Archival Re-appropriation and Discontents of Self-cine-identification in Iranian Cinema

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Abstract

The indexical interpretation of the archival footages and historical theme of Mohsen Makhmalbaf's Once Upon a Time, Cinema (Iran 1991) has inspired many studies to read the movie as a semi-historical homage to (Iranian) cinema from 1900. However, this article questions the archival footages and cinematic strategies of the movie not as indexes/evidences of/from the past rather as organs of a crisis in remembering and forgetting in relation to the official power and the filmmaker's career. In order to give a character to this crisis, this paper employs the notion of self-image or self-identification of the artist and the official power through cinema and archival images. This cine-memory crisis is traced in three overlapping forms of the artistic memory, the memory of power (both the post-revolution 1979 and the Qajar in 1900), and the memory of the religion (Islam). This article argues that beyond the represented political motifs and historical indexicality in the movie, the archival footages and history of cinema underline and perpetuate struggles in self-imaging/imagining with the medium of cinema in Iran since 1900. This investigation helps us understand how manipulating archival footages is not an artistic narrative or homage to the past but rather a product of hardships of cinematic re-appropriation or a re-personification of 'self' (artistic or institutional) in the present. Furthermore, in a bigger picture, it sheds light on the internal dynamics and paradoxes in Iranian post-revolution movies which are not tangible on the screen.

Keywords: Archival footages; Cinematic strategies; Re-appropriation; Islamic Republic of Iran; Cinematic self-image.

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Introduction

Any cinematic remembering of Iranian cinema history (from 1900) in post-revolution period (1979-present) is cultivated with questions about the relation of the filmmaker to the power in the mechanism of cinematic memory and history in Iran. A repercussion of this overwhelming concentration on the post-revolution artist-state relation has framed the apparatus of cinema as a mere tool which individual and institutional agencies are applying for depicting their ideas/ideals and serving their purposes. Instead of tracing the artist-state interactions, the main question is about the agency of the medium in construction or de-construction of the individual and institutional actors of cultural memory in Iran. How the medium and its archival and historical factors are involved in the operation of the artist's and the power's self-image and cultural memory in general?

In the case of Once Upon A Time, Cinema (1991) by Mohsen Makhmalbaf (b.1957. Tehran), the medium-archive relationship with the artist-power agencies signals particular contextual and historical issues in memory mechanisms through cinema and employment of cinematic images and archival footages in 1991. Why are initial days of cinema in Iran remembered three years after devastating Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and the groundbreaking revolution (1979)? Are there relationships between fantasising the archival footages of the abolished pre-revolution monarchies and Islamic state's censorship? These types of questions graduate the position of remembering the birth of cinema and archival footages in the hectic period of post-revolution and war era. However, it is the ill-matched conjunction and paradoxical context of the Western medium to the socio-political memory of Iran which underlines the presented and absented history in cinema-memory of Once Upon A Time, Cinema.

Unlike Europe, cinema in Iran was not the innate medium of industrial revolution, new discoveries in physics and chemistry, inventors, and scientists. Neither is it the fruit of prosperity and the apparatus of Imperialism for discovering and conquering the world. Nor did it appear initially as the medium of the mass and entertaining in the leisure time of modern man. Rather it is an imported illegitimate child from the West in 1900 which has opened its eyes to the welcome of the fading pro-West Qajar[1] kings and the rejection of the fundamentalist Shi'a clerics and an ancient-traditional society gaze in awe of motion picture. "From its introduction in 1900, the cinema favored nationalism, cultural modernity, and Westernization" (Naficy 2011: 2). Engaging with various socio-political movements in 20th century, cinema in Iran has never been considered merely as means of entertainment, it was rather a tool for propaganda, social engineering, political resistance, and revolutionary machine.

The dubious relationship between the medium and the institutions of power came to fore when the first commercial movie house, Cheraq Gaz Street Cinema, was shut down in 1904 only one month after opening. The king Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar (1853-1906), who imported and loved cinema, was forced by a Shi'a cleric Shaikh Fazlollah Nuri (1843-1909) and his fatwa against cinema to close it. Although a few month later after a private screening for Nuri he removed the fatwa against cinema, the motion picture has remained a topic of socio-political struggles in Iran. The problem of integrating cinematic image in Iran became more complicated when Islamic Republic of Iran was established after the revolution of 1979. On the one hand, making images is prohibited by the principles of Islam, since only depicting non-alive objects are allowed. On the other hand, the Iranian Shi'a clerics have not opposed producing movies rather they have strived to modify the images by censorship in terms of modesty, hijab system, and other Islamic policies of representation on the screen. But more important was the issue of memory and history by cinematic images. On the one hand the post-revolution 1979 theocratic system tends to forget the pre-revolution visual memory of Pahlavi (1925-1979) and Qajar (1796-1925) monarchies or remember them adjusted to its own memory structure. On the other hand, the post-revolution state elevates the limited pre-revolution cine-club/film-collection[2] to the developed and systematic Iran's National Film Archive (1983). Furthermore, while the post-1979 censorship machine has affected every filmmaker and movie in Iran, the heyday of Iranian cinema has taken place in this period.

