

CULTURAL COMMUNICATION THROUGH AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA

(Study of the films *Children of Heaven*, *Color of Paradise*, and *Baran* by Majid Majidi)

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Abstract. Audio-visual or film is one of the strategic means of intercultural communication. Films are often used as a medium of propaganda for partisan and partial political interests, leading to misunderstandings of a culture. The destruction of a nation's cultural meanings and values always involves audio-visual media to create psychological effects in building opinion and mobilizing the masses. Iran and its culture are the victims of world misunderstanding. However, the films directed by Iranian filmmakers have opened a 'cultural dialogue' with dignity and in an artistic manner. This study aimed to examine Iranian cultural communication patterns through cinema and identify Iranian cultural symbols that influence cultural communication. This research used Symbol and Value Theory. Symbols and values influence political and cultural campaigns. This research employed the Gestalt method that involved descriptive coding of sentences and images and recording of contents. Through Gestalt, we can interpret the meaning and behavior displayed by humans in certain situations. The films 'Children of Heaven', 'Color of Paradise,' and 'Baran' directed by Majid Majidi, communicate essential aspects of Iranian culture, showing the spirit of resilience of Iranian society today, which is rarely included in the news due to global politics. The representation of Iranian culture is presented in very natural and simple ways without using visual effects. The reproduction of Iranian culture in the three films above uses a measured, intense, and substantive approach and shooting angle. The spirit of Sufism was reflected in the production process and the Iranian cinematic contents.

Keywords : *Cultural Communication, Audio-visual Media, Iranian Films*

INTRODUCTION

The film is a medium for creating social and cultural changes in society. This audio-visual media provides a clear and broad picture of many aspects of culture from anywhere in the world. Films can also present the reality, ideas, thoughts of the characters, and cultural signs in stories compressed into various durations and screens.

The principle of cultural communication, one of which is to reduce uncertainty from cultural differences. Verbal and non-verbal communication then becomes a

bridge to narrow the ambiguity by describing, interpreting, and predicting actors' behavior in other cultures to create meaningful interactions. In intercultural communication, we try to maximize interaction results. The consequences discussed by Sunnafrank (1989) hint at important implications for intercultural communication. For example, people will interact with other people whom they think will give positive results. Because intercultural communication is difficult, we may avoid it. Moreover, when we get positive results, we



continue to engage and improve communication quality, whereas if we get negative results, we start to withdraw and reduce communication.

As the heir to the old Persian civilization, Iran has been considered a closed country due to the "Western" world's mass media representation. Films and mainstream media productions distributed throughout the world always shut down any information on Iran's cultural communication. After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran was more symbolized as an Islamic state that threatened superpowers in controlling the world's economic resources. This reality is exacerbated by the Sunni-Shia conflict institutionalized in the history of Islamic politics and reproduced by the media, including films that have circulated even to Sunni-Muslim-majority countries, such as Indonesia.

There are many negative images produced by the mainstream media towards Iran, even though Iran is an Islamic country. So that with the image and the difference between Sunni and Shi'a, it creates mental conflict and ideology against Iran, especially Sunni Islam. There are many similarities and positives from Islamic countries that are not utilized in Islamic-based countries, like Indonesia, in developing the country.

The film is a medium of cultural manifestation of a country. Various propaganda and promotion can be done through film. From cultural, educational, political, security, and economic life, it can be seen how a country produces its

films. Iran itself has produced films that are worldwide but has its paradigm in the development of the film.

Previous studies of Iranian films have not been done much. One of the few was done by Wildan Hanif (2017) in his journal article entitled *Semiotic Analysis of Iranian Films* by Majid Majidi; *Children of Heaven*, *Color of Paradise*, and *Baran*. The article's explanation discusses the meaning of images from a semiotic perspective only and finds many visual language meanings in several sequences taken from the three films. There is no detailed explanation of the cultural communication produced by each of the shooting models. Other research has been conducted by Sigit Nurwicaksono (2009) in his thesis entitled *Construction of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the Film Persepolis*. The research focuses on academic exploration only from a film by an Iranian feminist, Marjana Satrapi, who critically challenged the meaning of revolution through a popular film among European and American film enthusiasts and observers but was banned in Iran. However, the study of films related to spirituality and ethos in films is minimal; this is where the significance lies.

