Sociological Analysis of Impressments of Modern Factors on Religious Values in Rural Kurdistan

Rashid Ahmadrash[1]
Assistant Professor of Sociology, Farhangian University of Kurdistan, Iran

Abstract: *This research has been done during two years and with studying and consistent referring to almost thirty villages of region called" Mukerian" located in south of west Azarbaijan Iran. Data's of this research considering socio-cultural peculiarities of studied rural by using qualitative methods and grounded theory and applying techniques like; deep interviews, oral history and field participation. Theoretically, new theories of modernization and some of theories which related to interpretive sociology have been our guidance and especially Engelhard's theory of values evolution, new theory of modernization and reflexive modernity of Giddens have formed our conceptual frame work. Anyway, observation, studies and " lived experience" of researcher shows the happening of different "objective- subjective" kind of changes in the " life world" of Kurdish rural under influence of environmental conditions, locating in border age and neighboring with Iraq and Turkey, historical, political and cultural conditions of geographical region called" Mukerian", in different fields; "religious and spiritual values" , all show "modernizing of rural man .In fact we in one side observing " creation of some new and modern traditions' and in the other " modernizing of some old traditions" in Iranian rural community and so in Kurdistan. All such changes guided us toward our field theory which we have called it "rural pseudo-modernism with Kurdish Iranian characters".*

Keywords: *modernization, grounded theory, life-world, interpretive sociology, reflexive modernity.*

Introduction

There is no society without its religious values and rituals. Durkheim defines religion as "nothing but expressing of ethical values of society and the collective beliefs. (Durkheim, 2004: 47). "So religious beliefs means that person relates things with no specific origins to metaphysical forces and finds the answer of unknown questions. So they relate their every bad fortunes to these super natural forces (Worsly, 2001; Beits, 2005:73).

Muslims, similar to other people, cannot escape the process of modernization and the growing integration and interconnectedness of people and societies around the world. This process can influence people in one of two ways; either, as argued by Fukuyama leading to "… an increasing homogenization of all human societies, regardless of their historical origins or cultural inheritances" (Fukuyama, 1992, p. xiv), or people may become even more aware of their differences as seen in the revival of traditional values and/or a rediscovery of indigenous cultures and religion. Observations and studies show that our field study (Kurdistan) as a traditional society, has experienced different changes in its life styles and cultural values. Studying of such changes, conditions and factors which accelerated these changes and their out comes in rural community, are those issues that haven't been studied and considered by researchers (Azkia, 2011:169; Taleb and Anbari, 2003).In this article, we have tried to a newer this question that; how and why such changes in the field of religious values and beliefs happened in the region called Mukerian of Iranian Kurdistan.

The aim of this article is to explore the consequences of religious value, norm and belief changes on the traditional society of the Iranian Kurdistan. This research employed a grounded theory approach for data collection and analysis.

---

[1] Email: rahmadrash76@yahoo.com

Restudies and Literature Review

Previous studies about Kurdistan and its problems are limited as they were generally conducted under influence of political and ethnical factors. Furthermore, in such studies, the socio-cultural aspects are mainly neglected. Despite the rapidly increasing body of research on Kurdish issues in recent years, there is little qualitative research focusing on such issues. In addition, most of the existing studies have used secondary data. Although in recent years and due to extension of higher education among Kurds especially the new generation attention to humanity courses like; sociology, politics, sociological researches qualitatively and quantitatively have been increased, but most of these researches have applied quantitate and positivistic methods and usually used Archie Vic and second data analysis.

The existing research studies can be categorized into two groups: studies done by Kurds and those done by non-Kurds. Most of these studies can be categorized into two grouped: who's which done by Kurds or internal researchers and those done by foreigners or outsiders. Most of the studies conducted by outsiders were based on historical and archival data rather than fieldwork or qualitative methodology. Most of these studies have been done by orientalists and during their touristic travels to Kurdistan. Among them we can name ;(Kochera, 1994; Nikitin, 1999; Van Bruinessen, 1999; McDowell, 2002).

