of Power)

Ahl-e-Zoor are a group of people who are physically well-built and powerful; they act out heroic performances, such as wrestling or do difficult and extraordinary acts, which ordinary people are unable to do. They entertain and excite the crowd and audiences in order to make a living.

Anfal (booties)

The main concept of Anfal refers not only to booties, but also to all public properties, such as woodlands, jungles, valleys, and wastelands; it is thought that these properties belong to God, His Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and His deputy; in other words, these properties belong to the Islamic government, which are to be used for the interest of Muslims. Arabs regard Iranians as booties, or properties of the Islamic government.

Arbabe Mareke (Masters of Stage)

Masters of stage are people who entertain crowds by performing epic plays, narrating stories, and conducting difficult and exhausting acts for a living; they (Arbabe Mareke) are classified into three groups: men of power, men of speech, and men of plays.

Dahghan (small land owner)

In ancient times, the original Iranians who were the owner of lands in villages or cities were called Dahghan. They were also the keeper of Persian traditions and customs after the Arab invasion; in this context, they are actually keeper of traditions and myths of pre-Islamic Persia. The term Dahghan has been repeatedly used in the Shahnameh with similar connotations. At the onset of each story, Ferdowsi actually creates a link between his speech and Old Persia through the words of Dahghan or the Zoroastrian priests.

Eslimi

Eslimi is a kind of motif, which includes complex lines, curves, and various circular arches; it is depicted in decorated inscriptions and some paintings. Although Eslimi is sometimes employed as the main design, in architecture, book designing and handicrafts, it is used along with other designs. The term Eslimi is attributed to Eslim, which is another way of saying the word Islam; it is sometime regarded as Islamic art. Eslimi is one of the seven original motifs in Persian traditional painting.

Fanos-e khial (The Lantern of Fancy)

It is a very old tool used by the people of Old Persia for fun and entertainment; it was a lantern lit by a candle; and around the lantern, there were some pictures that moves alongside the heat and smoke of the candle.

Gardooneh Mehr (swastika)

The swastika is a symbol that generally takes the form of an equilateral cross, with its four arms bent at 90-degrees. The earliest archaeological evidence of swastika-shaped ornaments dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization, as well as the Mediterranean Classical Antiquity and Paleolithic Europe. Swastikas have been used in various other ancient civilizations around the world, including Turkic, India, Iran, Armenia, Nepal, China, Japan, Korea, and Europe.

Ghalamdan Negari

Ghalamdan Negari is a Zir Laki painting in Iran; it means drawing on small metal or wooden boxes where writing tools, such as pencils, are kept; it is seen as one of the traditional handicrafts in Iran.

Ghalat Sazi

Ghalat sazi is the other name applied to the methods of coffeehouse paintings in Iran; it is also the term which some of the recent painters and researchers attribute to this type of painting due to its asymmetric shapes, non-compliances, and non-realistic designs in these kinds of paintings.

Gusan

Gusan is actually the forefather of minstrels, legendary tellers, and narrators in Iran.

Jam-e Jam

Jam-e-Jam, or the crystal ball, is a bowl used by Iranian kings, especially Jamshid, who the bowl is named after. The bowl is supposed to foretell the affair of other states and individuals. It is also expected to show faraway scenes and events that are not visible to the people.

Kalamkari (figured calico)

Kalamkar refers to a type of cloth where traditional designs are printed on using wooden molds. Kalamkari also refers to the creation of figures on cloth using hands or wooden molds. This type of handicraft is common to the Isfahan province, and is mostly produced there.

Khiali Negari

It is another term used for Pardeh Khani paintings in Iran.

Khonyagar

Is defined as the one who sings, recite poetry, play music, narrating legends, stories, and epics of the past; they also recited history, and sometimes get involved in juggling.

Magi

Zoroastrian religious leader

Mahiat-khani

Mahiat-khani is a method of Pardeh Khani performed by experienced and knowledgeable narrators (Pardeh-khan). Mahiat-khani is actually the next phase after Sorat Khani (face recitation) in Pardeh Khani, where the narrator starts to describe the main concepts of the paintings and the main goals of the narration and the characters' actions after they are introduced; these explanations regarding the main concept of narrations comes along with advice for the audience.

Maqdur

Means what is destined -destiny-fate

Mareke

It literally means battlefield, or field of conflict, or a platform for performing a play or act for the audience. In other words, it can be defined as acting in a play for a group of audiences.

Marekegir

He is the one who perform a play for a group of people. They can be classified into three branches: men of speech who perform eloquence (sokhanvari), men of power who perform wrestling plays, and men of plays who perform folkloric and local plays.

Mavali

Mavali, whose plural form is Mavaali, has different meanings in Arabic; one of its meanings is servant. It should also be noted that in some of the historical and literary books, all non-Arab nations that were under the control of Arabs were defined as Mavaali.