The three Iranian films that got top achievements at several international film festivals show another side of Iran's daily culture that is very far from what the mass media or "western" films represent. Complex cultural communication problems can be solved through cinematic communication. The film

world has finally become a space for intensive and systematic cultural dialogue to understand world cultures. Based on the background of the problem above, the researcher focuses on studying Iranian-Persian cultural communication that is reproduced through audio-visual media (film) and examines Iranian-Persian culture's symbols and codes reconstructed in audio-visual media (film).

Research Theory

Messages in audio-visual media provide deep meaning to viewers because the meaning can be seen immediately and accompanied by spoken words to give a deep impression to listeners and viewers. The guide in this article uses Symbol and Value theory. According to Newman and Perloff, symbols are political material and attraction based on symbols and values, arguably the most influential of all campaign messages (Kaid, 2015,37). This film's symbolic approach is the director's creations produced through spoken words and accompanied by images representing Persian religious culture and wrapped in Persian culture that is thick with a high cultural ethos by displaying children's dreams of reaching their future.

Research Method

The method used in examining this film is Gestalt coding. According to Graber (2001), Gestalt is a middle way between descriptive coding of sentences and images and recording extensive

public broadcasts (Kaid, 2015: 76). Gestalt coding records the entire audio-visual display and its meaning rather than separately analyzing the visual and verbal details. This coding is oriented to the meaning conveyed to the average audience member by broadcasts, rather than detecting any content of information in an audio-visual message (Kaid, 2015: 76-77). Detecting gestalt for coding relies on verbal leads or images that identify a particular person, location, or situation. This method is considered suitable to reveal the meaning of the film understudy.

Sources of research data come from three Iranian films, namely *Children of Heaven*, *Color of Paradise*, and *Baran*, the most superior cinematic works of the famous Iranian director, Majid Majidi. The three films' picture frames are directly dissected by looking at the author's story structure. Several other films by the same director will also be major comparators looking for new possibilities in communication.

Secondary data sources for research rely on books, scientific papers in journals, online pages (websites) that have reviewed these films, and those related to cinematic communication studies. 1) Literature study, where researchers will collect a number of written documents, both in the form of books, films, and other scientific notes that support academic exploration in the context of cultural communication in the cinema. 2) Field studies will be used as carefully and efficiently as possible in interviews with several film observers and workers.

Selection of figures will be carried out by selection based on criteria to answer the problems that exist in the research.

The messages in film pictures full of cultural codes and social symbolism are then dissected with a Gestalt approach. The breakdown of film metaphors about Iranian culture will significantly determine the process of extracting the meaning conveyed. The results of the analysis will be presented comprehensively to conclude. Furthermore, this data analysis activity includes five stages: first, establish a research focus; second, compile preliminary findings based on existing data; third, make plans for the next collection; fourth, develop analytical questions for further research; and fifth, determination of data collection targets.

Research result

Majid Majidi was born on April 17, 1959, in Tehran, Iran, into a middle-class family. At the age of 14, he began acting in an amateur theater troupe. After graduating from high school, he studied art at the Institute of Dramatic Arts in Tehran. After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, he became interested in cinema, which led him to act in various films, especially Mohsen Makhmalbaf's *Boycott* (1986). Then he began writing and directing short films. His feature film and the directorial debut were marked by *Baduk* (1992), which was screened in Quinzaine of Cannes and won an award at the International Fajr (Dawn) Film Festival

Since then, he has self-written and directed many acclaimed films that have won awards worldwide. His most notable work is *Children of Heaven* (1997), winner of the Best Picture award at the Montreal International Film Festival and nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards in 1998. Then he directed the film *The Color of Paradise* (1999), which also won the Best Film award from the Montreal International Film Festival that set new box-office records for Asian films. *Baran* (2001) won several major awards worldwide, especially the Best Film award at the 25th Montreal World Film Festival, and received a nomination for the European Film Academy Award.

