



Alternative cinema (a study of the achievements of Iranian cinema and its relationship to global intellectual variables)

Dr. Muhammad Abdul Hamid Dhaidan
University of Karbala - College of Tourism Sciences
Iraq - Holy Karbala
m.abdulhameed@uokerbala.edu.iq

Summary of the research: It is no secret to anyone the role that the image in general and the cinematic image in particular play in the intellectual orientation of societies in all their forms and references, and this is what prompted many Western political institutions to invest cinematic art for their propaganda purposes and influence on peoples in one way or another. However, Iranian cinema tried through A large number of films establish different intellectual trends that are compatible with the nature of the Muslim community to be an “alternative cinema” to “mainstream cinema” and in particular “Hollywood cinema,” which in most of its films tried to focus on violence, sex, excitement, murder and other ideas and values that were clearly spread in Western societies, as well as Eastern and Muslim societies, until these values and ideas became as if they were among the main pillars of the new culture.

The researcher divided his research into several sections:

The first topic: dealt with the methodological framework of the research from the research problem, which focused on the following question: What is the way in which Iranian cinema was able to achieve features of an alternative cinema to the prevailing cinema.

Then the researcher dealt with the goal of the research and its importance and identify the most important terms.

As for the rest of the investigations, they dealt with the theoretical framework, and they are as follows:



1- The moral content that suits the intellectual, social and cultural dimensions of Muslim societies is one of the most important features of alternative cinema.

2- Alternative cinema is a cultural and social cinema that is linked to the Iranian reality more than it is a propaganda cinema.

Keywords: Iranian cinema, alternative cinema, film studies

The first topic: the methodological framework of the research.

Research problem: How has Iranian cinema been able to achieve features of an alternative cinema to the mainstream cinema?

The aim of the research: to reveal the most important features of Iranian (alternative) cinema after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

The importance of the research: The importance of the research lies in addressing a topic that focuses on the characteristics of cinema that was able to establish a special identity for it and find a distinguished position for it in the artistic cinematic milieu. Now, the features of its cinematic production are not clear, stylistically and technically, and it will not be able to reach the world despite its continuous film production, and this research also benefits scholars, researchers and specialists in cinematic affairs.

Alternative cinema idiomatically:

There are those who believe that alternative cinema "is the alternative cinema to commercial films," as stated by Mona Daly, director of the Zenith Cultural Foundation, in a television interview on the BBC, and this opinion is shared by many. One of the sites (Dar Al-Manthama, 2018) is the new option, as indicated by the film historian "Joffrey Newell Smith", who divided the history of cinema into three sections (silent - speaking - modern). In the silent cinema period, the Japanese presented an alternative cinema experience in terms of technology, as they tried to break the silence in the film through the "Banshi" system, which does two things: commenting and pronouncing the dialogue during the presentation of the film. The article reviewed the types of alternative cinema in terms of the method of presentation and distribution, which forced the cinema to be television, where television was the alternative medium for the showrooms.

The researcher does not adopt any of the opinions mentioned about alternative cinema, except in some statements from the third opinion, in which he sees that alternative cinema is a new option.

Where the researcher believes that the alternative cinema in this research is based on intellectual, cultural and social premises different from the prevailing, regardless of technology, and it establishes an alternative cinema and confronts the prevailing intellectual and cultural invasion directed by the other in order to influence societies.



The first topic: the culture of the image and the intellectual and cultural variables of societies.

It is no secret to anyone that the image has the power to influence individuals and societies after the global culture has become the culture of the image, and it has become the global language that can be compatible with the tremendous development of the system of digital communication and information exchange.” Roland Barthes says, “We live in the civilization of the image. (Al Hamid, 2005) as Umberto Eco confirms the importance of the image by saying, “If the twentieth century is the century of linguistics, then the twenty-first century is the century of the image par excellence” (Eco, 2005), which means that the image has become the influential tool in all areas of life, rather it is language that can Everyone exchanges it in the shadow of a village that may be very small, because the picture does not need translation, but rather has its connotations in itself without arbitrary at the very least, "where the picture is defined as" every embodied representational tradition or a hostile visual expression, which is a sensory given to the visual organ. That is, a direct awareness of the external world in its luminous appearance, as this image bears two messages, the first is declarative and the second is implicit and is derived from the first” (Selassi, 1996). Optimum for the goals you seek to achieve Rather, the investment of the image with a political dimension framed by the cultural and intellectual dimension took the largest part of this culture, because controlling the image market means controlling the economy of cultural thought and then political, social and even military “as the image is considered one of the most important strategies, so whoever has the ability to maneuver the image and control its production And marketing it can manage situations in his favors” (Fadhl, 1999).

