



# **A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 1: The Artisanal Era, 1897-1941**

*Hamid Naficy*

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Hamid Naficy is one of the world's leading authorities on Iranian film, and *A Social History of Iranian Cinema* is his magnum opus. Covering the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first and addressing documentaries, popular genres, and art films, it explains Iran's peculiar cinematic production modes, as well as the role of cinema and media in shaping modernity and a modern national identity in Iran. This comprehensive social history unfolds across four volumes, each of which can be appreciated on its own.

*Volume 1* depicts and analyzes the early years of Iranian cinema. Film was introduced in Iran in 1900, three years after the country's first commercial film exhibitor saw the new medium in Great Britain. An artisanal cinema industry sponsored by the ruling shahs and other elites soon emerged. The presence of women, both on the screen and in movie houses, proved controversial until 1925, when Reza Shah Pahlavi dissolved the Qajar dynasty. Ruling until 1941, Reza Shah implemented a Westernization program intended to unite, modernize, and secularize his multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic country. Cinematic representations of a fast-modernizing Iran were encouraged, the veil was outlawed, and dandies flourished. At the same time, photography, movie production, and movie houses were tightly controlled. Film production ultimately proved marginal to state formation. Only four silent feature films were produced in Iran; of the five Persian-language sound features shown in the country before 1941, four were made by an Iranian expatriate in India.

### *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*

*Volume 1: The Artisanal Era, 1897–1941*

*Volume 2: The Industrializing Years, 1941–1978*

*Volume 3: The Islamicate Period, 1978–1984*

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