THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

School of International Service
International Communication Program
Director, Hamid Mowlana

August 5, 1990

George -

Enclosed is our TV study. See pages 31-32 for the points I discussed with you in Dublin. Any suggestion where we can publish this work?

See you in Bled.

Sincerely

Hamed

4400 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016-8071
Telephone: (202) 885-1628 Fax: (202) 885-2494

JAPANESE PROGRAMS ON IRANIAN TELEVISION:
A Study in International Flow of Information

By

Hamid Mowlana

and

Mehdi Mohsenian Rad

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Hamid Mowlana is professor of international relations and director of the International Communication Program at the School of International Service, The American University, Washington, D.C. Mehdi Mohsenian Rad is a communication researcher affiliated with the Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology and the Imam-Sadegh University, Teheran, Iran.

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PART I

INTERNATIONAL FLOW OF JAPANESE TELEVISION PROGRAMS

Introduction

The flow of television programs internationally and across national boundaries has been the subject of a number of studies over the last two decades. The growth in communication technologies hardware has been accompanied by an expansion in production and distribution of software programming as well as by an acceleration of research in these areas. Many studies have attempted to show that the flow of television programming is dependent on varying cultural, economic, and political relations among nations. Most studies of television flow in the past, however, have been in the area of flows of programs to the United States, Western Europe, and other developed countries, with less attention paid to the flow of programs from and between other regions of the world.[1] This research examines the growth of Japanese television programming to other countries with special

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[1]For example, see Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis. "Television Traffic: A One-Way Street? A Survey and Analysis of the International Flow of Television Programmes Material." Reports and Papers on Mass Communication, 70. Paris: UNESCO, 1974. Tapio Varis. "International Flow of Television Programmes," Reports and Papers on Mass Communication, 100, Paris: UNESCO, 1985.

attention to the Japanese television programs on Iranian television.

For decades, Japan has been in the forefront of the exportation of electronic media equipment in the international market. At the level of communication infrastructure, Japan has been instrumental in various countries throughout the world in the construction and maintenance of television facilities and equipment.[2] An interesting recent phenomenon has been the intent on the part of Japan to export programs such as drama to neighboring countries. These efforts have mirrored a desire on the part of a number of countries in Asia and the Middle East to consider Japan as a possible source of such programs.

The recent growth in worldwide interest in Japanese traditional and modern cultural television programming has been attributed to the increase in Japan's economic and political influence. This relationship, according to Ito,[3] in part explains the remarkable success European and Western countries have had in exporting their media and cultural products over the last two centuries. Calling industrial strength a "spear" and

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[2]Saburo Okita, "International Cooperation Through Visual Communication," Hoso-Bunka Foundation Newsletter, No. 28, June 1989, 3.

[3]Youichi Ito, "Global Communication and Cultural Identity: An East Asian Perspective." Hellmut Schutte, ed. Strategic Issues in Information Technology: International Implications for Decision Makers. Maidenhead, Berkshire, England: Pergamon Infotech, 1988, 151.

cultural identity a "shield"[4] in the area of cultural industry, Ito dismisses the validity of the "cultural imperialism" theory between countries with different cultural backgrounds. He does acknowledge, however, that for countries with more similar cultural backgrounds such as the U.S. and Canada, or Japan and South Korea, the theory still has applicability. The flow of science and technology in terms of hardware, Ito contends, is not culturally filtered but flows from more to less industrialized regions whereas the flow of media products in terms of software or programming is more likely to be related to strength of cultural identity. In the case of Japan, Ito points out that the heavy importation of foreign media products in the 1960s could be attributed as much to the weak sense of cultural identity among the Japanese people (an aftermath of World War II) as to the weak competitiveness of the Japanese mass media products themselves. By the 1980s, however, Japan's sense of cultural identity had been fully restored, and Japan's expansion as an economic power, Ito concludes, is reflected in its export/import ratio of television programs: 2:1 globally; with Europe, 3:1, and with the United States, approximately 7:9. Foreign television program presentation in Japan currently is second lowest in the world after the U.S.[5]

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[4]Ibid, 150.

[5]Ibid., 138.

Japan's Interlocking Economic and Cultural Policies

The linkage of cultural identity with industrial and technological success in Japan is rooted historically in Confucian work ethics of traditional craftsmanship and views on group harmony and consensus. Indeed, in the 1960s an intellectual discourse was initiated to relate Japanese culture to the advanced economic growth and modernization that was then underway.[6]

For example, in pursuit of this goal, Japan has singled out the promotion of international cultural exchange as a primary pillar of its foreign policy, and in this regard, Japan's renewed focus on television broadcasting and programming, in the face of rapidly increasing international competition, should not be surprising. In 1980 Japan exported 4,585 hours of television programs to 58 countries, a doubling of the 1971 volume with imports remaining virtually stable over the period. Topping the list of users was the U.S. (1,357 hours) followed by Italy (767 hours), Hong Kong (391 hours), South Korea (284 hours), and Taiwan (185).[7] In the past, Japanese television programming has been most viewed in East Asia; however, television export data as

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[6]Ibid., 143.

[7]M. Sugiyama. Television Programme Imports and Exports. Tokyo: NHK Public Opinion Research Institute, 1982, 7-35, as quoted in Youchi Ito. "Global Communication," 145.

recent as 1982 indicate shifts toward other regions of the world, with export/import ratios (in broadcast hours) between Japan and South America, 4:1; between Japan and Eastern Europe, 1:1, and between Japan and Africa, 12:3.[8] The Japanese experience appears to indicate that, without any government intervention protecting national cultural identity, as television production and distribution ability develops, domestic programs gradually edge out imported foreign programming. The first to disappear are the more culturally bound foreign programs. Surviving are programs based on violence, horror, and sex indicating that these themes are perhaps international and cross-cultural in nature.[9] In terms of viewer ratings, drama, comedy, information elaboration, and education are the top television programs both imported and exported by the Japanese.

Support of Japan's governmental mission to bolster cultural exchange through broadcasting also is being carried out by private organizations and foundations. Such programs include international cooperative grants that assist with domestic production for external broadcast and with distribution of television programs and material for use in other countries. For example, over 300 productions on 100 themes have been aided by Hoso-Bunka Foundation grants alone resulting in over 65 countries receiving educational or cultural program material made in

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[8]Ibid., 145.

[9]Youichi Ito. "Global Communication," 147.

Japan.[10] In a similar manner, though the establishment of a special fund for audiovisual assistance in Asia in the official assistance towards development budget, the Japan Foundation has carried out a program purchasing from producers and distributors various dramas, serials, and documentaries that have proved popular on Japanese television. The Japan Foundation clears all copyright and redubbing costs and distributes the programs to Asian broadcasters thereby reducing the expense and language barriers to distribution in Asia of popular Japanese dramas and programs.[11]

The coordination between Japanese government and international foundation efforts to promote Japanese television products also extends to the Japanese mass media industry sector itself. Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK), Japan's sole public service broadcaster (radio and television), is reshaping its internal and external policies to keep abreast of rising international interest in Japanese television programming and increasing competitiveness from commercial broadcasting. Having had a broadcasting monopoly in Japan from 1925 to 1950, NHK has the advantage of experienced personnel, quality and quantity of programs, and technical innovations. A staff of 15,000, spread all over the world, makes NHK one of the largest broadcasting

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[10]Saburo Okita. "International Cooperation," 3.

[11]Ibid., 12.

organizations in existence today.[12] Its non-profit public service organization, NHK International, Inc., in 1987 sent 4,000 items of educational material to 128 organizations in 48 countries.[13] In addition to its expansion into the development of direct broadcast satellites (DBS) and high definition television (HDTV), NHK also has the highest number of viewers of any television network in Japan, broadcasting more that 13,000 hours of television a year, or 250 hours a week.[14]

The economic dimension of the Japanese inroad into the software market, especially in light of current media consolidation on a global level cannot be ignored. Seeking a fair share in the global entertainment market, early in 1990 a consortium of Japanese corporations was being formed to invest "in everything from Hollywood movie production to sports programming."[15] This consortium called Media International Corp, with its $700 million in funding, primarily is the creation of a Japanese Broadcasting Corp. subsidiary known as NHK Enterprises, "Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank, the world's largest commercial bank; Sumitomo Bank, another top financial institution; and Seibu

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[12]Shinichi Shimizu. "Public Service Broadcasting in Japan: NHK Prepares for the Twenty-First Century," Media Asia, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1989, 198.

[13]"Production and Distribution Aspects and Problems in Japan," HBF Newsletter, No. 28, June 1989, 12.

[14]Shinichi Shimizu. "Public Service Broadcasting in Japan," 198.

[15]Alan Citron, "Japanese Concerns Form Media Venture," The International Herald Tribune, June 30 - July 1, 1990.

Saison, a conglomerate that operates airlines, department stores, supermarkets, and hotels."[16]

Japan's Television Programs: The "Oshin" Phenomenon

NHK's 1983 production "Oshin," a daily 15-minute morning drama serial of 297 episodes, has been one of the most popular, highest-rated (65 percent) television programs in Japan as well as an immensely successful Japanese export. The series named after its heroine dramatizes the social and cultural settings of Japanese society in the early part of this century. Distributed by NHK Enterprises, a subsidiary company of NHK responsible for overseas programs, the "Oshin" serial was broadcast in its entirety in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, Belgium, Mexico, and Brazil. Between 48 and 114 episodes were aired in Macau, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Poland, Brunei, Vancouver and Toronto in Canada, and Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco in the United States. One hundred and sixty-eight episodes were broadcast in Iran.[17]

The unprecedented popularity of "Oshin," nicknamed "O Syndrome" or "Oshindrome" in Japan, is attributed to its substantial educational and informative value combining quality and entertainment with international appeal and excellent

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[16]Ibid.

