
This book could not have been written by anyone but a sophisticated postmodernist anthropologist who has an intimate knowledge of Iranian history, culture, and society. This book contains five lengthy chapters incorporating contemporary critical theories, ethnography, and textual and filmic deconstruction. The chapters reflect on (1) epical, moral, and metaphoric meanings of Zoroastrian high-liturgy Yasna ritual, (2) the parable logic of the 10th century epical masterpiece, Shahnameh (The Epic of Kings) by Firdausi, (3) textual and cinematic Iranian cultural critiques of 1960s and 1970s and their roots in modernist surrealism of novella writer Sadeq Hedayat, (4) Iranian cultural critiques of the 1980s and 1990s as presented in recent New Wave Iranian cinema, and (5) filmic discourses reflecting on the devastation of recent wars on Iranian borders. An epilogue extends Fischer's reflections to some Iranian diasporic productions. For Fischer, these contemporary oral, visual, and literary works represent a parable and commentary discourse to older moral reasoning found in Persian poetic and epical traditions. The recent global success of the cinematic aspect of this discourse reflects the modernist connections and appeals of these traditions. Searching for multi-meanings and symbols, Fischer offers a detailed, sophisticated, perceptive, and evocative analysis of liturgical, cinematic, and textual Iranian narratives.

- Ali Akbar Mahdi