It is not strange when we find that there is a clear acquisition of the Western image, especially the American one, through all the fictitious activities that it undertakes, whether cinematic or television, or through social networking sites, advertisements and others. The Hollywood movie has become a semantic and intellectually influential format that conveys the intellectual, cultural and social content that is ready for global as well as local communities. Hence, a great discrepancy is noticed between the Western figurative discourse led by a group of experts at all levels who carry awareness and a goal and between the other discourse (Arab or Eastern or Islamic) Which you find mostly ineffective, but perhaps submissive to that discourse and imitated by it. Therefore, it became clear that the social, cultural and intellectual dimensions of the eastern character have become simulated to the patterns of characters presented by Western films, especially Hollywood ones, whether at the level of dress and clothing or thinking, behavior, lifestyle and other details of life, and thus the image (source) became the nourishing and donor of everything new. For these societies, the individual has become governed by these ready-made images and templates



without discussion, and thus, perhaps the formal control is more effective and deadly than military control. On this basis, no society can be liberated at all levels except by confronting these fictitious missions that come from abroad, filtering them, studying them and knowing their dimensions, as well as finding The alternative in confronting these missions on the one hand, and on the other hand, is the creation of a different fictitious culture that is compatible with the nature of the intellectual, cultural, political and social orientations of these countries.

The second topic: a historical overview of Iranian cinema

From the very beginning of its inception, cinema has been of great importance at the public level, both in terms of the comic and the playful dimension, or in terms of the intellectual, aesthetic and artistic dimension that has grown later.

The cinema in Iran may have appeared at an early age, due to a number of reasons, including that it is adjacent to a country that pioneers cinematic art, which is the Soviet Union, as well as its proximity to India, which is one of the important countries in the film industry through the construction of some studios, in addition to the fact that Iranian rulers They had foreign relations and well-known tours in Western countries, which made them look at the most important new achievements, including cinematic projectors, and this is what happened “when Muzaffar al-Din Shah watched some movie shows in one of the halls in Paris and liked them” (Berjakani, 2009).

The documentary feature with which Iranian cinema began is what distinguishes it, especially that the history of documentary cinema is directly related to the history of the emergence of cinematic art in any country, including Iran, and this can be seen in the appearance of the first documentary film recorded by Mirza (Ibrahim Khan), which was Filmed in July 1900 at a flower party in Belgium.

The year 1905 also witnessed the opening of the first cinema hall in Tehran, but the political events that the Iranian scene witnessed during this period against the ruling family led to the destruction of the contents of this hall, including projectors and films.

However, the urgent need for cinema made cinemagoers in Iran try again to build cinemas, so in 1922 (Ardashir Khan) opened a cinema in Tehran, followed by similar steps in some Iranian cities such as Isfahan and Tabriz. But during that period, Iranian cinema was content with producing and showing some documentaries about the royal family and some foreign films, except for some attempts that resulted in the production of some films, such as the movie “The Absurd,” which was made by a group of students (film school) and under the supervision of Ibrahim Moradi. That school (Oanis Ohanian), who studied cinematography in the Soviet Union and established the first film school in Iran in 1931, directed the first feature film with the help of Khan Baba Motadidi, titled (Abi and Rabi) It is a thirty-five-minute



silent film that tells a comic story about two men, one short and the other tall.