[17]NHK Broadcasting Center, "Oshin" Episodes Data Sheet. Tokyo: NHK Enterprises.

production techniques. The well-designed development and pace of the story in serial form maintained a high degree of viewer interest.[18] The problem for NHK has been the lack of a follow-up drama series capable of commanding comparable audience appeal. The show was produced and written by two women, Uhkiko Okamoto and Sugako Hashida, and appears to offer something for every viewer. The word "Oshin" derives from "shinbo," the Japanese word for perseverance, and has become a new word in the Japanese language synonymous with perseverance in the face of hardship.[19] The story line, in brief, encompasses Oshin's life in a setting approximately 100 years ago, from age seven to 83, in which she encounters and overcomes virtually every possible form of adversity in raising herself from serfdom to prosperity.

Broadcast in Japan six days a week for over 49 weeks, Oshin, played by three actresses who are now national idols, became part of daily family life for most viewers. Oshin dolls, sake, and rice crackers, as well as tours sponsored by the Japan Travel Bureau to Oshin country in Yamagata prefecture where Oshin's early years were filmed, are testaments to the serial's embeddedness in Japanese culture.[20] "Oshin" is a "konjo mono," a guts story of endurance and success, a genre adored by Japanese

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[18]"Production and Distribution Aspects and Problems in Japan," HBF Newsletter, No. 28, June 1989, 12.

[19]"Japan's 'O Syndrome': The Television Story of One Woman's Life Stirs a Nation," Time, 13 February 1984, 44.

[20]Ibid., 44.

audiences, especially by older citizens, whose own prewar experiences in hardship and humiliation enhance their appreciation of the drama. These same viewers believed in "Oshin's" educational value in teaching Japanese youth about earlier life in Japan.[21] Producer Okamoto contends that it is this educational aspect more so than the melodrama that clinched "Oshin's" success. The preservation of moral integrity and the struggle for new values among old traditions in a rapidly transforming society[22] is what has endeared the character of Oshin to the Japanese and to millions of viewers around the world.

What are the various regional explanations given by subscribers for "Oshin's" universal popularity? Vincent Canby of the New York Times attributes "Oshin's" success in the United States in part to Japanese emergence as a great political, economic, technological, and military power now evident in many aspects of Japanese life such as finance and industry, electronic appliances, as well as film content.[23] By virtue of Japan's new prominence in conjunction with conscious export efforts on the part of Japanese television stations, increased interest in all aspects of Japanese culture, traditions, arts, etc., can be correlated with greatly increased coverage of Japan in foreign

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[21]Ibid., 44.

[22]Ibid., 44.

[23]Vincent Canby. "Japan's Best Movies Aren't a Leading Export," New York Times, December 1989, 1.

mass media. Canby cites the particularity or "Japaneseness" of Japanese movies as central to the small but faithful American audience. Describing the best of Japanese films as "acquired tastes," Canby identifies the slow pacing and sparing use of close-up shots as characteristic Japanese film techniques to which non-Japanese viewers inevitably will become more accustomed because of Japan's increasing global influence.[24]

Impact of Japanese Programs on National and International Audiences

There has been much qualitative discussion centering on the "Oshin" phenomenon but only a few quantitative, empirical studies have been conducted. Research on "Oshin" in Japan includes that of Tetsuo[25] whose study examines questions regarding "Oshin's" attractiveness to viewers. The research, which took place in 1983, encompassed 2,000 people over 20 years old in age. Asked why they first chose to watch "Oshin," Japanese viewers stated that they did so upon recommendations from television, newspaper, and magazine channels as well as from family and friends. In answer to what they liked best about the program, viewers chose: (1) the good performance of child actress, Ayko Kobayashi; (2) the attitude of Oshin portrayed in her life story as a brave

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[24]Ibid., 13.

[25]Makita Tetsuo. "Search for the 'Oshin' Boom: 'Oshin' and Japanese," Hoso Kenkyu to Chosa. Tokyo: NHK, Dec., 1983.

woman possessing patience, self-control, and endurance, and (3) the coverage of social issues such as education, home training of children, wife and mother-in-law relationships, and women and work. The quality of the program won the allegiance of viewers not generally inclined to watch drama. Viewers watched "Oshin" as a teacher of life style.[25]

Tetsuo's study also included a survey of Japanese viewers' physical reactions to watching the drama. Over 40 percent of the total studied reported crying while watching "Oshin." Of the total women who watched, 56 percent reported crying. Fifty-eight percent of those women listing themselves as housewives cried. Fifty-one percent of women over 20 years of age and 62 percent of women over 60 reported crying. Of the total men who watched "Oshin," 23 percent cried as did 36 percent of those over 60 years old. It was estimated that 98 percent of Japanese citizens knew about "Oshin" and that, of the high audience rating, many were new viewers. A breakdown of viewing attitudes revealed that 29 percent of the viewers tested felt they watched "Oshin" fully relating themselves to the story; 29 percent, not fully relating; 11 percent, relating while doing something else, and 28 percent, not relating while doing something else. Background factors attributed to increasing the appeal of "Oshin" in the early 1980s environment of Japan included the fact that the Japanese people considered Japan to be in an era of low development, low

[25]Ibid.

morality, and educational ruin. The most powerful channel of communication with the Japanese population was considered to be oral; therefore, "Oshin's" broadcast by NHK, the most influential broadcasting company in Japan, was thought to have had an important impact in the series' success.[27]

In 1984 and 1985 "Oshin" was broadcast, with follow-up reruns, throughout East Asia and mainland China with unprecedentedly high ratings. Called the "Oshin fad," in China, where "Oshin" was broadcast in 1985 twice a week for 90 minutes it was reported that people disappeared from the street in Beijing when the program started. In Singapore, "Oshin" was broadcast twice because of the large audience response to the program. The viewers poled identified the well-organized story as the major attraction.[28]

According to research, "Oshin's" positive influence in Thailand was more gradual due to Thailand's 88 billion baht trade deficit with Japan in 1983. Critical articles against Japan, prevalent in Thai newspapers prior to the series, disappeared following "Oshin's" broadcast which began on November 19, 1984, first as a 30-minute segment which later was increased to one hour by popular demand. Thai audience ratings averaged 17 percent. Dary News, the second largest news agency in Thailand, ran an outline of "Oshin" which caused the paper's readership to

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[27]Ibid.

[28]"How to See and How to be Seen: 'Oshin' in the World," Tradepia. Tokyo: Niishoiwai Corp, Sept., 1986.

increase from 400,000 to 700,000. A small survey revealed that 81.6 percent of 49 people interviewed had watched "Oshin." Thirty-five or 87.5 percent liked the program with the major reason being that they thought "Oshin" taught how to solve problems through effort and patience. Thai viewers felt empathy for the Japanese because they realized that Japan and Thailand were in the same situation at that time.[29] The word "oshin," as in Japan, was adopted into daily Thai usage to mean "perseverance" or "hardship."[30]

The "Oshin" phenomenon penetrated Eastern Europe when the Polish National Television System bought the series and telecast it in 1984 with ratings as high as 70 percent.[31] "Oshin" was broadcast 12 times for one hour. A major attraction of the story for Poles was the good performance of the child actress, Ayako Kobayashi. In recognition of the response to the series, Walesa announced a proclamation to follow in the footsteps of Japan. Criticism of the series was that the story was too dramatic and that the environment in Poland was very different from that of Japan.

In Sidney, Australia, "Oshin" was broadcast for 30 minutes every Tuesday on SBS, the government-owned broadcasting company

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[29]Ibid.

[30]Youichi Ito. "The Trade Winds Change," 42.

[31]"Saikin Warushawa Fuhzoku (New Life Styles in Warsaw)," Yomiuri Shimbun, 30 November 1985. Evening Edition. In Youichi Ito, "The Trade Winds Change," 43.

responsible for importing foreign programming. In January, 1986, SBS held an "Oshin Competition" in which viewers were asked to submit papers about "Oshin." Many of the 566 papers submitted stressed the popularity of "Oshin" and listed the program as the viewer's favorite. The papers also revealed that many older Australians watched "Oshin" and felt that the program taught the importance of patience and would lessen Australian misunderstandings about Japan.[32] "Oshin's" broadcast in Canada began on February 17, 1985, in 15-minute episodes on a program entitled, "Hello Japan." Japanese-Canadians as well as Canadians comprised the audience. The drama series is thought to have promoted positive images of Japan as evidenced by a $100 contribution made to the program by a former military man who stated that the program had changed his attitude about Japan from negative to positive.[33]

Reactions to "Oshin's" broadcast in Europe is best illustrated by two studies done in Belgium. Tetsuo's research determined two major reasons for "Oshin's" broadcast success in Brussels. One was the importance in showing a woman's biography and the second was the close similarity between Belgian and Japanese life styles 100 years ago.[34] An explanation for "Oshin's" success in Belgium can be found in the research of De

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[32]Makita Tetsuo. "Researching the 'Oshin' Boom," Dec., 1983.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid.