Once Upon a Time, Cinema (Iran 1991) has inherited this historical context and power plays even though out of the linear structure and authenticity of history. The movie remembers the birth of the apparatus through

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1. Qajar dynasty 1796-1925. In this paper I do refer to Naser al-Din Shah (1831-1896) and Mozaffar al-Din Shah (1853-1906).

2. In the last years of 1950s, the first Iran's Film Club established which later changed its name to Iran's Film Archive and eventually National Haus-Film of Iran in 1974.

re-circulating the archival footages and Iranian cinema history but in a phantasmatic form and ahistorical narrative. This cinematic formation allows to remember the past (even though in the structure of censorship) which the Islamic state tends to ignore or modify in its own favour (institutional memory). The recirculation of archival footages and narrative time of the pre-revolution monarchies, particularly Qajar era, still registers the movie as a historical homage to (Iranian) cinema. But the phantasmatic form has also become a practice of forgetting the historical encounters between cinema and religious forces and disciplines from 1900 onward. This form matches with post-revolution censorship repression system to re-compose the history and memory in manipulated ways without its old discontents with cinema. Instead, the visual-narrative fantasy of the movie suggests an allegorical reference to the post-revolution state through depicting the absurdity of Qajar in conceiving the medium.

The interplay between the censorship and the filmmaker in the remembering-forgetting practice registers the movie as visual outcome of the institutionalised memory of Makhmalbaf. In addition to obeying the structure of Islamic state for deploying the archival footages, script, characters and their appearance and acts before camera, the background of Makhmalbaf is constructed directly within the history of the Islamic state. On the one hand, he used to be a fundamentalist Muslim who was disgusted by cinema and supported the demolish of pre-revolution cinema and freedom of speech in cinema. On the other hand, he became a pro-state filmmaker, then he moderated his position to such an extent that his two previous (before Once Upon a Time, Cinema) movies got banned.

With this intertwined context of reclaiming the archival footages and historical characters Once Upon a Time, Cinema appears to be a sort of re-appropriation with institutional and individual purposes: a) the state amplifies its propaganda against the monarchy system to neutralise its own model, b) the filmmaker exploits the pre-revolution images and history of cinema in Iran to shadow or neutralise his ill-reputation. In any case, this systematic bond of re-appropriation and remembering/forgetting signals a certain need for articulating a new cine-image of self in both *institutional* (the official/legal memory of the power)[3] as well as the *institutionalized* memory[4] of the individual (the filmmaker). Furthermore, it indicates the relation between the emergence and integration of the medium in the memory of the power and the filmmaker as the medium of crisis in their memory. This crisis is not fully understandable merely by the content or theme of the movie on screen and through the historiography as conception of the past in the present. Rather we need to consider reading history by focusing on fantasising, manipulation, and absence of the historical elements as the means of re-appropriation. Therefore, this article explores the re-circulation or re-writing of archival footages and history in Once Upon a Time, Cinema as operations and exercises which diagnose the issue of remembering/forgetting in cultural-cinema-memory in Iran. The encapsulated forces and counterforces in this cine-memory will be described in three directions: a) the relation between the archival footages, artistic strategies and self-reflexivity of the filmmaker, b) the archival footages in the context of national identity and cultural memory, and c) the faculty of archive and cinema in the Islamic construction and visual disciplines and law.

It will be a background for anther paper to study the memory of the Iranian audience and international reception of the movie in connection to the cinematic cultural memory.

1   Cinema and interlaced self-image of the filmmaker and the power

The cinematic form of Once Upon a Time, Cinema generates a re-appropriation of archival footage/past and restaged images which signals specific articulation of self-image by and of both Makhmalbaf and the Islamic state. Two pre-conditions underline the aesthetic of this individual-institutional re-appropriation and the interlaced self-images of the filmmaker and the power. First, the selected archival footages, the restaged images, and the

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3.   By *institutional* memory I point to the consciousness of the official power agency regarding the Islamic-revolutionary values, image in general, and cinematic representation in particular in the past/present/and future. I define the institutional memory by the legislations, law, orders of censorship, and the visual disciples of Islam. The institutional memory in this paper concentrates more on Islamic Republic of Iran (since 1979) and Shi'a clerics (since 1904). It will be declared whenever the term embraces the memory of Qajar and Pahlavi monarchies with regard to cinema and West.

4.   By *institutionalized* memory I refer to the artistic memory of the filmmaker (Makhmalbaf) in relation to the institutional memory and the medium.

narrative shape a diegetic world which is already filtered by Islamic states' censorship machine. Second, both filmmaker and the state have an ill-reputation in relation to cinema. However, it does not necessarily mean that Once Upon a Time, Cinema is a pro-state movie. Instead, this situation can be considered as a controlled narrative which the control and the interplay with it can signal crisis in self-cine-identification of filmmaker and institutional memories in 1991. To avoid applying the notion of control as a force imposed by on side and implemented or resist by the other side, I explain it as a consequence, not a drive, of the crisis in self-cine-identification.