Iranian films did not come out of the local circle except through the movie "The Lor Girl" in 1932, which was the first talking film produced by Ardashir Irani and Abdul Hussein Spenta at the Imperial Film Company in India (Bombay). Critics and those interested in cinematic affairs, which encouraged the production of later films, such as (Black Eyes) in 1934. And (Sherine and Farhad) and (Majnoun Laila), but most of those films that were produced in that period did not adopt a clear line of thought or specific philosophical adoptions, but rather were concerned with material profit and pleasing the masses so that they would frequent theaters, except for some productions. Made by a few directors like (Abdul-Hussein Spenta), who tried to delve into topics related to the Iranian heritage and his thought, and this appeared in a film about the well-known Iranian poet Ferdowsi in the thirties of the last century.

During the Second World War, Iranian cinema suffered a clear decline in production, and the demand for Western films began that depended on the temptations of production and presentation, which greatly reduced local production, which at that time was limited to documentaries and depictions of the ruling family, forcing some directors to try to imitate the West. and reproduce well-known experiences from Western cinema, as in Hitchcock's Vertigo and Billy Wilder's Sabrina.

However, this did not prevent the emergence of a new generation of directors who wanted to present new ideas to the cinema, and to monitor the social and cultural changes at the time, influenced to some extent by the current Italian neo-realism, so their films were characterized by monitoring the lived reality and delving into its minute details and moving away from the monopoly of cinema in favor of the royal families and families The luxury of Iranians, the movie (South of the City), directed by Forough Ghafari, was one of those films that revealed the bad living conditions experienced by the Iranian citizen.

As a result, the formation of a (new wave) of filmmakers who adopted reality as the basis of their themes was the movie (The Cow) in 1969 directed by Dariush Mehrjoui, one of the important films and a milestone in the history of Iranian cinema. This film was banned from showing in the era of the Shah, but the director smuggled it and participated in it externally, and he won the Critics' Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1971.

In the post-World War II period, producers and those interested in cinematic affairs began to establish some film companies, and film production began to grow little by little, and some cinematic trends and film diversity appeared, such as lyrical films that were influenced by the nature of Indian films, comedies, and films based on Stories such as stories (One Thousand and One Nights) and romantic films, as well as artistic trends appeared in cinematic art, such as poetics in the film, as is the case in the movie (The Rain



Showers) and the film that relies on plastic art as a movie (Silent Nature). Magical realism films and comedies like the movie "The Renter." During that period, the period of the sixties and seventies, great names emerged in this field, such as Parviz Chemiy Bahram Baydaei, Dariush Mehrjoi, Abbas Kiarostami, Nasser Taqawi and others.

Despite the new indications that appeared starting in 1971, the producers did not notice the reality of the crisis except with the current year, when they produced 87 films. Only a few of them were successful, making 1972 a disastrous year for many producers who went bankrupt or stopped working. production for a while" (Mehrabi, 1382).

The third topic: Intellectual features of Iranian cinema and activating confrontational discourse.

If a comparison is made between Iran's political, cultural and intellectual history and the entry of cinematic art there around 1900, it can be noted that the great changes that this country witnessed as it lived in chaos under Russian influence in the north and British influence in the southeast, and in the mid-twenties of the last century became Reza Khan was king of Iran as the first head of the Pahlavi state and was succeeded by his son, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, after the father abdicated the throne and left Iran.

During the period in which the Islamic Revolution appeared in Iran at the end of the seventies, Western countries were experiencing a significantly changing cultural, intellectual and political reality, a period of the emergence of different intellectual and philosophical currents and cognitive revolutions, a superior development in communications and various sciences, accompanied by major political changes such as the beginning of the successive collapses of the Eastern pole The growth and expansion of one pole that controls the course of affairs and controls them, which is the United States of America.

On the other hand, the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which is the most prominent political, cultural and intellectual event, came exactly the opposite with the American trends and its view of the world and the East in particular, and that is why America took it upon itself to thwart this revolution by all means, while the Islamic Revolution in Iran tried to confront this trend. Cinema was one of the important means in the confrontation process, albeit indirectly.