Bens which determined that foreign series have greater audience appeal than feature films in Belgium and that the strong preference is for home-made fiction.[35] The implication of De Bens' research is that the Belgian broadcasting climate, with its dense cable network and large number of foreign stations, is indicative of that of the European Community at large and represents a substantial market potential for Japanese media products.

In November, 1987, the Iranian National Television System started its broadcast of "Oshin" which achieved ratings as high as 70 percent. It was believed, from a policy standpoint, that Oshin's spirit of self-sacrifice was what the Iranian people needed at that moment.[36] In addition to television broadcast, the producers of the Iranian National Television System showed 168 episodes on Saturday evenings to full-house audiences in local movie theatres.[37] As of February, 1989, the Oshin fad still continued throughout Iran in the form of clothing, personal effects, and toys displaying Oshin's picture. The sensitivity of

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[35]Els De Bens. "Comparative Analysis of 20 TV Channels Distributed on the Belgian Cable Network: Programming, Program Origin (Home vs. Foreign) and Viewers' Preferences." Paper presented at the Annual ICA Congress, San Francisco, CA, 25-29 May, 1989, 22 and 23.

[36]"'Oshin' Buhmu ('Oshin' Fad). Sankei Shimbun. 1 December 1988. In Youichi Ito. "The Trade Winds Change," 43.

[37]"Oshin: Senjika No Iran de Ninki Bakuhatsu ('Oshin' Popularity in Warring Iran," Hochi Shimbun. 22 January 1988, 19. In Youichi Ito, "The Trade Winds Change," 43.

the linkages between technological and cultural factors in the introduction of foreign broadcasting into Iran is illustrated by an unusual incident. According to the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), in January, 1989, a reporter of the Family radio program "had interviewed a woman who in her remarks had somehow insulted Hadhrat Fatima Zahra (AS), the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (S)"[38] on the occasion of the saint's birthday and had identified Oshin as her ideal woman. According to Islamic Law, insulting the prophets and saints is an offense. Four Tehran radio executives who had been sentenced to varying prison terms for airing this un-Islamic program were pardoned by Ayatollah Imam Khomeini when the panel court which had issued the verdict found that there was no malicious intention on the part of the program directors.

The flow of television programs, research on the audience reactions,[39] and stereotypes,[40] the effects of message type and message context on attention and memory[41] as well as electronic

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[38]"Imam Pardons Radio Officials," Tehran Times, Vol. X, No. 258, February 4, 1989.

[39]Herbert Gans. "The Audience for Television -- and in Television Research" in Stephen B. Withey and Ronald P. Abeles, eds., Television and Social Behavior: Beyond Violence and Children. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, N.Y., 1980, 55-80.

[40]Kazuo Kawatake. "Japan--U.S.--France TV Stereotype Study," HBF Newsletter (supplement to Issue No. 24, May 1987), Hoso-Bunka Foundation, Tokyo, Japan, July 1, 1987, 1-8.

[41]Byron Reeves, John Newhagen, Edward Maibach, Michael Basil, Kathleen Kurz, "Negative and Positive Television Messages: Effects of Message Type and Message Context on Attention and Memory," Institute for Communication Research, Stanford

(continued...)

media and cultural identity[42] continue to be the subjects of investigation in the field of mass Communication. In this context a study of the Japanese programs on Iranian television, particularly "Oshin," can provide valuable data not to be found elsewhere.

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[41](...continued)
University, Stanford, California, October 1988. (Paper submitted to the Mass Communication Division of the International Communication Association).

[42]Joseph Rota and Denise Tremmel. "Television Use and Cultural Identity Among Children in Rural Yucatan." Paper presented to the XXXIX Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, San Francisco, California, May 25-29, 1989.

TABLE 1

International Flow of the Japanese Program, "Oshin" as of 1989

Organization	Country	Episodes
China Central TV (CCTV)	China	297
HK TVB	Hong Kong	297
SBC	Singapore	297
Army Television (Ch.5)	Thailand	297
Sistem Television Malaysia Berhad (TV3)	Malaysia	297
Teledifusao de Macau	Macau	48
Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB)	Iran	168
Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI)	Indonesia	114
Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC)	Sri Lanka	48
Saudi Arabia Radio and Television (SAB/SAR)	Saudi Arabia	48
Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)	Australia	297
Belgische Radio en Televisie (BRT)	Belgium	297
Polish Television	Poland	48
Instituto Mexicano de Television	Mexico	297
Radio Television Brunei	Brunei	60

Japanese Language Stations

UTB	Los Angeles	
NTI	New York	
FTV	San Francisco	
KHNL	Honolulu	
City Television (Ch. 79)	Toronto	48
ICAS (Cable TV)	Vancouver	48
TV Gazeta (Ch. 11)	Sao Paolo	297

Source: NHK Broadcasting Center, Tokyo, Japan, 1989.

PART II

THE ISLAMIZATION OF IRANIAN TELEVISION

Introduction

Islamization of the mass media in Iran, in both its contents and operation, has been an on-going process for the last decade since the Islamic Revolution in 1978-79, and it is only recently that its full impact on society and polity is being recognized. Nowhere is this more visible than in the institutionalization of the broadcast system, particularly television, within the framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In its little more than three decades of volatile history, the Iranian television system has gone through many cycles. Beginning as a commercial and privately owned operation, it passed through the paternalistic apparatus of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's royal dictatorship. Then, after the monarchy was overthrown in one of the most popular uprisings of contemporary history, television became subsumed to Islamic tenets. "The Voice and Profile of the Islamic Revolution," as the Iranian radio and television organization was named after the success of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Imam Khomeini's revolution, is now one of the most formidable communication systems, covering the Persian Gulf and the Islamic countries. Iranian external radio

broadcasting has increased from some 170 hours a week in 1978 to 323 in 1986, in 13 different languages and ranking 18th among the world's top 20 major broadcasters. These include such countries as the United States (2,368 hours), the Soviet Union (2,259), China (1,411), Taiwan (1,098), West Germany (821), and Egypt -- including Middle East radio (820). Iran's external Arabic language programming exceeds any other initiated in the Arab world. In terms of the weekly program hours to the Middle East, Iran ranks fourth among major international broadcasters with 233 hours/8 languages, following Egypt (495 hours/3 languages), The Soviet Union (371 hours/11 languages), and the British BBC (250 hours/4 languages). The United States' Voice of America (VOA) ranked fifth with 168 hours weekly/3 languages.[43]

The Islamization of popular culture and communication is particularly obvious in the Iranian television system. Completely reorganized after the Shah's downfall and revitalized during the past ten years, Iranian television, with an estimated audience of 20 million (in the country of 55 million), as well as its more usual role in information and education, has established itself as a potent medium. Its two major channels cover 628,000 square miles, more than three times the area of Spain and larger than the whole of Western Europe -- or equal to more than one-fifth the area of the United States. Its signals can also

[43]These statistics are compiled from a number of sources, including the BBC, Voice of America and UNESCO.

blanket the 1,200-mile border with the Soviet Union to the North and almost the entire coastline of the Persian Gulf countries.

Television and Media Ecology

Iran is the land link between the Middle East and the rest of Asia, the cultural highway between the Arab and the Indian histories, and a great land bridge connecting the bulk of Asia and Europe. With a 98 percent Muslim population, it is the largest center of Shia scholarship in the Islamic world. Because of Iran's strategic position and its vast oil and minerals resources, world empires have occupied themselves with seizing or defending it. In the 19th century, the British regarded Iran as the bulwark protecting India; the Russians, as a much-coveted outlet to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf. Today, it is the center of the Shia Islamic resurgence and the only Islamic state defying both East and West with its ideology and religio-political will. This is why Iran has become the focal point of international interest.

The Shia branch of Islam has mostly flourished in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Kuwait and Syria (though there are considerable numbers in other Islamic regions -- such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union and India). The rest of the Islamic world is predominantly Sunni. A major difference between the two schools is the Shia belief that Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law, is the Prophet's rightful successor, the first legitimate leader of

the Islamic community as the Imam. The Summi branch of Islam, while not rejecting Ali, consider him only fourth in the first group of "khaliphs," or leaders, chosen to lead the Islamic state after the Prophet's death. It is important politically (and leadership-wise) that Shia religious leaders, or "ullama," could maintain their independence from the semi-secular or monarchical states that have come into power in the past centuries.

In the Sunni tradition countries, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, religious leaders' power was consolidated within the existing political structure, leaving clergy, or "ullama, " little autonomy. It was precisely this power of checks and balances between the "ullama" and the monarchs or government heads in Iran that allowed the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini -- and others before him -- to be in the center of power when disputes arose.

Television has acquired a prominent role in Iran's geopolitical, socio-economic, and religious milieu. The technological determinist point of view, often cited in Western scholarly literature, that puts a high premium on television as a most powerful and pervasive means of modern communication affecting popular culture, does not hold much validity in Iran. Television is a potent medium in Iran not because of the technology but because of long-standing cultural factors that give it legitimacy. In the West, particularly in the United States, television has been said to have a ritualistic function -- comparable to religion. If "television is religion" in the

United States, in Iran it is religion that provides television. This is by no means to minimize the importance of the conventional mass media, including television in Iran but serves to point out that as a whole, it is the legitimacy of the media that depends on, and is subordinated to, the traditional channels, and not the other way around.