The disciplines which constitute the behaviour of control in Once Upon A Time; Cinema are designed based on various contradictions. On the one hand, tends to demolish the memory of the pre-revolution cinema and image of monarchies, unless in negative sense. On the other, the state has established National Film Archive of Iran (1984). On the one hand, producing image in Islam is forbidden unless depicting still life objects. On the one hand, the state not only is functioning the cine-archive but also produces movies, supports film festivals, opens cinema schools, and subsidises production and screening of movies. In any case, archival re-circulation/remembering or producing new images access to the archival footage, narrating the historical events and characters, and modes of depiction should be authorised by the regulations of the Islamic state which ratified by parliament in 1982.

Among various articles this "Islamic Cinema,"[5] two sets of orders concerning the 'Islamic representation' and 'legal memory' are directly implemented in construction and content of Once Upon a Time, Cinema First, the restrictive articles which forbid physical touch between men and women, unveiled appearance, passionate dialogues, erotic acts and narrative. The second set underlines the history/memory: depicting or mentioning the Islamic and political characters is forbidden unless it is respectful and is fully authorized by the official system. Depiction of holly Islamic characters, such as the prophet Mohammad, remains forbidden. Furthermore, remembering the pre-revolution cinema and any monarchies is allowed only in negative sense or if it is adjusted to the policies/ideals of the anti-Monarchy state. The same goes with representation of certain countries such as the US, Israel, Soviet Union, and UK due to the anti-Imperialism motto of the revolutionary state.

The relation of Once Upon a Time, Cinema to the protocols of power is controversial. The movie depicts the monarchy, recalls the pre-revolution movies, and has been widely considered as "a homage" and "love letter" to Iran's cinema history. The regulations are executed in all aspects of re-appropriation and remembering the history. The oscillation between the archival footage and new images and the dubious behaviour of the power signals another disparity out of the screen. The anachronic and phantasmagorical style of the movie covers the absence of the most powerful counter-force of cinema in Iran: Islam and Shi'a clerics. This absence is vital in understanding the cinematic materiality of Once Upon a Time, Cinema because the history of Iranian cinema, the archive, the construction of the movie, the images, the memory, and career of the Makhmalbaf is constructed on and within the presence of Islam/Shi'a.

Subsequently, Makhmalbaf's self-identification in relation to Islamic state through re-appropriation of archive is intertwined with the pre-revolution history of motion picture in Iran from Qajar monarchy in 1900. Because not only the contextual cine-Islamic principles but also the on-screen archival and narrative elements are interwoven with the history of emergence and integration of cinema in Iran (1900) during Qajar monarchy.

This splits the reception of the most "controversial movie of the Tenth International Fajr Film Festival, Tehran (1991)" (Farasati 1992) mainly in two groups: Some loved the movie as a homage or love letter to cinema (particularly the pre-revolution cinema history) or a narcissistic narrative which pretends a love for cinema. Critics such as Behzad Eshgi trace the contradictions between the filmmaker and power through the story of the protagonist and Kings. On the contrary, others such as Mohammad Shakibi points out that "for Makhmalbaf the pre-revolution cinema is merely a forage warehouse which alienates and drives anyone insane" who is dealing with that.[6] (Shakibi 1992) Both groups interpreted the movie through measuring the factual history. However, not the testimonial and temporality aspects of the archival as evidences of/from the past but a net-

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5. The post-revolution title used by the state to distinguish itself from Filmfarsi and cinema of the West.

6. In the re-staged scene of the Gav (the Cow 1969, by Dariush Mehrjui) the main character, Naser al-Din Shah is possessed by the spirit of a cow and is eating film strips.

work between the filmmaker, the medium, and the power in the present is registered. This historicizing of the non-depicted (absent) which is made present by manipulating the archival footages, be it the depicted past, is firstly established by direct implementation of the filmmaker's identity in the materiality of the movie. The movie begins with the archival footages of old Tehran in early decades of 20th century. Soon afterwards, we see that the archival footages are over-written with names and career titles of Makhmalbaf and other crew in old-fashion titling and typography in early Iranian cinema (figure 1). Furthermore, the originally silent footages are sounded with a song of a pre-revolution pop singer.

Figure 1

During the entire movie Makhmalbaf interlaces himself with the archival footages and cinema history directly and indirectly articulating a cinematic mirror self-image in accordance to the power. In addition to the credits, Makhmalbaf re-stages and intertwines some of characters and footages from his previous movies. So far, the archival footages have become a physical/materialistic womb for pollination of the filmmaker and his movies as components of the history. However, it is his allegorical self-representation and embodiment as Akasbashi, the protagonist of the movie, which outlines the contradictions between his innocent self-image on the screen and his ill-reputation in the history of post-revolution cinema. Let us introduce an example of the way which the manipulated archival footages become the dynamic form of cultural/historical elements in the level of the artist's memory. Historically, Ebrahim Khan Akasbashi (1874–1915, literally means *photographer*) was the official court photographer of Mozaffar al-Din Shah-e Qajar (1853-1906). The Shah, during an eight-month trip along with the royal court to Europe in 1900, commanded Akasbashi to buy a Gaumont camera as a joyful souvenir from the West back to Iran. In Once Upon a Time, Cinema the archival footages of this trip are intertwined with the re-acted Akasbashi and a re-staged scene and actress (Atieh, acted by Parvaneh Masoumi) from Downpour (Ragbar, 1972. by Bahram Beizai). Makhmalbaf's Akasbashi is justifying his inevitable departure from Atieh due to the order of the Shah while she is visible in a mirror reflecting her sitting on an off-frame bench in park (figures 2-3).