Therefore, the Iranian government tended to put culture and art in general, and cinema in particular, within the approach of confrontation, to confront the cultural, intellectual, political and ideological invasion that has prevailed in the world. Contrary to what is rumored that the Islamic Republic's system, by its religious nature, may be an obstacle to artistic and cultural trends, many statements have been issued stressing the importance of cinema in public life, provided that it does not corrupt public morals. Cinemas that contribute to corrupting the morals of young people, since they are different



from Islamic culture, but we agree to programs that help in politeness and are in the interest of a sound moral and scientific education for society” (Bergakani, 2009).

Iranian cinema had to be a means of change that the region witnessed, and to bear the seeds of confronting the other by sending clear intellectual, cultural and political messages. After Iranian cinema, and especially after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, took a unique path in its approach, themes and method of treatment, it was the true birth of Iranian cinema, which had a clear identity in expressing its own issues, and (local) was the most prominent feature in Iranian cinema, which made it a share In competition and a strong presence in all international festivals The researcher believes that Iranian cinema has taken many steps through the opponents in this regard to get rid of dependency and have a special style that can define new features for this cinema, which the researcher calls the third cinema or other classifications that he considers it incorrect to classify these films according to grades or levels.

The new Iranian cinematic trends after the victory of the Islamic Revolution can be studied in a number of features:

1- Paying attention to what is known as the sacred defense cinema, within two axes:

A-At the level of film production: government agencies have begun to confront the war project that I want to overthrow the Islamic revolution in Iran by producing a large number of films that talk about war with all its tragedies, destruction and killing, with the legitimacy of defending the homeland and its connection to the values of heroism and martyrdom. This cinema actually began with the launch of the first bullet of the war through a group of photographers and directors, led by director (Mortada Aweni), who was martyred by the explosion of a landmine after the end of the war while filming a movie about the missing as a result of the war. The war from the fronts, with all its details, then necessitated the need to produce a group of narrative films, and the production of those films continued even after the end of the war.

One of the topics that these films dealt with is the tragedies of the war that took place between Iraq and Iran between 1980-1988, a cinema that the interested person can describe as having emerged from the womb of events and wanted, through the large production that Iranian cinema produced, to portray the war as an imposed, not an option. The government or the people, therefore, defending the homeland is one of the sacred concepts. In the movie (Flower of Life), when a doctor sees his leader in the war zone being martyred as a result of a shell that fell on him, he says to him (Oh Hajj Mahdi, intercede for us), which is an indication of the sanctity of this martyr.

In terms of fairness, Iranian cinema has a good history in production and has important names in this field. This amount of production was not the result



of the moment of war or revolution, but rather a process full of many films that made Iranian cinema a clear specialty, but it can be said that this interest Continuing to produce despite the difficult circumstances that the state has gone through is what made Iranian cinema possess that peculiarity and uniqueness in style, which directly addressed the issues of war, which could be direct messages, whether inside Iran or abroad, or by addressing the war indirectly through He brought up many tragedies and disasters left by war, and this is what Iranian cinema has adopted After the war, to try to rebuild the psychological structure of man before building cities, and to try to repair what was ruined by the war, especially by addressing issues related to orphans, the wounded and the disabled, and how to care for them and give them new roles in life.

B - Establishing a special festival concerned with this type of films in order to market the cause of sacred defense abroad through this festival, which is the Fajr Film Festival. Four years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, officials sought, through their eagerness to take a path and a fertile ground to support film production, to establish a festival At dawn in February 1983, coinciding with the ten days of dawn and the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, this festival was launched by the Al-Farabi Cinema Foundation and under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. This festival marked an important turning point in the history of Iranian cinema, and the festival was not limited to local films. As it started, since 1995 Foreign films began to compete with Iranian films, and thus there was a great opportunity for exchanging experiences and increasing artistic and cultural exchange between Iran and the rest of the countries.