In 2001, during the anti-Taliban war in Afghanistan, he produced *Barefoot to Herat* (2003), an emotional documentary about Afghan refugee camps that won the Fipresci Award at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival. He has also received the Douglas Sirk Prize in 2001 and the Amici Vittorio de Sica Award in 2003. In 2005 he directed *The Willow Tree*, a film about a blind man who falls in love with someone other than his wife when he recovers and can see again. The film won four awards at the 2005 International Fajr (Dawn) Film Festival in Tehran. He is one of the most influential directors in Iran, and his films have a simple and poetic impression in them (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0006498/bio> accessed on September 23, 2019).

In 2008 his film entitled *The Song of Sparrows* was awarded as the opening film at the *Visakhapatnam International Film Festival* in India. Apart from international recognition from film workers, Majid Majidi also received recognition from the government at home and abroad. One of them was from the Chinese government who invited him to produce a short documentary film to introduce Beijing for the Summer Olympics of 2008. At the Danish Film Festival, Majidi protested by withdrawing his film from the festival in protest at the cartoon insulting the Prophet Muhammad by a Danish citizen (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/majid_majidi, accessed on September 23, 2019).

1. Children of Heaven

After struggling for a long time, almost 20 years, in producing short films and documentaries, Majid Majidi's second feature film entitled *Children of Heaven* or in Persian called *Bacheha-ye Aseman* received the most prestigious award in the world as the nominee for the best foreign-language film in America. The recognition of the world's film people seems to send a message to the American government that the beauty of the language and symbolism of a film is greater and nobler than the pressure of foreign policy on Iran since Khomeini's Islamic revolution.

This film tells the story of children among the poor in Iran. Ali, the son of a tea maker at major Islamic events, lost a shoe belonging to Zahra, his younger sister who had just been taken from a shoemaker.

When he stopped for a moment to buy fruit, vegetables, and some kebabs for food at home, he left the bag filled with shoes outside. A flea picker mistakenly threw it on his cart and left. Ali is desperate. He came home to find his mother arguing with the rental house owner because he was three months in arrears.

The emphasis on the high angle shot (Figure 1) explains the interaction space of the middle to lower class people who seem "dwarfed" mixed with flour sacks and kebab-burner kitchen as a staple culinary marker of society. The dominance of the white color of the object's clothes accentuates the simplicity, even though it is not a deep sanctity so that the rhythm of everyday life without burden can be felt. The image form used is a full shot that incorporates all important elements and objects into the camera frame. The director aims to show the typical Iranian bakery process, from kneading dough and make it into some big doughs that are then pulled lengthwise on a kind of pillow and baked in a hot stove under the floor. Ali became more focused as a buyer because of his clothes' color and his movements in wrapping the kebabs.



Figure 1

After Ali told her about the loss, Zahra burst into tears and asked how she could go to school without shoes. Ali returned to the shop and roamed the streets looking for shoes. When she returned home again, she found her father angry with her for not helping her mother. His father told him he was no longer a child; at nine years old, he already has to help his parents, not just to play. Their mother is pregnant, and the father does not like the cesarean section plan. Meanwhile, his two children pretend to be studying even though they exchange messages through writing in books about what to do tomorrow. Ali begged Zahra not to tell his father because he certainly did not have money to buy new shoes.



Figure 2

Interior is essential in a film. Cinematographically, a scene's setting is not merely decoration without meaning, but it has an emotional connection to the story and the characters in it. Ali's house (Picture 2) emphasizes culture in Iranian homes where tapestries are wall decorations and even floor coverings. The room's composition in the form of dense, full shot images, dull furnishings, old-

fashioned television, and a typical Persian teapot, plus a mattress propped against the wall, is a sign of the cramped neighborhood of rented housing. It becomes a depiction of a slow country or maybe refuses to respond to modern developments that are happening out there.