Figure 2. The restaged scene in 1991

Akasbashi leaves Atieh and then in the next scene we see the archival footage of the first existence of Iranians in the motion pictures which happened to be not in Iran but at Ostend, Belgium in 1900. The archival footage shows the Shah watching a parade in Ostend, visiting foreign authorities, and then the Shah gazes directly into the camera. After this nostalgic archival silent 'cinema of attraction' and after the fictional return scene to Iran, in the next sequence Makhmalbaf's Akasbashi gets sentenced to death by another Shah (Naser al-Din Shah 1831-1896). Akasbashi is under the guillotine due to his unwilling presence at the Haramsara[7] half century

7.   Kings' house of wives.

Figure 3. The original scene in Downpour 1979

before the invention of cinematography which happens due to the mistake of the court's magician. Through another visual superimposition Amir Kabir (1807-1852) appears and convinces the Shah to give another chance to Akasbashi. They temporarily release Akasbashi to present his moral scripts however, his manuscripts/scripts get brutally destroyed by the guillotine. So far, this cross-historical netting (from 1900 to 1972 and then 1850s) can disappoint a classic historian. However, the visual pun of Akasbashi's neck and the torn scripts under the guillotine of the Shah, with Makhmalbaf's two banned movies[8] in 1990 by the Islamic state, satisfy many critics.

Figure 4. Akasbashi, acted by Mahdi Hashemi.
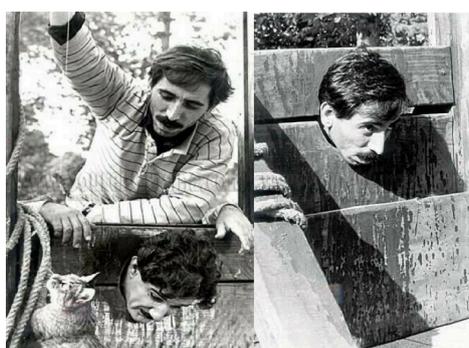
Figures 5-6. Mohsen Makhmalbaf directing Mahdi Hashemi as Akasbashi.

The archival footages and historical elements are applied to define the filmmaker's self-identity and his relation to the power. The insistance on depicting the personal relation to the power through allegory of Akasbashi/Makhmalbaf and Kings/Islamic-state continues through the entire movie. The archive, even though detached from its historical order, is employed as an evidence for the present situation of the filmmaker in 1991 but legitimised by the sense of history and the past. For instance, in various scenes Makhmalbaf explicitly intertwines his own movies and fictional characters screening them for Naser al-Din Shah and the royal court. However, the more Makhmalbaf deploys historical elements to visualise his relation to the power, the

8.   *Time of Love* (*Nobat-e Asheghi*, 1990) and *Nights of Zayandeh Rud* (Shabha-ye Zayandeh Rud, 1990)

more it becomes apparent that the crisis of his self-image is related to the medium rather than the State. The restrictions over filmmaking in Iran can easily overshadow the fact that it is the medium which shapes not only the memory of the filmmaker but also generates the discontents of State with identifying or dealing with cinema and force the system to design, enact, and implement law and censorship. This agency of the medium is clearly traceable throughout the career of the filmmaker.

Raised in a religious worker class at southern Tehran, Makhmalbaf (1957) started chanting against the monarchy of Pahlavi (1919-1980) a few years before the revolution 1979. Unlike his alcoholic father, he became a "pious" cleric advocate of Ayatollah Rohollah Khomeini (1902-1989), the father-figure of the revolution. At age of 17 Makhmalbaf the "dedicated Muslim" (Sadr 2006: 202) was imprisoned due to revolting against the monarchy of Pahlavi. Subsequently, he and other revolutionaries condemned and considered the mainstream cinema, Filmfarsi,[9] as the Shah's means of manipulating the mass and ruining Islam through the erotic and 'immodest' stories and scenes. Between 1979-1981 Makhmalbaf witnessed brutal attacks and setting several cinema theatres in fire,[10] demolishing the Filmfarsi and Western movies, imprisonment and exile of many pre-revolution producers, filmmakers, and actor/actresses.[11] During this violent and chaotic establishment of the new state and regulations (1979-1981),[12] Makhmalbaf was a novel and drama writer propagating Islamic notions and condemning the pre-revolution monarchy and cinema. However, soon he realized that the cinema is the best tool for propagation and "influencing the mass audience", thus he became an amateur Islamic filmmaker. During Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) Makhmalbaf made several religious propaganda movies such as Nasuh's Repentance (Towbeh-ye Nasuh, 1982), Two Feeble Eyes (Do Cheshm-e Bisu, 1984), and Boycott (Baikot, 1985). Alike many other critics, the pre-revolutionary exile filmmaker Bassir Nassibi points out that Makhmalbaf's collaboration with Islamic state. However, the character of Makhmalbaf rapidly altered from an Islamic hardliner to a more moderate and "relativist."[13] This period started with "films [that] are critique of capitalism and its effects on our society" such as The Peddler (Dastforush, 1986), and The Cyclist (Bicycle-ran. 1987), and *Marriage of the Blessed* (Arusi-ye Khuban, 1988) (quoted in Dabashi 2001: 186). Particularly in the last movie, Makhmalbaf vividly represent the devastating trauma of war and disappointments of hollow revolutionary and propaganda slogans of the system. The diegetic disappointment of the war veteran, Haji (Mahmud Bigham), is echoing Makhmabaf's self-narrative as a former pro-state who is morphing to a critic of the system. However, neither Haji nor Makhmalabaf question the war or the revolution in itself. Rather they oppose the opportunists who benefit from socio-political hectic period of 1980s. Next movies of Time of Love (Nobat-e Asheghi, 1990) and Nights of Zayandeh Rud (Shabha-ye Zayandeh Rud, 1990) were banned a year before making Once Upon a Time, Cinema in 1991 due to their deviation from the regulations of the censorship with regard to earthly/carnal love and the questioning the ideals of the revolution and the war. It seems that the more Makhmalbaf get familiar with the apparatus, the faster his character changes drastically.