Additionally over the last ten years, the revolutionary leaders in Iran, schooled in traditional communication, have in many cases consolidated the mass media channels in an integrative and convergent manner with the old, such as the mosque, Friday prayer, and hundreds of other traditional channels peculiar to Iran and Islam. For example, the Friday prayer ceremony, a forum for both religious and political topics attended by millions nationwide, is broadcast by radio and television and covered extensively in the press. Correspondingly, mass media contents are discussed in the bazaar and scores of other traditional institutions of social communication, such as "dorch" (group circles), "tekyeh" (religious centers for public speech and ceremonies) and "madrassah" (traditional education centers).

It is at this point that it becomes difficult to determine the effects of television without first tracing its sources and legitimacy to the input and output of the traditional means of communication at its roots.

The role of traditional channels has been examined vis a vis the modern media in the process of political and religious

mobilization in Iran.[44] Here, it is suffice to add that in recent (1988 and 1989) visits to Iran, and in close examination of Iranian television structure, operation, and contents, it is possible to see a surprising blend of modern technology and tradition in the process of political and cultural change.[45] The technological infrastructure of television has remained intact throughout the revolution and post revolutionary years but its symbolic and cultural contexts have been altered institutionally.

From Monarchy to the Islamic Revolution

The history of Iranian television is but a small window to that long standing contradiction and duality between the imported sensate culture of commercialism and the ideational culture rooted in Iran's indigenous religious and national tradition. Iran's first television system, consisting of a single network covering a few major cities -- including Teheran -- was established as a privately owned commercial venture in 1958 by

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[44]Hamid Mowlana. "Technology versus Tradition: Communication in the Iranian Revolution," in Journal of Communication, Vol. 29, No. 3. Summer 1979, 107-112. See also Mowlana. "Communication for Political Change: The Iranian Revolution," in World Communication: A Handbook, eds. George Gerbner and Marsha Siefert, New York: Longman, 1983.

[45]Hamid Mowlana. "Communication and Cultural Development: A Report from Iran." Paper presented at the IIC's Annual Conference, Washington, D.C., 12-16 September 1988. For a broader discussion of communication and social change, see Hamid Mowlana and Laurie J. Wilson. The Passing of Modernity: Communication and the Transformation of Society. New York: Longman, 1989.

Iraj Sabet, a Harvard trained and wealthy Iranian entrepreneur. It was also Sabet who brought Pepsi-Cola to the country a few years earlier and who later owned the franchise to sell RCA television sets. In fact, Iran and Thailand were the first "developing" countries to experiment with the modern technology, tailoring it into hybrid models of the U.S. commercial networks. Blessed with the Shah's approval, the system continued to operate modestly mainly on U.S. imports.

Recognizing the information -- and political -- potential of television, the Shah's government established a state-owned system as a second network in 1966. By 1971, Iraj Sabet's network was nationalized and incorporated into the state-owned Television Iran (ITV) to form a single organization called National Iranian Radio-Television (NIRT). Introducing color TV was completed by 1975 and NIRT's budget increased by 20 percent, making it technically one of the most well developed television systems in the region. Additionally, the American Armed Services television station, operated for several years for the U.S. personnel living in Iran, was replaced by the NIRT's English language channel, serving thousands of foreigners, including 60,000 U.S. army and civilian personnel stationed throughout the country.

Television and Popular Culture

It was a Persian poet who once pointed out that old wine may be poured into new bottles. The "Americanization" of Iran in the 1960s and 1970s, before the Islamic Revolution, reflected this -- particularly Iran's television. Where European culture once penetrated the upper class of Iranian society -- Iran's so called "thousand families" -- Americanizations were now being diffused and infused among a wider population, with TV playing a leading role. There were no religious programs on television and the Shah's so called "White Revolution" was designed to make Iran a secular society modeled on Europe and the United States. His plan of "modernization" included no political reforms to meet the rising demands of the increasingly aware participant population, whose culture was for centuries rooted in the Islamic tradition.

Until the Islamic Revolution in the 1970s, the Iranian television system was under the directorship of Reza Ghotbi, a member of the queen's family and trusted member of the Court. Ghotbi oversaw the entire work of NIRT and a few other organizations involved directly or indirectly with audience analysis, research, and development, including the newly created Iran Communication and Development Institute.

The National Iranian Radio and Television had hired disc jockeys from Los Angeles and London for its language radio and television broadcasting. As Iranian film production decreased because of state censorship and rejection of trivial subjects (i.e., royal family, state ceremonies) by the viewers, a

corresponding number of U.S., Italian, French, and English programs and films dominated cinemas and the television screen. And to find out what kind of mass media were needed by the Iranians, several multimillion-dollar contracts were awarded to U.S. and British universities and communication research institutes.

As U.S. and European "girlie" magazines flooded Teheran's newsstands, advertisements featured sensuous women on the TV and movie screens, as well as in print, which the advertizing agencies had not even bothered to "Iranianize." In television entertainment programs, national secular and pre-Islamic items were emphasized but not the traditional religious and cultural values. In short, Western culture met the indigenous values of Iran on television -- but in a paradoxical and contradictory way. The barefoot rayots and native middle class could watch Wyatt Earp brandish his six shooter and bang it out with big Chief Horse Face. Afterwards, there were Ed Sullivan, Jack Benny, Captain Kangaroo, and Jerry Lewis, plus "What's My Line?", followed by the American style beauty pageants. Iranian viewers marveled how U.S. forefathers of the American West found time to quell the Comanches, plow up Kansas, and build the transcontinental railroads while spending most of their time in the hay and the bars. One newspaper in Teheran wrote: "The new Yank is part of a new breed...He is two parts Gary Cooper and one part hero -- that is to say, when things are going well.

Otherwise, he becomes two parts Jerry Lewis and one part Boris Karloff."

It was precisely this sort of television programs that was contributing, among other things, to the alienation of the Iranians, thereby sowing the seeds of the revolution. The constant cloying and ingratiating tone of sycophantic adulation for the regime, especially on television, had brought forth a hybrid media -- a weird organ of propaganda that was, simultaneously, a crude kind of cinematography depicting social schism.

Compared to other Islamic countries in the Middle East, where some religious traditions were maintained in the state-owned media, the Iranian system of monarchy had completely and speedily divorced itself from traditional Islamic tenets to build a secular state. According to the Shah, Iran was supposed to be "the Sweden of the Middle East," but without the political freedom associated with the modern nation-state system. Iran had already rejected full-scale Westernization in the past -- once in the 1906 Constitutional Revolution and again in the 1930s during the physical modernization by Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty.

It was at the height of these developments that the Islamic Revolution successfully overthrew the monarchy and attempted to restructure the country's mass media system, including television. In 1979, it ended up taking less than a year for events in Iran to go from the unthinkable to the inevitable. In

February of that year, Ayatollah Khomeini set the seal on Iran's revolution by returning after 14 years of campaigns in exile. At a national referendum two months later, in April, 1979, he laid the Pahlavi dynasty, which had ruled Iran for over half a century, to rest.

Television in an Islamic Context

The unique role played by radio and television in the process of individual and group socialization was well recognized by the founders of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Unlike many countries -- capitalist and socialist -- in which electronic media and the print media are organized and operated jointly in single or parallel organizations and bureaucracies, the Islamic Republic of Iran has separated radio and television from all other media. Indeed, by recognizing the importance of electronic media in the process of political, cultural, religious, and economic mobilization, Iran must be the first country to include specific constitutional provisions in regard to the electronic media in its fundamental laws. Whereas the operation of the national news agency -- IRNA (Islamic Republic News Agency) -- and the regulations governing the press including newspapers, magazines, books, and films are within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance, the organization and operation of radio/television as an independent entity is under the supervision of the republic's Leadership.

This importance attached to radio and television as means of Islamic propagation and cultural transmission was well documented in article 175 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. By proclaiming that "Freedom of publicity and propaganda in the mass media -- radio and television -- shall be insured on the basis of Islamic principle," the new constitution gave it an independent organization outside any single ministry, placing it under the joint supervision of the Judiciary (High Judiciary Council), legislative, and executive branches.[46] According to the revised and supplementary constitution to be adopted this year, the radio and television organization will remain under the supervision of a council composed of two members from each of these three branches, and the power of the Leader of the Revolution (or members of the Leadership Council) to appoint the director of the organization for radio and television has been clearly stated.[47]

Iranian television's major role today, being under the complete control of the Islamic state, is the tabligh or propagation of Islamic culture.[48] Program content is checked to for compatibility with Islamic tenets. Sovereignty belongs to

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[46]Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Islamic Propagation Organization, Teheran, no date, 77.

[47]Kayhan Havai, No. 837, 19 July 1989, 11.

[48]See Hamid Mowlana. "Communication, Ethics and the Islamic Tradition," in Communication Ethics and Global Change, eds. Thomas W. Cooper with Clifford G. Christians, Frances Forde Plude, Robert A. White. New York: Longman, 1989.