Metragh

It is the narrators' stick, which they use to point to the pictures on the canvas (Pardeh) when they are telling the stories, or it is used as a stage prop in the manner of a lance or sword when the narrators play the roles of characters.

Miniature

It is a small-scale painting with subtleties. Miniature is actually a special painting that is only attributed to the East. In this painting, the rules of landscapes, Mercia, and forensic sciences are not observed; the color is only defined as the decoration tool, and all of the details are depicted with special subtleties. This French term is also used for Iranian paintings.

Mosions

The followers of Manis-Manichaeus call the Iranian prophet as Mosion; they started promoting Mani rituals and religion in Iran and to some other parts of the world, such as China, Egypt, and Europe after Mansion was martyred.

Naghal (narrator)

He is the one who repeatedly narrates stories and events that contain sublime moral advice and messages.

Naghali

Naghali (narrating) is a performance with one player. It is a Persian play where a lyrical, epical, religious, ethical, or social story is narrated; the aim is to provide advice or pass on a sublime message to the audiences.

Naghashye Khaneshi

It is the term used for those paintings that are explained and narrated by the painter himself or another (Narrator). These kinds of painting are mostly religious and sacred. In Iran, they are attributed to Manichean rituals. In their religion, Manichean missionaries painted their rituals and religious practices on canvas, and then explained

them so that people and their addressees could understand the practices quicker and easier.

Nazr

Nazr is one of the Islamic traditions based on which mankind considers it necessary to do right or avoid sins for the sake of God.

Negargari

Negargari is a general term that refers to various methods and styles of Persian paintings; it contains paintings in books and manuscripts, such as illuminations, marginal illustrations, drawing tables, flowers, and birds, as well as drawings on buildings' walls and other canvas.

Otagh-e Tarik (Darkroom)

It is a closed and dark place, similar to the space within the camera and video camera. It actually provides the possibility for pictures to be formed inside the camera, and is regarded as fundamental to cameras and videos.

Pardeh (canvas)

It is the painted canvas (tableau) in Pardeh-khani (storytelling/tableau description); it is actually the painting canvas in a larger size on which painters paint. However, it is called pardeh (tableau) because it is hung in different places for performing Pardeh-khani.

Pardehdar

It is another term used for Pardeh-khani (traditional Iranian storytellers); it refers to a person who uses a painted canvas (pardeh) for narration.

Shahnameh-khan (Shahnameh Narrator)

He is a person who recites the epic poems of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh to the spectators and audiences.

Shamayel-Gardani (Icon touring)

It is a type of visual narration, where a narrator has a painting with a special subject on a small canvas (tableau); the paintings are mostly the pictures of holy figures; he then narrates those holy figures' stories and lives to the audience. In Shamayel Gardani, there is only one icon or picture on the canvas, while in *Pardeh-khani*, there are a lot of characters, places, and stories being depicted on canvas (Pardeh), and this painting is larger than the painting in Shamayel Gardani.

Shariate

Tradition, customs, religion, and God's conduct: prophets' traditions and customs

Shehr-e Farang

Shahr-e-Farang is a type of entertainment for children; it is a rectangular portable box with holes on its walls; through those holes, one could see the old pictures of Iran and famous landmarks of the world. When Cinemas and TVs were uncommon in Iran, children liked to watch these animated pictures while listening to the rhythms and eloquent explanations of the device's curator.

Soorat-khani (Face Recitation)

Soorat-khani is one of the varieties of *Pardeh-khani* where the narrator only introduces the apparent form and personality of the painted faces on canvas (Pardeh); he narrates nothing about the main concepts of events and the characters' actions.

Tarieghate (religious or Mythical Path)

Ideology- conduct of wayfarers

Tazieh (passion play)

Tazieh is a kind of religious Passion play in Iran; its main subjects are the events of Karbala.

Tazieh-khani

Performing and acting in religious plays of Tazieh in Iran is called Tazieh Khani.

Tekye-ye

It is a religious site that exists in most of the cities in Iran. Tazieh khani (performing passion play) is one of the common ceremonies that are generally practiced in Tekye-ye in Iran.

Tomar

Tomar is the text where the storyteller expresses and performs his narration; he sometimes sneaks a look at his Tomar during the performance. In other words, Tomar is the written text of narration in *Pardeh-khani*.

Vakhshor

Literally, Vakhshor means the carrier of divine words, referring to a prophet.

Zareh-parvari

Zareh-parvari refers to the process of training new traditional storytellers (*Pardeh-Khan*). In the past, the experienced and skillful storytellers trained children and those who were talented and interested in storytelling (*Pardeh-khani*) step by step. They also evaluated their skills in different ways till they become skillful, and could perform *Pardeh-khani* on their own. This way of training by experienced and master storytellers is called Zarre-Parvari.

Zirlaky

Lacquer painting is a form of painting done with lacquer, which was practiced in China and Japan for the purpose of decorating lacquerware, and found its way to Europe both via Persia and direct contact with Asia.