2- I adhered to the principle of decency and avoided provoking imported instincts and morals, and this angered some and began to demand a more liberated cinema, under the pretext that art and culture do not live in an environment riddled with restrictions, although Iranian cinema, although in some stages of its production, suffers from some (taboos) and despite the pressures The actual practice by the censors, until the filmmakers' love for their work and their love for cinematic art made them turn these restrictions into strengths And to divert their attention to choosing simple, but accurate, topics that stem from the reality of life, and are characterized by their comprehensiveness, meaning that the issue at hand may be among the details of daily life, but it can be a common human concern experienced by man in all parts of the world, such as issues of aging, alienation, death and life Childhood, the theme of love, and the man-woman relationship, which took a large part in most international film productions, although this relationship is based mainly on sexual instinct. However, Iranian cinema tried to focus on important human issues that link the sexes, despite the caveats faced by directors in their dealings with the female sex. This is what prompted many directors to choose topics related to children, so that children would be the



heroes of their films, until this feature, which is focusing on childhood issues and children's films, became the most prominent feature in Iranian cinema, as is the case in the films *The Apple* by Samira Makhmalbaf, *Children of Heaven* by Majid Majidi and the film *The Balloon the White* by Jaafar Panahi and *Turtles Can Fly*, directed by Bahman Ghobadi and many other films. "Iranian cinema has managed to be unique in the film market in an original way that avoids sex and blood and approaches more simple social issues. In many cases, children are the heroes and pioneers of their stories" (Haqqat, 2018). Iranian cinema, through its commitment to certain morals, can be suitable for viewing and follow-up by many groups of individuals and societies Especially families looking for modesty and issues aimed away from vulgarity, nudity, violence and murder. "The Western cinematic eye is fed up with sex, violence and similar topics, and then they find the topics that Iranian cinema addresses are authentic and focus on different values such as solidarity, friendship and sincerity" (Haqqiq, 2018). , and even the problems presented by this cinema stem from a real reality, as is the case in the movie *A Separation*, which won the Oscar. The film presented a realistic model for Iranian families while they live a certain economic reality in which some individuals are forced to travel abroad and there is incompatibility between the husband and wife, Thus, the film deals with minute details in the reality of societies without relying on marketing elements that flirt with desires, as is the case in some Western or Arab cinema productions.

3- The woman took a pivotal role in these films, and was able to present a distinguished model, and was able to refute the saying that cinema needs a woman's body for excitement and seduction. It was exaggerated, but it was not able to present a reliable cinema, and it was not able to possess a clear identity through which it could reach the world. And to continue to participate abroad in an independent cinema, which has special features, but Iranian cinema, despite the fact that women have drawn limitations and censorship, impose many controls, some of which may reach some of them except not to give them a starring role, and not to talk to men in a way that raises suspicion and adherence to movement, but it sometimes comes to the matter To impose restrictions or prevent the use of close-ups of the faces of the actresses, but she was able to prove her existence little by little, with a kind of giving some supervisory facilities by the officials, making women tackle new topics in the presentation, as is the case in the first movie that dealt with a love story after the revolution as a movie (*Flowers*). *Chrysanthemum*) 1984 The story revolves around two lovers, both of whom are blind, and that women are given the starring role in important films, as in the movie *Elie*, *The Salesman*, *A Separation*, and many other films. It almost comes to the point that almost no Iranian film is devoid of a feminist element, and this is what contributed to the active participation of women in Film production, not only at the level of acting, but also in fashion and



makeup, and most importantly in directing. A new generation of female directors emerged and presented important films that reached the world, Karkhshan Bani Etemad, Boran Derakhshand, Tahima Milani, Samira Makhmalbaf, Marzieh Meshkini, and Radhia Promand.

4- At the level of participation, Iranian cinema has sought to be present in many international festivals, east and west, and has won important prizes, such as the 1985 film *Running* and the film *(Water - The Wind-Dust)* in 1989 by Amir Naderi, and the film *Taste of Cherry* by Abbas Kiarostami in 1998, which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, and the 2011 film *Separation* and the 2016 film *The Salesman* by Asghar Farhadi won the Oscars for Best Foreign Film.

There are also four Iranian films in the list of the 100 best foreign films in the world in a survey conducted by BBC Culture. Three of them are directed by Abbas Kiarostami, and they are *(Close Up)*, *(Where is the Home of Al-Siddiq)* and *(Taste of Cherry)*, and the fourth is by Asghar Farhadi (*A Separation*). And not only that, but the Iranian director was able to enjoy a privileged position and be among the international directors, and their films became a focus of attention on a large scale by directors and those interested in cinematic affairs, especially director Abbas Kiarostami, who was able to achieve international fame and win the admiration of great directors such as Kodar and Scorsese. and others.