Allah (God) and not to the state or people; the Islamic state is a God-fearing ("muttaghi"), not political, state; nationalism is subordinated to the interest of the Islamic community, or "ummah," which recognizes no racial, geographical or cultural boundaries. The powers of control in the media are exercised through a careful selection of material by the editors and producers to make sure that media content does not violate Islam's traditional ethical and legal codes. Thus special Islamic legal experts are appointed to the boards of the press and broadcasting organizations to advise the staff on Islamic law.

News, information, and documentaries are prepared within the framework of Islamic interest. Commercial advertising is not allowed; entertainment and information are recognized as social items and not as neutral manufactured commodities. Gone are the U.S.- and Western-style products. "Dynasty" and "Dallas" are unknown names to the Iranian audience; Hollywood products in general are scarce in the electronic media. With what result?

Serious educational and current affairs programs get a large segment of television time. Also, a newly created local historical series, "Bu Ali Sina" (the life and works of the 10th century Iranian philosopher and physician known in the West as Avecina), "Mirza Taghi Khan Amir Kabir" (the ideas and accomplishment of the progressive, reform-minded 19th century prime minister killed at the hand of a Qajor king), and "Hezar

Dastan" (portraying the urban life of Iran during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi in the 1930s), all command large audiences.

Interestingly, Japanese features and films dubbed into Farsi are among the most prominently placed foreign products on Iranian television. The popular Japanese series, "Oshin," portraying social and cultural life in the 1930s, is now the most popular feature on Iranian television, receiving the highest rating for films shown in the last several years. It should be noted that Japanese mannerisms in dress, conduct, and film content are compatible with Iranian customs and do not offend the Islamic tradition.

There are two national channels: one devoted predominantly to light, popular programs; the other to educational and cultural discussions and commentaries. Television broadcast hours generally run from 5 p.m. until about midnight, with children's programming getting an extra two hours on Friday -- the Islamic weekend or holiday. There is also a daily two-hour program of news, features, and commentaries in Arabic, directed to the Arabic population in the South and the Persian Gulf, as well as to the thousands of refugees -- and perhaps prisoners -- of the Iraq-Iran war.

Political, ideological, and foreign policy dimensions of public affairs programs are emphasized on television. During the Iraq-Iran war, all public communication or electronic media were placed in national defense and mobilization service especially during the city missile attack.

Looking to the Future

In his last will and testament made public immediately after his death, Ayatollah Khomeini wrote:

> Television films depicting Eastern or Western products made young men and women stray from the normal course of their work, throwing life and industry into oblivion in respect of themselves and their personalities. It also produced pessimism vis-a-vis their own being, their country, and culture and about highly valuable works of arts and literature, many of which found their way into the art galleries and libraries of the East and West through the treachery of the collectors...
>
> My advice to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), to the Guardianship Council, to the Supreme Judicial Council, and to the government now and in the future is to maintain the news agencies, the press, and the magazines in the service to Islam and in the interest of the country. We must all know that the Western style freedom degenerates the youth, is condemned in Islam's view and by reason and intellect.[49]

As a spiritual and political leader, as well as a propagator of the Islamic Revolution, he always recognized the importance of tabligh (propagation). In fact, his will and testament emphasized its role through the media, including television, at least 15 times in regard to domestic and foreign policies.

As the Islamic Iran enters its second decade of revolution, there is no doubt that it has succeeded in the Islamization and institutionalization of many of its political, economic, military, educational, cultural, and media sectors. Whether it has created sufficient organizational and managerial

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[49]"Imam Khomeini's Last Will and Testament," in Kayhan International, Vol. X, No. 2446, Teheran, 24 June 1989, 6.

infrastructure to implement the policies articulated remains to be seen. Communications infrastructure, especially telecommunications, television, and radio broadcasting will doubtless be given high priority, especially in the light of economic problems confronting Iran during the war. These post-revolutionary and post-war reconstruction years will be a crucial period of full scale implementation of the Islamic policies.

In northern Teheran, a massive new television house is already under construction, to be completed by 1990. This complex building, the largest television and radio center of its kind in the Middle East, is a mark of the Islamic Republic's commitment to modern and expanding systems of electronic and optical-digital media. However, Iran needs highly trained media specialists if this and other similar centers are to be properly and fully operational. Plans are already under way to train journalists, technicians, and other mass media personnel through newly established schools of communication/propagation and the existing in-house training programs. The post-war period should [ought to] also see the relaxed media control and self-censorship that characterized the early years of the revolution and not the eight years of the Iran-Iraq war. One thing is clear: Iran and its Islamic state have no intention of moving towards either the private capitalist model or the state-owned (completely or partly) television and broadcasting models that characterize the socialist countries. Creating a completely Islamic television model is Iran's future challenge.

PART III

JAPANESE TELEVISION PROGRAMS IN IRAN

Introduction

Japanese documentaries and films on Iranian television have been among the most popular and widely broadcast of foreign programs since the Islamic Revolution. Indeed, since the mid 1980s, Japanese programs have occupied the most prominent place on Iranian television compared with productions from Europe and North America. In addition to the "Oshin" series, which is marked as a dominant and long running Japanese program on Iranian television, the last decade has featured a number of fairly well received Japanese serials:

1. "Pedareh Mojarred" ("The Bachelor Father"), 15 episodes, shown twice.
2. A series of four programs, each representing particular social, technological, and bureaucratic problems of modern life.
3. "Sobh Be Khair" ("Good Morning"), a short serial of approximately 30 minutes each for several weeks.
4. "Sarzamin Shomali" ("The North Land"), a nature documentary, 12 episodes.
5. "Dastan Zendegi" ("The Story of Life").

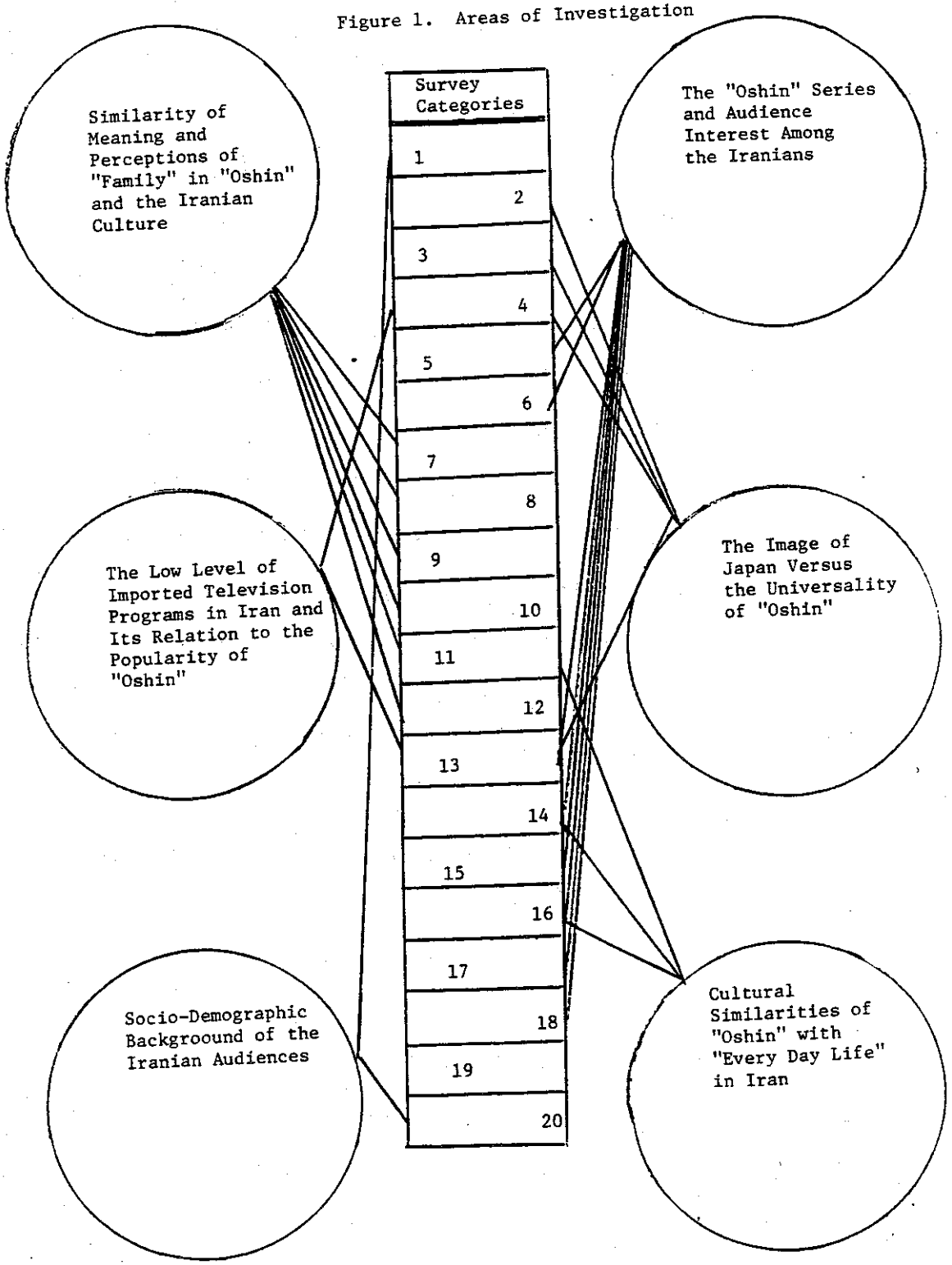
However, it was the "Oshin" series that popularized Japanese programs on Iranian television through its appeal and wide viewership.