The choice of dark colors is not conspicuous and acts as a layer of meaning for happiness, even though it is a little gloomy. As the main cultural value of every social community, Solidarity is represented in a close-up of a pair of hands when Ali shares his pencil because Zahra's pencil broke. Ali intends that communication and negotiation on paper and writing about the lost shoe case can go on to completion and at the same time calm Zahra's heart, which is plagued by gloom.

Ali has an idea: since they both go to school at different times, Zahra can wear her sneakers in the morning, and then Ali can wear the same shoes to school in the afternoon. Every time she came home from school, the girl ran fast. However, Ali was always late for her class. And so on. This fact made Zahra's study concentration tense because she had to finish all assignments and exams before returning home. Three shot shooting patterns are usually used as comparisons between characters in a scene. The costume model of high school students is left to indicate that there is no legal burden on them unless they are adults as the clothes of teachers who are already obliged to pay more attention to the side of Islamic law. Even though they are equally dark, the teacher-student

composition in a group shot with different colors of costumes shows high respect for the teacher's dedication.

Zahra follows the girl in the shoes after school between the narrow alleys of the shabby city. Unfortunately, she was late returning home, and his brother Ali was late again for school. The principal wanted to send him home, but the teacher happened to be nearby and vouched for the child. Ali raises his hand with the index finger up as a symbol of apology to the teacher or parent. After school, then Zahra took Ali to the house where her pink shoes were. They saw the child's father was blind and could not bear to ask for the shoes.

Over the weekend, Ali's father had an idea to find a new job: a gardener. He took Ali while riding a bicycle to an elite residential complex. Traveling long distances on a bicycle together is a tough one. The father is a tough man who dares to challenge a big city with all the complications commensurate with big cities' intricate overpass. The composition of the extreme-long shot, coupled with the sound of a gasping breath, will make it easier to convey the message not to give up until the goals are achieved. The message of cultural diplomacy is very obvious and seems to have high hopes for openness to incoming foreign products. This happened during the billboards' high angle shot along the road that Ali and his father passed.

One day at school, Ali heard the announcement of a running race with the third prize for a pair of

sneakers. Since Ali runs every day to get to school on time, he must be very prepared and in great shape to race. This was a golden opportunity, and Ali convinced his sports teacher that he would become champion even though he was initially rejected because the selection deadline was over. Sure enough, he won the race. However, he did not want to win first place. He just wanted to get third place. He almost cried when he was given the gold medal and first winner trophy. His sneakers had been completely crushed, and his feet were bleeding. He informed his sister that he had not succeeded in getting new shoes. However, the father, elsewhere, is already buying a new pair of shoes for each child.

The shooting angle of top angle and a long shot is like a "bird's eye view" at the end of the film after Ali sits down and is left alone by Zahra by the edge of a round pool, quite representing a disappointment. There was a hope that did not come true (to get shoes) because Ali was very kind and smart and the fastest in running competitions. Two contrasting realities are wrapped and linked in the pool water and Ali's clothes' blue color. He wanted to say that silence was religious. The scene of dipping his feet in the water conveyed that his bruised feet had led him to become class champion and race champion. Even though the main hope of getting new shoes was not achieved, all was not in vain. The fish then give meaning to an unambitious struggle with a happy resplendent color.

2. Color of Paradise

The conceptual depiction of a typical Iranian cultural communication is also contained in the second film in this discussion, *Color of Paradise*. This film is about a blind child named Muhammad, a student at a school for children with disabilities. He learned to read Braille. School is over, and the kids are dressed up and packing up. Their parents came to pick them up—everyone except Muhammad's father. The teacher tried to convince Muhammad, who felt abandoned. While he waited, Muhammad played in the garden. He found a young bird that had fallen from its nest. Muhammad climbed the tree and returned the bird to the nest. His fingers were always touching something like he was reading a Braille message on everything. The father had arrived and watched the boy in silence. Then he walked into the school and begged the teacher to look after the child because he did not have time to care for him, and his mother had died. The teacher explains that the school is now closed and that no one can help him solve his personal problems.