In respect to power relations, while Makhmalbaf was oscillating between various ideologies, scripts and technics, the state was struggling with defining and stabilizing its own Islamic view with regard to the medium. The censorship was systematically restricting the modes of representation and narratives to prevent producing 'non-Islamic" and "anti-revolutionary" images. Furthermore, screening and nostalgic representation of the movies/characters of the pre-revolution cinema (1900-1979) and monarchy characters became forbidden unless for denouncing them. Moreover, the state soon realized capabilities of the apparatus and tried to direct it through the structure and its organizations. Consequently, the Fajr International Film Festival has started since 1982, the first official censorship law was enacted by the Islamic parliament in 1983, many Iranian movies

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9. The "Filmfarsi movies are popular feature films made in Iran between 1948 and 1979. They are a mixture of melodrama and popular tales in which the clash of good and evil is chiefly based on class contrast (between rich and poor), a contrast of values between chivalry and lack thereof), and social contrast (between city and village)" (Mohammad Kashi 1999/1378:140). Quote from Naficy, A Social History of Iranian Cinema: Volume

10. Only in one case in 19 August of 1978, the Rex Cinema in the southern city of Abadan was set into fire by unknown forces during the screening time of Gavaznha (1974, by Masud Kimiai). A total of 337 spectators were burned to death.

11. By migration of many Filmfarsi filmmakers the pre-revolution established system of star-making, script-writing, distribution, financial models, etc. transformed in hands of new people who had no professional experience.

12. The official articles of the censorship ratified by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in February 1982

13. From Makhmalbaf's interview with Huoshang Golmakani in the documentary movie of The Dream Dumb (aka Gong-e Khabdideh. 1995)

won international prizes, and the National Film Archive of Iran was established in 1984.[14] Once Upon a Time, Cinema was produced out of this terrain with full commitment to the regulations of the censorship which was the result of Islamic reaction to the medium in the first place. What that seems as a reflection of the morphed filmmaker or a 'love letter' to cinema is the skin for engagements of the apparatus with the structure of power. Not only the cinematography, editing, archive, narrative, actors' appearance and actions, space, and time, are composed based on the institutional regulations, but also screening in festivals and market encompass are the space of the power. When the movie was screened at Fajr Festival in Tehran it won four prises out of seven nominations in various fields and was a box-office hit in public screening while his last two movies were banned. Therefore, Makhmalbaf's memory becomes cinematic object which visualises something beyond Makhmalbaf: the agency of the medium in encompassing "communicative memory" in terms of the daily concern of Iranian about the omnipresence of Islamic state. Although, this concern is not depicted/objectivised in the movie but exists as the action of absent/forgetting.

Assmann and Czaplicka (1995: 123-125/ pp. 125-133.) argue that "communicative memory includes those varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications" of the individuals such as oral history. The communication memory is structured by the power in terms of (oral) language and "is characterized by a high degree of non-specialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganization." Through objectivizing "the formlessness, wilfulness, and disorganization" communicative memory by a medium (cinema, rites, text, architecture, and etc.) communicative memory "transited" and transformed to the cultural memory. It is only now that the all "three poles – memory (the contemporized past), culture, and the group (society)" emerge as the cultural memory.

Accordingly, if we assume that the cinematic materiality is the apparatus of cultural memory, then archival footage used in Once Upon a Time, Cinema are objectivised forms of the power-relations in the everyday communication in the past. However, since the archival footage is re-generated and re-composed in a new movie, they are a new condition for the present rather than for the past. Subsequently, it is the means of transformation and transmission which become central to the relation to collective memory or history. Therefore, if camera and editing table are used to reflect the self-image of the filmmaker, the mere action of re-appropriation through applying archive becomes central in conception of both communicative and cultural memory. In other words, while the archival footage and cinematic attractions/tactics build a sphere which moving from any direction on the surface finally ends to filmmaker-power point, a complex medium-memory network rules the dynamic of the invisible inside. The same system of self-cine-image as a "love letter" to cinema continued in two other movies of The Actor (1993) and Hello Cinema (1995). Shahla Mirbakhtyar (2006: 154) points out:

> "Although in all three films there are beautiful scenes, none was able to capture the development of the cinema nor the filmmaker's relationship with the medium. They mostly come across as a collection of interesting scenes from Iranian films, though of course they are vehicles for the critical views of the filmmaker himself."