In 1989 a survey was undertaken among the Iranian television viewers to determine the degree and scope of exposure of the "Oshin" series and to determine the reactions of the audiences to the themes of this program. In designing the survey and interview questions a number of hypotheses were advanced.

1) The audience's interest in "Oshin" does not relate to the national origin of this program, in this case, Japan. Rather it is the human and social appeal which determines the choice of the program.
2) Cultural similarities of Iranian and Japanese societies could be a factor in the acceptability of the program as well as its overall comprehension.
3) The cognitive meanings of family themes and names in Oshin are similar to those of the Iranian society making individual identifications and social interactions easier for the exposed audience of Iran.
4) Due to limited offerings of foreign television series in Iran, the popularity of "Oshin" could be partially based on the availability of existing programs rather than constituting a choice.

The "Oshin" series was broadcast under the Iranian title of "Salhaye-door-as-Khaneh" ("Years Away From Home") by Channel 2 of the Iranian television which, according to the survey taken by

Figure 1. Areas of Investigation



the Iranian television research office, usually covered 67 percent of Iran's total population. The sample survey, selected randomly, was comprised of interviews with members of a total of 184 families in 16 cities and townships including the capital city of Teheran. Fifty-four percent of the total sample came from Teheran with 46 percent from the provinces.

The data shows the universality of this series among the television viewers, as 94 percent indicated that they had viewed the series at one time or another. Fifty-seven percent indicated that they watched this program always and without interruption, with 22 percent stating that they watched often, 12 percent occasionally, and three percent seldom. The data correlates highly with the previous rating statistics of Iranian television programs conducted by the statistical and research department of the Iranian television organization showing "Oshin" with the highest rating of 82, 79, and 76 percent of the total TV audience during the three quarters of 1988. During the same period, the next highest rating of 64 and 63 percent belonged to two Iranian series. Other foreign offerings at this time included a British serial (52 percent), another Japanese film (45 percent), and a third foreign-made program (37 percent).

The appeal of "Oshin" cuts across all demographic groups of the viewers as data indicates no differences in correlations between the exposure to this program and the education, age, socio-economic status; however, in measuring the audience involvement and intensity in the program, women showed a higher

TABLE 2

Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of the Viewers of "Oshin" in Iran

Employment & Occupation (percentage)	Education (percentage)	Age (percentage)
Unemployed 3.2	Illiterates 3.8	6-15 yrs. 5.9
Students 32.0	Elementary School 9.7	16-25 yrs. 50.5
Laborers 1.0	Junior High School 13.5	26-35 yrs. 24.4
Shopkeepers 4.3	High School 20.6	36-45 yrs. 10.3
Teachers 10.3	Precollege 32.6	46-55 yrs. 3.2
Physicians & Engineers 1.6	College 9.7	56-65 yrs. 2.1
Farmers 0.5	University Graduates 7.0	66-above 1.0
Housekeepers 20.6	Post Graduates 1.0	No Answer 2.6
Government Workers 15.3	No Answer 1.6	
Army Personnel 4.3		
Others 3.8		
No Answer 2.7		

degree of interest in the themes (37.5 percent) compared to 15 percent among men.

One indication of the popularity of the "Oshin" series could be found in the reactions of readers in the letters to the editor columns of newspapers. A review of Iranian newspapers and magazines reinforces the finding of our data that this Japanese series was indeed extremely appealing to the viewers and had occupied a somewhat perplexing place in the daily routines of the viewers. One reader from the city of Mashad wrote in the newspaper Khoarsan that, due to the increased usage of public transportation in the period just prior to "Oshin," he had difficulty getting to his night time employment on time and had to leave home earlier during the series to compensate for the increased volume of traffic.[50] Another paper, Resalat in Teheran, wrote "the best hours for free telephone lines and long distance calls are the hours of 'Oshin's' program."[51] The press also reported numerous occasions in high schools where teachers had asked student to write essays on this drama.[52]

Measuring recall factors, the audience's indications of heroes and characters in "Oshin," the study showed a high level of retention of names and phrases (in some cases up to 12) --

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[50]Khorasan, No. 11358 (21 Mehr, 1367). All references to dates are in the Iranian calendar year, except as noted.

[51]Resalat Haftagi, No. 2409 (4 Aban, 1367).

[52]Etelaat Haftagi, No. 2409 (4 Aban, 1367).

considering the fact that Iranian audiences generally had less exposure to Japanese language and names in the past.

Group Viewing and Audience Emotions and Involvement

Unlike the United States and many industrialized countries where television viewing mainly has become a single person entertainment and social activity, in traditional societies, such as Iran, group listening and viewing of broadcasting is a common occurrence. This practice has more of a cultural and social underpinning than one based on economics and the lack of access to radio and television sets.[53] The family nucleus in Iran has a high retention rate and individuals in the family, for a long period of their life, may live in a single household. In addition, extended families beyond immediate relatives and their interactions in forms of home visits, interpersonal communication, and advise and consent, all play a crucial role in social communication and group dynamics; thus, television viewing in Iran is a group activity.

In determining the intensity with which the viewers might have involved themselves in watching "Oshin," emotionally and otherwise, a number of questionnaires were designed to seek information on viewers' observations of other's emotional involvement during the viewing times of the program, as well as how they reacted verbally and nonverbally to the themes and

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[53]For example, see James Lull, ed. World Families Watch Television. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1988.

TABLE 3

Iranian Television Audience Reaction to "Oshin"

Degree of similarity of "Oshin" with present day life in Iran / Degree of audience interest in "Oshin" series	Exactly Similar		Similar		Limited Similarity		No Similarity		Completely Different		TOTAL	
N = number P = percentage	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
Extremely interested	4	2.2	14	7.6	19	10.3	6	3.3	8	4.3	51	27.7
Very much interested	-	-	6	3.3	37	20.1	8	4.3	2	1.1	53	28.8
Interested	2	1.1	4	2.2	26	14.1	8	4.3	6	3.3	46	25.0
Less interested	1	0.5	2	1.1	12	6.5	2	1.1	3	1.6	20	10.9
Not interested	1	0.5	2	1.1	2	1.1	2	1.1	5	2.7	12	6.5
No answer	-	-	1	0.5	-	-	1	0.5	-	-	2	1.0
TOTAL	8	4.3	29	15.6	96	52.2	27	14.7	24	13.0	184	100.0

episodes of "Oshin." These questions were followed by interviews seeking further clarification as to the nature and extent of these involvements. The study showed the following:

1) Viewers recalling some sort of emotional and psychological reactions measured 61.4 percent. These included emotions such as anger, weeping, shouting, laughing out of sadness, etc., on their own part as well as on the part of those with whom they watched the program.
2) 21.1 percent recalled some emotional feelings, but they were unable to identify the nature of that emotion.
3) Those stating that they had no particularly intense reactions to the series measured 15.2 percent.

The data further shows that 25.5 percent of respondents witnessed other members of their family crying, and 8.1 percent said that they themselves wept. The number of viewers who recalled sympathizing with those who had shown emotional reactions was 11.4 percent. For example, one young female student from the city of Arak said, "When the mother of Oshin's husband treated Oshin badly, I yelled at her mother-in-law." Another comment from a 20-year-old woman respondent in Bandar-Turkeman was, "My fathèr feels sorry for Oshin, and he swears at her mother-in-law." The innovator Edison was sworn at by a 25-year-old bureaucrat from Gunbab-Kavoos when the electricity in his neighborhood went off during an "Oshin" episode.

Here it should be mentioned that immediately after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the sudden decline and disappearance of American-made programs and series were in part replaced by programs imported from Japan and a number of other countries in which the concept of public service broadcasting was strong. Consequently, during the last decade, Iranian audiences were exposed to a considerable number of Japanese television programs. The flow of news between the two countries, especially through television was also high. Indeed Japan, as of August 1988, had about eight newspaper, TV, radio and news agency representatives in Iran, highest among the foreign correspondents stationed in Teheran. Similarly, the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) had regular correspondents in Tokyo covering Japan. It is also interesting to note that during the Iran-Iraq war a Japanese journalist was injured while covering the conflict.[54]

Was this prior exposure to Japanese programs a factor in the popularity of "Oshin" in Iran? The data does not support the hypothesis that the name of the producing country has any significance on the prior expectations of the viewers. The television viewers interviewed for the study were asked to indicate their preference of a film series announced to be shown on television and were given a choice of one among five producing countries -- Italy, India, United States, Japan, and Iran. Thirty-two percent of respondents' preference was Iranian film;

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[54]"Japanese Expert Optimistic About Tehran-Tokyo Ties Growth," Tehran Times, Vol. X, No. 114, August 14, 1988, 2.

those indicating the U.S. as a first choice numbered 27.7 percent, with India 22.8, Japan 10.8, and Italy 7 percent.

Here, it might be added that the viewers' choice of "Oshin" was dictated by the similarity of the social conditions of Iran and Japan at the time and not because of the origin of the country in which this series was produced. This is more obvious specifically when we considered the low level of interest shown by the viewers to Japanese films in general.