Figure 3

On the way home, father took Muhammad to a tapestry shop because he wanted to sell something. The medium shot in the composition of three shots and Muhammad's blue costume made him the center of the story in a colorful Persian culture that he could not witness even though he was delighted, cheerful, and full of warmth. He seemed to enjoy the atmosphere as if he could "see." The father took the boy back home on a long trip through the countryside. They live in a village surrounded by green hills. The boy was happy to be back home. Even though she could not see, she started running towards the house and was very happy to hug her grandmother. The little sisters were also happy to see him, and they took him to the farm, where their grandmother worked. The green village nature and full of greenness in the arrangement of the extra-long shot image that places the object right in the middle of the image composition is a simple form to explain the universe of natural thoughts in the film story. The characters are on a straight path to reach that thought.

An agricultural village's landscape is different from a fishing village that is always hit by sea breezes and heat. The panorama by taking a horizontal line between the fields and the forest at the mountain's foot is strong color contrast. The extreme-long shot creates the spatial dimension as if it confirms the union of two loves: grandmother and grandchild. A universal culture that cannot be rejected anywhere in the world. Muhammad enjoyed his vacation. He listens to woodpeckers,

his fingertips always touch objects, and of course, he played in the fields with his sister.

When his sisters went to school, he cried because she wanted to go with them, and his grandmother begged the teacher to take him. The teacher greeted him humbly and was surprised to learn that Muhammad could read better than other children. They all looked over Muhammad's shoulder while his fingers scanned the Braille text. The culture of religiosity is again displayed by Majid Majidi in a rhythmic scene when Muhammad wants to pray among the flowers' cheerful colors boiled for dye cloth. The high angle image composition shows a sense of solemnity and humility in the self and the human spirit before Him who is Most High. The balanced layout of the players fills the depth of the camera frame to complement the solemnity of humans in the mortal world (Figure 4).



Figure 4

Despite Muhammad's success, the father became furious when he found out that Muhammad was taken to school. He decided to take her away from grandma. So, the son has to follow the father to the beach, where the father is employed

with other men. They camped in a nearby forest. The child plays with the sand and talks to the seagulls. At night, the father saw Muhammad going in the wrong direction and did not stop him. He let it be, so he got hurt. Again, he heard a loud voice. It is like nature's warning to him. Then someone brought the child back.

His wonderful life with his grandmother ended when his father took him on another long journey, this time to a blind carpenter who would train him in the profession. The boy was finally able to confess his mood to someone who understood him. Muhammad knew that society avoided him, and his only comfort was that he could feel God in everything with his fingertips.

Upon returning to his mother's house, the father saw the look of hostility from his mother. In vain, he explained that he was a lonely man and that it was the tragedy of his life. He delivered a marriage proposal to the prospective in-law's house. The cultural depiction of drinking hot tea on a plate when served at his future wife's house shows the similarity of traditions in several Asian countries. Likewise, the tablecloth's colors on the wall show a sign of happiness, although it is a little gloomy. The composition of the windows and curtains behind the object gives the impression of an incomplete proposal process, which hinders marriage.

Then he found his old mother walking out of the house in the rain and leaving the farm village. The man chases her and convinces her to

come back. Mother returned home but would not talk anymore, just prayed in bed. When the father offered to bring the child back, the mother told him that she was not worried about Muhammad but worried for the father. Then his mother died. This was considered a bad omen, and after the funeral, the engagement was canceled, and the marriage failed.