To sum up, looking at cinematic materiality from the standpoint of political impact on the filmmaker's mode of depiction, leads us to limit the archival footages in Once Upon A Time, Cinema in context of "conflict between the filmmaker and the politician" (Eshghi 1998: 435), "a personal love letter" to cinema, "narcissism of the filmmaker" (Farasati: 1991), or "Makhmalbaf's repentance" (Esfandiary 2012). If we reversely trace back the archival or new images to their everyday communication elements to understand the medium in Iranian context, then the struggles of filmmakers for focalizing his image remains unrelated to the archival footage. As Assmann and Czaplicka declare, the objectivization generates fixed points which "are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)." (1995: 129). Likewise, the fixed points of Makhmalbaf-cinema from 1979 to 1991 are different from the ones in the archival footage not only due to their different contents, but also due to different application of the medium. The contact, as well as the content, and application of the cultural memory or collective knowledge varies from culture to culture as from epoch to epoch. The manner of its organization, its media, and its institutions, are also highly variable. (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995: 132-133/ pp. 125-133.). Therefore, the cinematic materiality (in One Upon A Time, Cinema) signals only the

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14. In the last years of 1950s, the first Iran's Film Club established which later changed its name to Iran's Film Archive and eventually National Haus-Film of Iran in 1974.

non-attachability of the filmmaker's self-image to the dynamism of archival footage. There is a similar crisis in self-identification of the post-revolution Islamic system and the Qajar era in relation to the imported apparatus from the West.

2   Camera and national identity

In Once Upon a Time, Cinema the tactics of cinematography and montage constitute the conception of the archival footages as a socio-political organism in 1991. I mentioned before that the anachronistic and phantasmagorical style of the movie has caused the oscillation of the history and archival footage between their original terrain and the new setting in time of remembering (1991). What can this oscillation reveal about the cinematic materiality and agency of power? Certainly, concentration on the movement/oscillation challenges the agency of the represented as the source of interpretation and meaning. Although, the on-screen images generate the discussion, here I focus on the import of the camera in relation to the unpleasant national self-hood from mid 19th to early 20th centuries. Looking at the emergence of cinema in Iran from the standpoint Once Upon a Time, Cinema in 1991, we inevitably go through the post-revolution media-struggles. However, the post-revolution archive, the archival footage, and Once Upon a Time, Cinema are still entangled with the genesis of the camera in Iran.

As I mentioned before, Mozaffar al-Din Shah-e Qajar (1853-1906) during his costly trip in Europe ordered Akasbashi to purchase a Gaumont camera and bring it back to Iran in 1900. Qajar's never applied photographic images for national purposes due to reasons such as lack of infrastructure, expensive material, resistance of traditional clerics, etc. However, their purchase reveals various crisis in the monarchy and a national humiliation with regard to the imperial powers. While the traditional dramatic and fine arts, architecture, and photography of Qajar dynasty is sumptuous, their political reputation is a collection of malfunctions in governing the country and encounters with the West. Over the course of the 19th century Qajar lost modern-day countries of Georgia, Dagestan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia due to the modern military equipment's of Russian. Qajar kings settled several unjust economical deals with the Western bloc to provide extravagant journeys to the West. Although Iran was never colonised, the country was constantly harassed from north and south by Imperialist powers. Furthermore, the Great Famine (1870-1871) and general economic problems exhausted the system and people. The kings of Great Persia had admitted the necessity of change and modernization. Therefore, the modern inventions such as telegraph, modern print machines, and camera were imported however mainly for military reasons or entertaining the royal court inhabitants while the traditional economic and cultural systems and penury still running in the entire country. Cinema was imported during this period.

In Once Upon a Time, Cinema the import of cinema appears through juxtaposition of the archival footage of Mozaffar al-Din Shan trip in Europe and the fictitious scenes. As mentioned in the previous section, the archival footages represent Mosaffar al-Din Shah at Ostend, Belgium in 1900. The archival footage of Shah in the modern, wealthy, and advanced West in 1900 are attached to fictional return of Akasbashi, Shah, and chamberlains to Iran. Akasbashi starts shooting the almost ruined royal palace, the bankrupted Shah, the poverty and diseases which govern the country. The court magician purifies the camera through an Iranian superstitious ritual and Shah recalls enthusiastically a memoir about visiting Lumier' brothers and watching their "motion pictures" in Paris. Later Shah orders the magician to dispatch Akasbashi to his successor in the future for further establishment of cinema in Iran. However, the magician wrongly transmits Akasbashi back to the time of Naser al-Din Shah (1831-1896) as he appears in the Harem[15] recoding the Shah's wives image, which leads to his imprisonment and execution.