This type of response might be indicative of two points. One was the popularity of a number of Iranian serials in the past with historical dimensions such as "Mirza Kuchek Khan," the life of a 19th century Iranian statesman and prime minister. The second was the diversity of the viewers' choices. The similarity of social conditions portrayed in Oshin's society of the time was compared to the prevailing social conditions in Iran of the 1980s. The viewers were asked to indicate to what degree cultural, social, and economic similarities are portrayed in "Oshin" which might be found in present day Iranian society. This was a somewhat significant question determining the perceptions of the viewers on a comparative basis since the "Oshin" series was being shown in Iran under extreme economic and physical difficulties as a result of the ongoing Iran-Iraq war. A large portion of the viewers, 72.1 percent, thought that this particular Japanese documentary film had similarities with the existing conditions in Iran. (Of this group, 4.3 percent saw complete similarities between the two; 15.7 percent indicated

some similarities, and 52.1 percent found limited similarities.) Looking beyond particular similarities to broader social conditions and settings of Iran and Japan, this study asked the viewers to compare the two social systems. Thirteen percent responded that the conditions of life in the serial and present day Iran are very different; however, there were differences among the viewers when the responses were correlated with demographic variables. For example, people with lesser education saw more similarities between the two systems than those with higher education. The elderly viewers found more similarity than the middle aged and younger. This might be attributed to the early experiences of older generations, especially when Iranian social conditions reflecting their prior, longer experience with Iranian society at large are considered.

A number of similarities between socialization and growth in the "Oshin" series and the family life of the viewers emerged when the viewers were asked to compare the childhood of the heroine Oshin with their own early experiences. Eighty-five percent of the viewers believed that the relationship between Oshin and her mother-in-law was prevalent to some degree in Iranian families, both rural and urban. Similarly, 79.8 percent of the respondents felt that the childhood of Oshin was similar to a number of cases observed in Iran. For example, 8.1 percent thought that Oshin's life existed among one out of 100 Iranian children and as many as 5 percent thought that 71 children out of 100 lived like Oshin.

TABLE 4

Audience Education and Interest in "Oshin"

	Very Much Interested	Interested	Some Interest	Little Interest	No Interest	No Answer
Illiterate	2	3	2	0	0	0
Elementary	8	5	3	0	1	1
Junior High	11	6	4	3	0	1
High School	15	13	7	1	2	0
Post Diploma	12	15	22	5	6	0
College	0	4	5	6	3	0
College Grad.	1	5	2	5	0	0
Post Grad.	0	2	0	0	0	0
No Answer	2	0	1	0	0	0

CHI-SQUARE = 66.3653753
LAMBDA CORRELATION = .09387751

D.F = 28

TABLE 4

Audience Education and Interest in "Oshin"

	Very Much Interested	Interested	Some Interest	Little Interest	No Interest	No Answer
Illiterate	2	3	2	0	0	0
Elementary	8	5	3	0	1	1
Junior High	11	6	4	3	0	1
High School	15	13	7	1	2	0
Post Diploma	12	15	22	5	6	0
College	0	4	5	6	3	0
College Grad.	1	5	2	5	0	0
Post Grad.	0	2	0	0	0	0
No Answer	2	0	1	0	0	0

CHI-SQUARE = 66.3653753
LAMBDA CORRELATION = .09387751

D.F = 28

TABLE 5

Audience Age and Interest in "Oshin"

	Very Much Interested	Interested	Some Interest	Little Interest	No Interest	No Answer
5-6 yrs.	0	0	0	0	0	0
6-15 yrs.	7	3	1	0	0	0
16-25 yrs.	24	29	23	8	8	1
26-35 yrs.	11	7	15	9	3	0
36-45 yrs.	4	8	3	2	1	1
46-55 yrs.	2	2	2	0	0	0
56-65 yrs.	2	1	1	0	0	0
66 and above	1	1	0	0	0	0
No Answer	0	2	1	1	0	0

CHI-SQUARE = 43.1274164
LAMBDA CORRELATION = .0639269406

D.F = 28

TABLE 6

Viewer's Perception of Family Member's Interest in "Oshin"

	Father	Mother	Brother	Sister	Husband	Wife	Children
Very much interested	10	37	20	33	9	8	65
Interested	9	33	24	11	3	8	29
Somewhat interested	28	27	17	13	12	7	26
Little interest	14	7	13	2	10	2	4
No interest	22	3	3	0	2	2	2
No answer	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

CHI-SQUARE=146.490726

TABLE 7

The Relation Between Viewers' Education and Their Perception About the Similarity of "Oshin" with the Present-day Life in Iran

	Complete Similarity	Some Similarity	Limited Similarity	No Similarity	Complete Dissimilarity
Illiterate	2	4	0	1	0
Elementary	1	6	10	1	0
Junior High	2	2	12	6	3
High School	1	5	19	9	4
Post Diploma	2	9	29	7	13
College	0	1	14	2	1
College Grad.	0	1	10	0	2
Post Grad.	0	1	1	0	0
No Answer	0	0	1	1	1

CHI-SQUARE=62.8 YATE'S CORRECTION

TABLE 8

The Relation Between Viewers' Age and Their Perception About the Similarity of "Oshin" with the Present-day Life in Iran

	Complete Similarity	Some Similarity	Limited Similarity	No Similarity	Complete Dissimilarity
5-6 yrs.	0	0	0	0	0
6-15 yrs.	0	0	4	4	3
16-25 yrs.	3	9	54	17	10
26-35 yrs.	1	9	24	4	7
36-45 yrs.	0	6	8	2	3
46-55 yrs.	1	3	2	0	0
56-65 yrs.	2	1	1	0	0
66 and above	1	0	0	0	1
No Answer	0	1	3	0	0

CHI-SQUARE=62.8 YATE'S CORRECTION

The "Oshin" series created both admiration and at the same time a choice. While the majority admired the heroic nature of Oshin, fewer were willing to live her life or be associated with her in an actual relationship. In response to the question, would you like to have Oshin as your wife, 60.8 percent of men questioned indicated some identification with Oshin as a potential wife, 36.6 percent responded negatively, and 3 percent did not respond at all. Women, on the other hand, when asked would they like to have the character of Oshin, responded 54.2 percent positively (with 5.7 percent of these indicating 100 percent willingness, 7.6 percent somewhat willing, and 40.9 percent to a degree) and 43.8 percent giving negative responses (26.7 percent of these responding not at all). Inferences from this data show that while Oshin generally is admired, a majority of the viewers appear unwilling personally to undergo her experiences. The characteristics attributed to Oshin and admired by her viewers included her unusual capability as a manager, her self-reliance and patience in the face of difficulties, her courage and hardworking traits, combined with self-sacrifice, compassion, and devotion to her husband.

Mass Media Reactions to the Japanese Series "Oshin"

A content analysis of the Iranian press reactions to the Japanese series, "Oshin," highlighted both the importance and the popularity of this drama among the population as well as the

media discourse on images and realities related to modernization and social change. There were numerous positions and reviews expressed on this series which for a number of weeks occupied prominent positions and discussions among the public. Many newspapers, periodicals, as well as commentators saw Oshin as a scapegoat for otherwise complex, social, and economic factors that might face society. For example, the weekly magazine Etelaat Haftagi attributed the popularity of "Oshin" to what it termed "avam-zadegi," meaning a public that is both duped and fooled in the past for finding simple questions for otherwise complex problems. According to this magazine, individual sacrifice and heroism are not separate from the social settings in which they are nurtured; therefore, Oshin's heroism would be useful to the Iranian audiences, especially during such a period of economic hardship only if it is put in its larger context.[55]

Similarly, the magazine Film saw a direct relationship between the popularity of the series in Iran and the years of repression, cultural domination, and inferiority complexes which characterized many individuals and personalities in coping with economic, political, and social problems and in fighting the system which perpetuated this process.[56] Those commentators who took this view were more concerned with the possible negative impact that this Japanese series might have on the public

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[55]Etelaat Haftagi, No. 2409 (4 Aban, 1367).

[56]Film, No. 73 (Bahman, 1367).

encouraging them either toward "withdrawal and passivity" once they sympathized with the heroine of the drama or toward superficial imitation of the features portrayed by the characters in the series. For example, the leader of the Friday prayer (Imam Jom'ah) of the city of Rasht in one of his sermons and speeches paid particular attention to the "Oshin" series. He warned his audiences against the misleading simplicity and attractiveness of the Oshin message which runs counter to the revolutionary spirit.[57]

The widely circulated Today's Woman magazine in an editorial entitled "Turn Off the Extra Lights, Oshin is Coming" analyzed both the technical as well as the specific social aspects of this series with particular attention paid to the values portrayed in "Oshin." In answering the question, what draws the Iranian audience to "Oshin," this magazine concluded that there is in reality no special secret and uniqueness in the "Oshin" series. Its strength lies in its simplicity and depiction of everyday life. It portrays realities as the audiences perceived them.[58]

Interviews were conducted with the reproducers of this series in Iran, especially with those responsible for the voice dubbing, as the series was shown in Persian. According to Jaleh Olov, one of the directors in charge of dubbing, the contents of the "Oshin" series in a number of cases had to be altered and

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[57]Kadeh, No. 27 (6 Mehr, 1367).