The man must continue living alone. He went to get Muhammad, and the boy was not happy to see him. There was another loud voice. The two of them travel back to the village on horses, in a landscape shrouded in mist. While crossing the bridge, it collapsed, and the horse and Muhammad fell into the water. The father's anxiety seems primarily to the horse, but he realizes that the child is being carried by the currents. The man jumps on the rapids and slides down, chasing his son in vain. The man wakes up on the beach. Her son's body is nearby. The father cried as he hugged his son's dead body. It can be seen that the fingertips are still moving as if the child is reading something in the air.

In this film, Majid Majidi also uses water at the end of the story, like in the film *Children of Heaven*. However, this time, it is not water that soothes and gives peace, but which swallows the loneliness of a child who does not get attention from his father in the world so that he always hopes to meet God. The mystical tradition of Islam or Sufism is very sharply exposed in this film so that the opening of this film finds the truth: "You are in two dimensions; seeing and not seeing. "

Water became the symbolism of mortality. Water is the beginning and end of life.

3. Baran

In this discussion, the third film entitled *Baran* tells the story of illegal workers from Afghanistan on a construction project in the corner of Tehran city. A young man is waiting in line to buy kebabs. Latif, a public kitchen worker for the construction project, is buying kebabs. After getting the kebabs, he entered the grocery store to buy cigarettes, sugar, tea powder, and some kitchen necessities. He handed an ID card to delay payment, and it will be paid at the beginning of each month by his employer. The shop owner is angry because it has been a while since the debt has been paid off, while the daily picking of goods never stops.

Extreme close-ups during the kebab-burning process at the beginning of the film are always Majid Majidi's opening menu to emphasize what is important in every activity of the urban poor and, of course, the most distinctive cultural mark of Central and West Asia.

An incident occurred in the middle of a multi-story building project activity. Najaf, an illegal laborer from Afghanistan, fell from the floor above while working and broke his leg. The employer or foreman was surprised and rushed to rescue him by directing some other workers to carry him to the car and take him to the nearest hospital. He is worried that Iranian security will arrest and deport Najaf to Afghanistan. The level of refugees

due to the war in Afghanistan has peaked, and they have chosen Iran to find work and occupy the slum settlements on the outskirts of Tehran. Most of them work as manual laborers in building or transporting river stones.

The next day, Sultan, a neighbor of Najaf who is also working on a construction project, brought someone named Rahmat, perhaps Najaf's son, as the Sultan confessed to the foreman, to replace Najaf to work there. The foreman received a two-day probation period. Latif looked at all of this with a cynical, disturbed look. He likes to save money left over from groceries or those found on the street and keeps a piggy bank in a stone wall. The daily money is held by the foreman and will be given later when he has accumulated a lot. It may also be why Latif is irritable and temperamental when dealing with anyone he does not like.

Conflict becomes part of the culture of the poor due to differences of opinion or violence between immigrants. The fire placement in the frame of a full shot camera in the middle of a fight in the building complex reinforces the rioters' mood. It will be different if the fire is positioned in the context of two lovebirds who are in love. The dark atmosphere was mixed with mortar ash, the sun shining through the walls, and the workers' commotion breaking up the fight. The image of masculinity is perfect.

After working for two days on the project, Rahmat made many mistakes that hurt the other workers. He dropped cement from the floor

above and hit a worker below. Then several times unable to carry sandbags. The foreman is disappointed and wants to fire Rahmat. He then is offered to work in the soup kitchen in place of Latif. If that does not work either, the foreman will fire him. Of course, this fact made Latif furious and angry. He must return to work hard like other workers: stir the cement, smooth the stones, and bring the cement to the top floor.

Latif's anger at losing his job is expressed by destroying all the furniture and cooking utensils. He was envious because the drinks and food that Rahmat cooked were tastier than what he had made before. The workers praised and felt that it was only now that they truly enjoyed properly prepared food. Latif then finds out who Rahmat is by sneaking into the kitchen all the time. At one moment, when he was about to pick up bags of cement that had been piled up in front of the soup kitchen, he was suddenly stunned to see that from behind the curtain, someone was combing her hair while singing a song. Latif was curious and approached. He looked from behind the glass of a woman with a comb in her hand.