The archival footage finds their underlined meaning and historical context only when we see them juxtaposed to the fictitious scenes. However, the socio-political context comes to the foreground not because of the interpretation of the filmmaker rather due to the disparities between a) the archival footages of 1900, the new staged images (Once Upon a Time, Cinema), and new re-staged archival footages (Downpour), and b) the banality of the presence of the Western medium in a vanishing monarchy and different context/country. The clash between cinematic materiality of the archival footages and Once Upon a Time, Cinema reveals how the

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15.   Haram-Sara (in Farsi) refers to domestic spaces that are reserved for the women of the house in a Muslim family.

apparatus encapsulates the conditions of images regardless of the explanatory contents. Jaimie Baron in his book The Archive Effect (2014) points that: "what makes footage read as"archival" is, first of all, the effect within a given film generated by the juxtaposition of shots perceived as produced at different moments in time."

This contradiction in Once Upon a Time, Cinema is doubled by attaching the acted sound of Akasbashi on the original silent archival footages of Shah's trip or by re-writing the archival footages of Tehran with the title of the movie and names of the Once Upon a Time, Cinema crew. Both the juxtaposition between or attached on the image generate notions of 'then' and 'now' (time), 'here' and 'there' (space), 'this' and 'that' (materiality), and 'I' and 'other' (self-image/identity). Therefore, even though the content of the images is perceivable coherently, the cinematic materiality echoes contradictory placement of the apparatus within the people/culture who apply it. The imported new apparatus to the traditional and old Iran inevitably and constantly refers to its own industrialized and Imperialist mother of the West, representative of power. The aesthetic of cinematic image in 1900 and 1991, therefore, is to some extent the result of Western/apparatus/power. And the cinematic self-identification of the Eastern/traditional is the shaped object in this process. Hamid Dabashi in his book Makhmalbaf at Large (2008) draws a connection between the "sur/real" aesthetic of the Once Upon A Time, Cinema and colonialism in this way:

> "The cinematic manipulation of colonial modernity in Once Upon A Time, Cinema gives Makhmalbaf an unprecedented opportunity to mock reality – through a creative manipulation of time, space, shape, and color. This is one effective way to alter the metaphysical assumption of the evident. The result of this visual poetic is that reality is made to look strange, unfamiliar, always subject to re-negotiation – again through the Persian passion play mimetic version of the Brechtian Verfremdung. (2008: 143)"

For Dabashi the ahistorical transmigration of the Makhmalbaf's Akasbashi, in the guillotine scene, to the 19th century, is a sort of de-colonialization through de-formation of realistic colonial subjectivity:

> What Makhmalbaf's Once Upon A Time, Cinema does in that simple move of creatively reversing the course of history is to have the paralyzing false dichotomy of 'Tradition and Modernity' eat each other out, and dismantle the authority of each other once and for all. This is a critical move if we are not to fall into the trap of essentializing 'Traditions' as we launch a movement against colonialism. (Dabashi 2008: 137).

Dabashi considers "Akasbashi, as depicted by Makhmalbaf, has become an extension of his camera, a visionary witness to the tumultuous history of Iranian modernity" (Dabashi 2008: 136). The aesthetic could hide the act of colonialism and appear as a form of resistance. In any case, the archival footage (and any original image which later become archival) carry the characteristics of the medium and collective memory in the original time or the period which they are remembered and re-cast. This materialistic dynamism in cinematic images might remain silent forever unless we accelerate them through a different time, context, or cinematic materiality. Qajar never applied cinema to hone an ideal national image in relation with the West. However, the import and applying the camera was enough to record their fragile identity in 1900 and to be remembered and instrumentalised 90 year later by Islamic Republic of Iran in consolidation of an ideal Islamic-national identity. What which is absent in Once Upon a Time, Cinema in 1991 the cinematic conception of imperialism by the Islamic state and leaders which is as old as cinema in Iran.

The resistance of Shi'a clerics against cinema as the agency of the West had started from the early years of cinema. The first act of encountering cinema in Iran occurred in 1904 (reacting to a Western movie) by a leading cleric's, Shaikh Fazolollah Nuri, order which resulted in Mozaffar al-Din Shah closing the first commercial movie house, Cheragh Gaz Street Cinema, within a month (Naficy, V1, P.27). Nuri's initial opposing against cinema was empowered by other religious figures such as Mojtaba Navvab Safavi (in 1950)[16] who, similar to Ayatollah Khomeiny, indicated the materiality of cinematic image and association of Other. In the 1950s Mojataba Navvab Safavi (1924-1956) a fundamentalist clergy leader of the anti-Shah group Fadaiyan-e Eslam

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16. He played a great role in assassinations of Abdolhossein Hazhir, Haj Ali Razmara, Hossein Ala' and Ahmad Kasravi. He was arrested in 1955 and executed in 1956 by the Pahlavi government.