[58]Zaneh Rooz, No. 1186 (9 Mehr, 1367).

modified in order to convey the authentic meaning of its Japanese version. This recreation, which included 25 percent of the total reproduction of the series into Persian, constituted the audio version only with no alteration in the visual portion. According to Olov, one of the reasons that Iranian audiences are drawn to the "Oshin" series is the fact that the episodes as a whole depict human tragedy and sadness.[59] Here it must be added that tragedy, sadness, and suffering in the eyes of many have a special place in Iranian ethos and culture. Achievements and accomplishments interwoven with human tragedy and suffering always have had a high mark in Persian arts and literature. High regard for resilience, resistance, and the fight against oppression in Islamic religious episodes is an example of this ethos. Achievement for the sake of it has little place in the Iranian culture, and the "happy go lucky" attitude at times expressed in the West is rather an alien note in the Persian arts, poetry, and literature. It is precisely here that the phenomenological context of "Oshin" can be observed in the study of audience predisposition and reactions.[60]

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[59]Personal interview, Teheran, 1989.

[60]Other newspaper and magazine articles as well as general public reactions analyzed for our study include the following:
Jumhori Islami, No. 2833 (10 Urdibehesht, 1367); No. 2765 (17 Azar, 1367); No. 2635 (11 Tir, 1367); No. 2833 (10 Esfand, 1367).
Kayhan, No. 13457 (10 Aban, 1367); No. 13625 (9 Khordad, 1367); No. 13357 (8 Tir, 1367); No. 13381 (6 Mordad, 1367); No. 13392 (20 Mordad, 1367); No. 13535 (11 Bahman, 1367).

(continued...)

Conclusion

International flow of television progr2ams as a source of global flow of information has entered a new era with its multidimensionalities -- political, economic, and cultural -- portraying the complexities as well as the opportunities it provides for the new frontiers of international communication. This increased exchange of foreign programming and, in this case, the phenomenon of Japanese entry into the television film and serial market, illustrated the consolidation and merger of the hardware with software markets. The most interesting and perhaps intriguing aspect of this phenomenon is the fact that "oriental" programming, with all of its cultural and social implications, is making its roads to other Asiatic countries as well as to some parts of the Occident.

The last 40 years since World War II, the film industry around the world basically was dominated by Western products, that is, American and European. Although the picture to a large extent remains the same, the wind of change may be here if new

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[60](...continued)
Resalat, No. 808 (1 Aban, 1367); No. 835 (3 Azar, 1367); No. 892 (10 Bahman, 1367).
Javanan, No. 1114 (16 Mehr, 1367), and No. 1124 (28 Azar, 1367).
Film, No. 72 (Dey 1367), and No. 76 (Urdibehesht, 1368).
Adineh, No. 28 (5 Aban, 1367), and No. 30 (12 Dey, 1367).
Etelaat, No. 18638 (24 Azar, 1367), and No. 18677 (10 Bahman, 1367).
Bashir, No. 75 (24 Farvardin, 1368).
Zaneh Rooz, No. 1209 (21 Esfand, 1367).

sources of televised imagery are well grounded and financed with new infrastructures to make their debut. The extent of Japanese penetration into the television programming market and their demonstrated success in both dissemination and the acceptance of their product signals the arrival of yet another era of competition among both the producers and users of cultural industries in the global market.

The introduction of Japanese programs on Iranian television comes at the time when, after a generation of cultural industry domination and influence of the West, the Islamization of popular culture and mass media is particularly obvious in revolutionary Iran. Indeed, the study of Japanese programming on Iranian television provides us with an opportunity to investigate the process of television and media ecology in a changing environment. In the West, particularly in the United States, television has been coined to have a ritualistic function comparable to religion. If "television is religion" in the West, definitely in Iran it is religion that provides television.

The Japanese programming on Iranian television and, in this particular case, the "Oshin" series, provided a laboratory for intermingling and debate between technology and ideology, modernization and dependency, anxiety and identity, as well as self-evaluation for a cultural and media policy among the planners, community leaders, and the public at large. It extended the parameter of import/export of television programming beyond its market value and audience gratification. The most

pronounced aspect of this experiment was the dualism of ideational versus sensate culture, between spiritualism and materialism, between tangible and not so tangible aspects of everyday life.

Anxiety and preference for television fantasy has been one of the major hypotheses of literature on gratification, alienation, and violence.[61] The available data on "Oshin" in Iran do not confirm the element of fantasy or anxiety but instead provide the first glimpse of evidence on the thesis that television viewers, at least in the case of Iran, are less interested in what they cannot get (i.e., "Dallas" style wealth, eternal youth, greed, power) and more concerned with what they might perceive as their own cultural setting. This is very well illustrated in the viewers' absorption of Oshin's life as a tragedy and drama so well depicted within the Iranian cultural and religious setting.

The "Oshin" series on Iranian television also indicates television viewing in different cultural settings and how family structure, group formation, and extended friendships become crucial elements not only in the direction and time of exposure to media messages but also in the way in which the contents are comprehended and absorbed in a complex symbiotic framework. Again, in the case of "Oshin," the program had less destructive

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[61]W. R. Hazard. "Anxiety and Preference for Television Fantasy," Journalism Quarterly, No. 44, 1967; see also E. Katz and P. Lazarsfeld. Personal Influence. Gleneco, Illinois: Free Press, 1955, 378.

functions and more interactive functions both enhanced by and as a result of family members' community communication. Here certain general themes emerge from the data. Sex differences do not apply for watching television nor are there gender factors in who decides what to watch and when. In the case of "Oshin," it seemed that the viewing audiences are fairly evenly distributed among the various socio-economic groups.

One striking point in our analysis is that despite tremendous cultural differences between Iran and Japan, certain modes of behavior, cultural cues, and similarities were well recognized by the Iranian audiences which, in turn, provided a common ground for sharing the experiences and events in "Oshin." These cultural cues and similarities are especially pronounced in the role of both sexes in society, their relationships to family and social hierarchies, as well as their more cosmic view of the universe. Other tangible events experienced in both cultures, though in different periods of history, definitely were a factor in the popularity of this Japanese program. The social settings of Japan in the 1930s and the period of global depression were reminiscent of post revolutionary Iran in which the country had to defend itself in a prolonged war against outside aggressors under the most difficult global constraints.

It is interesting to note that the large number of Iranian viewers, when given a choice to select their television films from a variety of international sources, selected Iranian television drama and series as their first preference, with the

United States, India, and Japan ranking next. Two additional concluding comments are in order here. First, indigenous programs of high quality and compatible with Iranian history and cultural settings have the ability to compete with outside products. Second, the notion of "universalism" and "human interest" angles so often associated with dominant Western cultural products, especially television, is neither empirically confirmed nor can it be claimed to be an exclusive or even unique aspect of a given culture.

Finally, we find the current discussion in communication literature on the "limited effects" versus the "all powerful impact" of the media of television inapplicable to the situation in Iran. The so called limited effects studies, produced largely in the United States and Western Europe, have revitalized the notion of "audience power" and the existence of what is termed "active audience." These audience studies basically support the process of individual selectivity, meaning that audiences are producers of meaning, and, therefore, minimize the power of media, owners, and program producers.

Opposite to this hypothesis is the notion of media as powerful agents of social change. This theory has a long history, starting with the years of World War II and continuing to the present debate on communication and international development. This proposition is based on the powerful growth of the cultural industries that manufacture the images and the basic

values leading to some kind of homogenization of both messages and audiences.

Our study of Iranian television programs, particularly the public's reactions to such serials as "Oshin," show the complexity of this phenomenon and the integrative nature in which media-audience relations are developed. In the first place, the assumption about the role of television in society is basically different in Iran as stated in its constitution and as practiced throughout its national media policies during the last ten years immediately after the Islamic Revolution. Consequently, the importance of the role of television in both national and international socialization (especially in an integrated manner with traditional channels as in the case of Iran) has been acknowledged by the Revolutionary leaders. This stands in contrast to the policies and philosophies of television in the industrialized West, which views this medium as basically an entertainment channel with limited educational and public affairs function.

Secondarily, we found the environments in which Western and Iranian television audiences are now nurtured to be completely different. In the United States and other Western industrialized countries, the daily discourse on the possible effect and impact of television programs on the viewers is either missing or fragmented. Indeed, the controversy over the impact of the media on society, particularly television and radio, are of an academic nature and are reserved only for the pages of scholarly journals.

Thus, the daily debate about television is not so much about its impact or "effect" but rather about the "interests" of the audience and the "ratings" of the programs. The study of the Japanese programs on Iranian television, in this case, "Oshin," is carried out in a completely different cultural ecology than that of the West. As is shown in the study, since the Islamic Revolution, the role of the media and communication in society has been a dominant subject of discussion and discourse both at the leadership and at the public levels. The primary concerns and discussions in Iran over the television material, unlike the pre-revolutionary days, are not about the popularity and the gratification of the audience, but about the perceived impact of such programs on different socio-economic and age groups, as well as about the material's compatibility with the basic precepts of Islam and those of the society.

In short, the explicit and implicit policies carried out in Iran acknowledge the powerful role of the media in national and international affairs. These policies are based on a further assumption that the process of individual selectivity and audience power and activity is very much dependent on the quality of the public's education regarding the media. Thus, the public's direct involvement in the discourse taking place in the press and the public forum is prerequisite to the kind of society they want to have and the role of the media in that society.