The main communalities of this group is their focus on political aspects life and sociopolitical movements of Kurds. Some of studies concentrated on the outcomes of entrance of modernization factors especially new technologies into rural and traditional societies. We can categorize into three groups; those which used individuals as their unit of analysis like; Ahmadrash (2002), and Mhamadpur, (2006), Amanollahi (2002), Moghadas (2001). Second group used group and family as their unit analysis like; Pole Ivan (2004) and in third group, modernization in general has been studied and the unit of analysis has been the whole society or country like; Stephan Calagori (2009) about modernization among three European countries and M.G. Cambil (1990) about comparing modernization and effective factors among six Asian countries can be named. Many aspects of modern-day Kurdish society remain unexplored and unexplained. Studies using qualitative methods and ethnographic fieldwork are needed to understand the impact of modern changes and developments on the people who live through, and experience them (Mhammadpur, 2010).

Conceptual Framework

"We are living in a period dominated by rapid social changes, a deep crisis of established values, and the initiatives of elite groups, who are able to elaborate complex strategies"(Touraine,1992:63). Modernization, on the other hand, basically means to remold a cultural system into a new mode (Naofusa, 2012). About modernization of societies, especially third world countries, there is two main some hat separated approaches, quantitate and positivistic approach to development which emphasize on necessary, similar and unavoidable transition of all societies and human groups from traditional and pre modern life into industrialized modern ones with whole production and collective consumption. This approach either under estimate or pay less attention to social and cultural peculiarities of societies. Second approach, is qualitative, commentary and constructive one where by put much emphasize on social actors and their contributions, values, norms etc. in the process of development and modernization. These group believe that, social actors under influence of their values, specific cultural and social life beliefs, have selective and reflexive reaction to modernization forces (Leftwich, 1998; Meer, 2005).

In fact, our conceptual framework is composed of a combination of Engelhard's theory of evolution, new theories of modernization especially psycho-social ones (those of Lerner, McClelland, Rogers etc.) and theories originated from works and thoughts of Webber which is famous as Verstehen or commentator sociology with emphasize on reflexive modernity of Giddens which shown in figure (1).
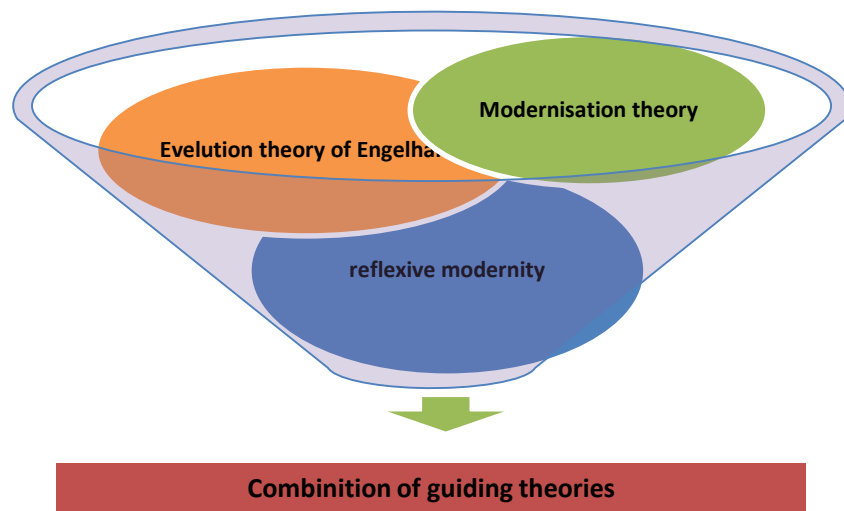
Figure (1): combination of theories used as guiding theories

Research Method

Due to the famous dictum of Glaser (2002), "all is data" the grounded theory researchers may use many forms of data including observations, interviews, and documents, all of which could contribute in generating substantive theory.