The process of composing a silhouette image is the strongest symbolism to cover a woman's body in a film. Iranian films never show an innocent woman's body without a headscarf or headscarf. Creative directors will look for artistic possibilities to express that visually. It becomes the most beautiful composition in this film. From outside the window framed with

white cement made by Rahmat, the balance between brown cloth, flowers, and a lamp is placed as a marker. visual language is enough to be a sign of tenderness, compassion, and purity as light in achieving the film's dramatic story. (Figure 5) in some cases, cultural communication is most effective using a silhouetted point of view to explain things that are not visible. For example, depictions of saints and figures of political crime victims would be threatened if their faces were shown.



Figure 5

Latif immediately fell in love with Rahmat and changed all the negative views about migrant workers he hated for taking over the local residents' workplaces. The silent inner communication between them just happened when Latif became more concerned about Rahmat. He did not hesitate to beat workers who cursed Rahmat for buying cigarettes wrongly, and he became very excited about his clothes. The foreman once scolded him for dressing up to meet Rahmat but was caught and forced to work in new and elegant clothes.

During lunch time together, Latif gave a gentle glance to Rahmat, who distributed the kebabs. The staple food of Iran is like a "bridge"

to touch their hands. It is another symbolism to convey the embers of Latif's love in the wrapping of his red dress. Latif's prominent face in the medium shot camera that cuts Rahmat's face wants to reaffirm this film's masculinity.

One day Rahmat came home from shopping in the city. He came across Iranian security forces who had just searched the entire building for any Afghan migrant workers. During the last questioning, the foreman managed to save them by driving them to hide anywhere not to be caught. Rahmat could not answer when asked in Farsi and ran, throwing the food package on his shoulder. Iranian police officers are chasing Rahmat. Latif looks from upstairs and helps Rahmat by chasing and knocking the policemen down. Latif is arrested as a substitute for Rahmat, who has already been released. Then the foreman ransomed him and picked him up at the police station while scolding him.

This incident made Rahmat stop working on the building construction project. Sultan informed the foreman about it. Latif is like losing weight. His heart became frozen, and he likes to be alone in the former kitchen location and finds hairpins where Rahmat used to give kebab crumbs to the pigeons. In line with the depiction of a faint winter without sun, trees covered in snow, and withered leaves, Latif went missing, moving away from the camera. He tried to find out where Rahmat lived.

On the way to find Rahmat's house, Latif meets an old shoe tailor. He held out his shoes to be repaired

while looking for information on where Sultan and Najaf's house was. The conversation between them was calm and profound about the relationship between humans and God, between humans and each other. The position of a close-up shooting pattern that shows the entire face of an older man bowed clearly, and an elegant dress shows the side of social Sufism in Iranian culture. (Figure 6). Even the older man's answers to Latif's questions were sometimes as poetic as quoting the poems of Konya's greatest Persian poet, Jalaluddin Rumi.



Figure 6

Latif's search for the illegal immigrants in Afghanistan finally arrived at his destination with great exhaustion. He joins an immigrant community feast while looking for Rahmat. The bitterness of life for illegal immigrants is reflected in the simple and shabby housing complexes, especially when winter comes. In another corner, far behind Latif's back, the figure of Rahmat is seen stirring hot milk in a large cauldron with a distinctive green scarf. He was surprised to see Latif and hurried away from the feast.

The point of view of the camera that seemed to represent

Rahmat's eyes when Latif was drinking milk with a group of people in the immigrant community opened his mind to situations of inter-cultural, cross-cultural communication without hostility. The atmosphere of the environment with various colors of the typical burqa clothes and the somewhat modern Latif costumes tried to clear up all the misunderstandings and cultural jealousies that had been going on so far. The problem of asylum seekers or illegal employment in all countries becomes insignificant when cultural encounters occur naturally and humanely in the name of love.