(Islam's Devotees) harshly criticised cinema. Navvab Safavi tried to find a way to control "corruptive" potential of cinema:

> "Movie houses, theatres, novels, and popular songs must be completely removed and their middlemen punished according to the holy Islamic law. And if the use of motion picture industry is deemed necessary for society, [then] the history of Islam and Iran and useful material such as medical, agricultural, and industrial lessons should be produced under the supervision of chaste professors and Islamic scholars observing the principles and criteria of the holy religion of Islam and then shown for education, reform, and socially wholesome entertainment." (Jame'eh va Hokumat-e Eslami 1978: 11)

For the Shi'a clerics the mechanical aspect of apparatus is the extension of the West's agency which affects the Islamic vision of Muslims. On the other hand, they hoped to demolish the West-oxicity of the apparatus and gaze by executing Islamic orders of appearance of the actors/actresses, the script, and the ownership of the cinema industry.

This religious-nationalist structure invisibly drives the re-appropriation through the archival footage in Once Upon a Time, Cinema. The clerics are aware of the impact of cinema as a Western source of new and secular images/imaginations/narratives and cinema theatres as a new space which challenges the traditional/religious locations such as mosque and shrines. However, instead of banning cinema like some other Muslim countries, they questioned gaze and its association with 'imperialist West.'[17] In order to Islamise the gaze based on Iranian nationality, the image and memory should be modified. However, this process inevitably intersections the above mentioned institutional and individual memory in cases such as Once Upon a Time, Cinema.

Therefore, both manipulations of the history and archive in Once Upon A Time, Cinema by the censorship and the filmmaker are able to show us the deconstructive-constructive function of re-appropriating archival footage with regard to the memory of power and filmmaker. However, this imported machine never enable us to see a concrete image since it would be an antagonistic paradox to the "detaching", manipulative, and transformative essence of the cinema and memory.

3   Conclusion

This paper tried to assess the dynamism of manipulated archival footages and history as form of re-appropriation mechanism in self-image process of the filmmaker and the power. The intertwined history and fantasy in addition to the importance of absent/forgotten as much as represented/remembered in Once Upon A Time, Cinema are remarks on the perpetuatual struggles for articulating a concrete self-image. The phantasmatic style and deployment of the archival images and history of Iranian cinema can easily cover the historical voids which are caused by obedience of the regulations. However, the cinematic tactics

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17. The icon of this theory is Ayatollah Rohollah Khomeini (1902-1989) the father-figure of the revolution. While in the hectic revolutionary days cinema theatres were under violent attacks by unknown groups, an Air France plane landed at Mehrabad International Airport, Iran on 1 February 1979. The plane flew from France to Tehran transferring Ayatollah Khomeini the religious leader of the revolution 1979. After fourteen years of exile, caused by the Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1979), Ayatollah Khomeini left the airport to preach for millions of people at the cemetery of Behest-e Zahra, Tehran. In that day, he stated:

> We are not against cinema; we are opposed to lascivious/prostitution [in the movies]. The cinema is a modern invention that ought to be used for the sake of educating the people, but as you know, it was used instead to corrupt our youth. It's the misuse of cinema that we are opposed to, a misuse caused by the treacherous policies of our [in the pre-revolution monarchy] leaders. (Khomeini R 1981: 258)

Ayatollah Khomeini goes further and mentions a pre-revolution movie as an "educative" movie [tool] which:

> I think the Iranian movies which are made by Iranian [filmmakers] are better. For instance, the movie of Gav (the Cow 1969, by Dariush Mehrjui) was a very educative movie. But the westernized intellectuals like the imported salacious American and European movies. Most of the imported movies are imperialistic/colonialist. Thus, we shall ban the foreign imperialistic movies unless it is one-hundred percent accurate" (Sahifeh-ye Imam. Vol. 12. 255).

After the speech of Ayatollah Khomeini, gradually the screening or producing movies of/similar to the Filmfarsi and the Western movies were prohibited. The closed cinema theaters were opened while they were allowed to screen exclusively the "good Iranian movies" made by the authorized "Iranian Filmmakers" such as Makhmalbaf.

and archival footage are able to signal the neglected/censored historical facts if we watch the movie from standpoint of juxtapositions, over-writings, and other technical manipulation. Once Upon a Time, Cinema systematically neglects the role of Islam in Iranian cinema; however, the negligence fills up the internal historical contradictions with regard to cinema in Iran. It reminds us again that the archival footages are about the absent and the forgotten as much as the represented and remembered. It is clear now that following the orders of censorship necessarily does not mean crippling the meaning and pleasure of watching a movie. More significantly, re-appropriation through the archival footages and history is always entangled not only with the memories of individuals and the powers but also it is the condition which the apparatus accelerates and shapes to make sense of itself embodied in Makhmalbaf and the power. In this way the phantasmatic self-reflexivity of Makhmalbaf or the construction of power are the indications of agency of the apparatus in history of thinking with motion picture in Iran.

Although this paper indicates the importance of remembering the emergence of cinema a few years after Iran-Iraq war, it answered the questions of the conditions of this remembering in relation to the filmmaker and the power. The relations between the public audience and remembering the pre-revolution images and memory in 1991 and now can be studied in another paper. Then we might have to revise the arguments about historicity of fantasy in social scale. It may also open a window to cinematic archival footages and the past not only as post-trauma healing materials but also as apparatuses which build the memory and self-image of a society.

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