5-Iranian cinema has directed a lot of its attention to focusing on religious and historical issues related to the ideological aspect, such as films such as *Ibrahim Al-Khalil* by director Mohammad Reza Warzi 2005, and *Malak Suleiman* by director Shahryar Bahrani or the animation film *(Princess of Rome)* by director Hadi Mohammadian 2015. It also produced films that mixed between reality *Kinder* and the incidents that are taking place in the case of sacred defense or any issue related to defending the homeland, such as the films *"Flying in the Night"* by *"Rasul Mulla Quli Poor"* and *"The Tenth Night"* by Jamal Shorja, in addition to its adoption of that religious line linked to the human outlook and the values of martyrdom. Like the film *"The Ambassador"* by Fribiz Saleh and the film *"The Qur'an,"* Iranian cinema has also taken upon itself the trend towards correcting the view that is made against Islam and Muslims through a huge production in the movie *"Muhammad is the Messenger of God."* Which appeared in an important period, when the phenomenon of multiple and deliberate abuse of the Messenger of Mercy, Muhammad (may God's prayers be upon him and his family), spread in the western center, and the accompanying distortion of the image of Muslims in Western countries as a result of the hardening of some groups claiming Islam, in addition to some institutions that finance some groups for the sake of This purpose, in addition to producing a large number of Western and Hollywood films in particular that insult Islam and Muslims and present them as terrorists, backward and bandits. Therefore, director Majid Majidi, the director of the film, emphasized on more than one



occasion that the purpose of producing this film is to change the violent image in which the Islamic religion appears.

6-Its commitment to issues related to faith, such as its position on the issue of Palestine and other issues, such as fighting terrorism and terrorist groups, such as those that appeared in Syria and Iraq, and the accompanying events of killing and displacement, and the role of the Islamic Republic in helping these countries to defend themselves logistically and humanitarily, as a film (in Levant time) directed by Ibrahim Hatem Kia, which was produced In 2018, it talks about a shipment of humanitarian aid that the Islamic Republic sends to Syria through a plane that is attacked by terrorist groups affiliated with ISIS.

With all that Iranian cinema has achieved in terms of global presence due to its adoption of a clear and systematic discourse based on a vision and prior planning linked to the Iranian cultural, intellectual, social and political atmosphere, it needs to keep pace with more to do the change and modernization that affects the world, and Iranian cinema may have already begun to do so through its use of modern technologies Which you introduced to the film's achievement, whether using techniques or dealing with topics related to progress and foreseeing the future.



Results:

- 1- In its confrontation with external hostility, the Iranian government relied on cinema as an effective tool in confronting the cultural, intellectual, social and political invasion.
- 2- Iranian cinema derived its strength and unique style from its cultural and intellectual references, in addition to planning and government support.
- 3- The moral content that suits the intellectual, social and cultural dimensions of Muslim societies is one of the most important features of alternative cinema.
- 4- Alternative cinema is a cultural and social cinema that is linked to the Iranian reality more than it is a propaganda cinema.
- 5- Iranian cinema was able to achieve a stylistically unique cinematic production and to reach the international level despite its local vocabulary.

Sources:

- 1- Al-Hamid, Shaker Abed, the era of the image, the negatives and the positives, Kuwait, the world of knowledge, 2005.
- 2- Eco, Umberto, Semiotics and Language Philosophy, The Arab Organization for Translation, Beirut, 2005.
- 3- Barjakani, Fatima, Iranian cinema, history and challenges, the Civilization Center for the Development of Arab Thought, Beirut, 2009.
- 4- Haqiqat, Mamad, press article, Noon Post, 2018.
- 5- Selassie, Hamid, what is the picture, Signs Magazine, No. 5, 1996.
- 6- Fadhl, Salah, reading the image and reading images, Cairo, Dar Al-Shorouk, 1999.
- 7- Mehrabi, Massoud, History of Iranian Cinema from the Beginning to 1979, Tehran.
- 8- www.mandumah.com.2018