When Latif returns there the next day, he gets information that Rahmat works on the river behind the river funeral complex. He peeked over the bridge wall where many women were working, pulling stones in the river. Moreover, he saw Rahmat pulling a stone and falling in the water. His friends helped him sit by the fire and stopped for a moment. He returned to the city, and on the way, he saw Sultan leaving in a pickup. Latif got off the bus and chased the car. Sultan said that he works odd jobs in other places that can accommodate illegal migrant workers. He said Najaf had recovered and planned to return to Afghanistan but was constrained by funding.

Latif charged all his savings to the foreman. Unfortunately, the foreman ran out of money because several sides of the building were not properly built. The supervising civil engineer said that they had to be demolished and rebuilt without any

additional funds. The foreman was angry, and Latif was crying because his sister was sick in the village and he had to come back tomorrow. The foreman keeps his promise by giving enough money so that Latif can leave it to the Sultan to give to Najaf, and tomorrow morning he invites Sultan to meet Najaf at his house. Apparently, the Sultan used the money to return to Afghanistan early, and Najaf was not angry. He entrusted a small letter from the Sultan to Latif, which stated that he vowed to return Latif's money. To no avail, Latif threw the letter into the ditch. He unpacked the savings inside the stone wall to buy wooden supports that would be gifted to Najaf.

The next day Najaf came to the construction project to borrow money from the foreman. However, he refused when he was given the little money left over from the foreman's pants pocket. Latif overheard their conversation and thought of helping. Latif goes to the black market to sell his ID card. ID cards are, of course, very much needed by illegal immigrants by simply changing photos. The money from the sale was given directly to Najaf, but he said that the money came from the foreman who could not come because he was busy with the project. Najaf promised to return it after he returned from Afghanistan. Latif refused it because it was the daily salary for Najaf that was not given by the foreman.

After finding out that Najaf was leaving in the morning, Latif was restless, and he ran quite a distance. He will lose Rahmat, the

woman he loves who later finds out his name is Baran. Arriving at a burial complex, he sat on the edge of a pond inhabited by several red fish. He took off his hat and put it on the side of the pool with blue water. The long duration of the close-up shot of Latif's hat shows a Baran hair clip tucked there. The powerful and close emotional connection represented by two objects with blue water covers Latif's inability to reveal his heart to Baran. There is no "open culture" in the relationship between men and women in traditional Islamic societies. Visual communication requires many symbols that are linear to the story.

Similar symbolism is also raised as the film's storyline's culmination in strengthening Latif and Baran's emotional connection. Just as Najaf and the rental car driver were getting ready to leave Iran that last morning, maybe even Latif did not return to the construction project that evening to look forward to parting with Baran. When Baran left the house, she was carrying a basket of fruit and vegetables. Because the basket is too heavy, it fell, and all contents are scattered onto the ground. Latif ran to help to pick up the fruit and vegetables with Baran. The camera's position with a top angle shot from above by only shooting two hands grabbing each other's fruit and vegetables become a kind of walkway between two souls. Also affirming Islamic art that should not touch men and women who are not *mahrams*

CONCLUSION

Films as an actual and most vital means of audio-visual communication carry out inter-cultural communication to understand and remove cultural tensions in world cultural interactions. Semiotically, cultural symbolism in films can break down clearly and expand meaning in communication.

Three films by famous Iranian director Majid Majidi, namely *Children of Heaven*, *Color of Paradise*, and *Baran*, are the latest audio-visual works of art from the land of the Mullahs. These films effectively communicated all crucial things in Iranian culture to see and explore the spirit of resilience of Iranian society today, which is rarely contained in the news due to global politics that isolate Iran and its role for the world's progress. The representation of Iranian culture in the three films is very natural and simple without visual effects to create hyper-reality in everyday stories. The reproduction of Iranian culture in the three films above uses a measured, intense, and subtle shooting approach to the end of the story. The spirit of Sufism and altruism is powerful in the production process and the Iranian cinematic content. Audio-visual is an act of cultural communication that comprehensively shows symbolic interaction in messages, symbols, and values store a lot of cultural meanings as a nation.

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