Qualitative research is any kind of research which its findings are not acquired through statistic or quantitate methods (Blick, 2005:301). An important fact about qualitative method is that besides of documenting personal experiences, ideology and subjectivity, where by them information about social structures, movements and social institutions can be gathered (Fronzoai, 1998: 517). Every qualitative study has good hints to theorization (Alasutari, 1996: 382). So in this way we can pay much attention to meaning, power and interaction in social life (Zakaee, 2007:1).

 Here in this study we have applied two approaches, Grounded theory and Ethno methodology and used techniques like; deep and open questionnaires, none reactive materials (documents and archives).

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, we concern more about validity than reliability. (This refers to ontological and philosophical nature of qualitative research) Fleek (2008; 410) believes that a way for increasing validity is "using selective quotes from the interviewees and informants". Another way for making our research valid is a technique named "triangulation" which means using different sources of data (Mhamadzade, 2009; Mhammadpur, 2001:69).

 In this article, in addition using different sources of data, first we asked PhD. Students, professors, researchers and some local informants for their opinion about the findings. We also carried the finding with some more internal and external before done researches like (Azkia,Rafifar, Mhammadpur). Due to Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Fleek (2008; 420) matching of researchers constructs with studied people shows the validity of research and making the finding believable. We in this article tried to reach to this goal by "long living in the field","constant observing and studying."

Setting and Sampling Process

The case study of this research was all a region in Iran which called Mokerian Kurdistan, include cities (Mahabad, Piranshahr, Naghade, Sardasht and Boukan). Due to purposive sampling, we finally chose and studied; Boukan, Mahabad and Piranshahr and we referred to more than 30 villages in the above region. Due to Denzin (1989) we have studied a "phenomenon" in different times and places and with different people. In fact we have used two kind of sampling at the same time; purposive sampling for selecting the informants and people for doing interviews and asking them to tell us their oral histories,

and theoretical sampling for deciding on the number of interviwees, places and time of collecting datas and finding the research path.

Data Collection and Analysis

In a grounded theory approach, a researcher simultaneously collects, codes, and analyzes the data. The decision of what and where to collect the next set of data is guided by the developing theory. Although the initial decision is based on a general problem area, subsequent groups of participants are chosen for their theoretical relevance to the development of categories (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mhamadpur, 2010).

In all steps of sampling and referring to villages and region and doing focus groups, interviews and recording oral history, we have tried to interview with different groups, male and female, old and young, literate and illiterate, usually the form and content of interviews were free and open, immediately, after coming back from the field, we were trying to check our field notes and write down the recorded interviews and having look at pictures, videos which were taken. Interviews were conducted until redundancy was reached.

The process of data analysis in qualitative research done with grounded theory is based on three types of coding procedures: open, axial, and selective.

Conceptualization Process

During open coding, transcripts of each interview were reviewed multiple times and the data conceptualized and reduced to codes. In this first level of open coding, 468 concepts were extracted. Codes found to be conceptually similar in nature or related in meaning were grouped to form categories or the main themes of the study. In this stage, called focused coding, twenty two main categories in all five domains emerged which constituted the major components of our grounded theory analysis. The process of extracting of concepts, sub and main categories are shown in table (1) below:

Table (1): table of extracting concepts, main categories and subcategories

Rows	Variable	concepts	Main categories	subcategories
1	Religious values	78	4	12

Axial Coding

The second step of analysis is making categories out of extracted concepts. Axial coding was used to develop categories/ themes. This process allowed links to be made between categories and their sub-categories. In this phase we have used two main strategies;"questioning" and "comparing".

Selective Coding

Selective coding is the last step in data analysis. It was used to integrate categories into a theoretical scheme and to fill in any category that remained underdeveloped. Subsequently, based on the core category and using the paradigm features of Strauss and Corbin (1998) a conceptual explanatory model was constructed to depict the relationship between concepts and the core category. In this time notes and diagrams like a mirror shows the complexness and depth of a thought which helps the new grounded theory be appeared (Corbin and straws, 2007; 217).
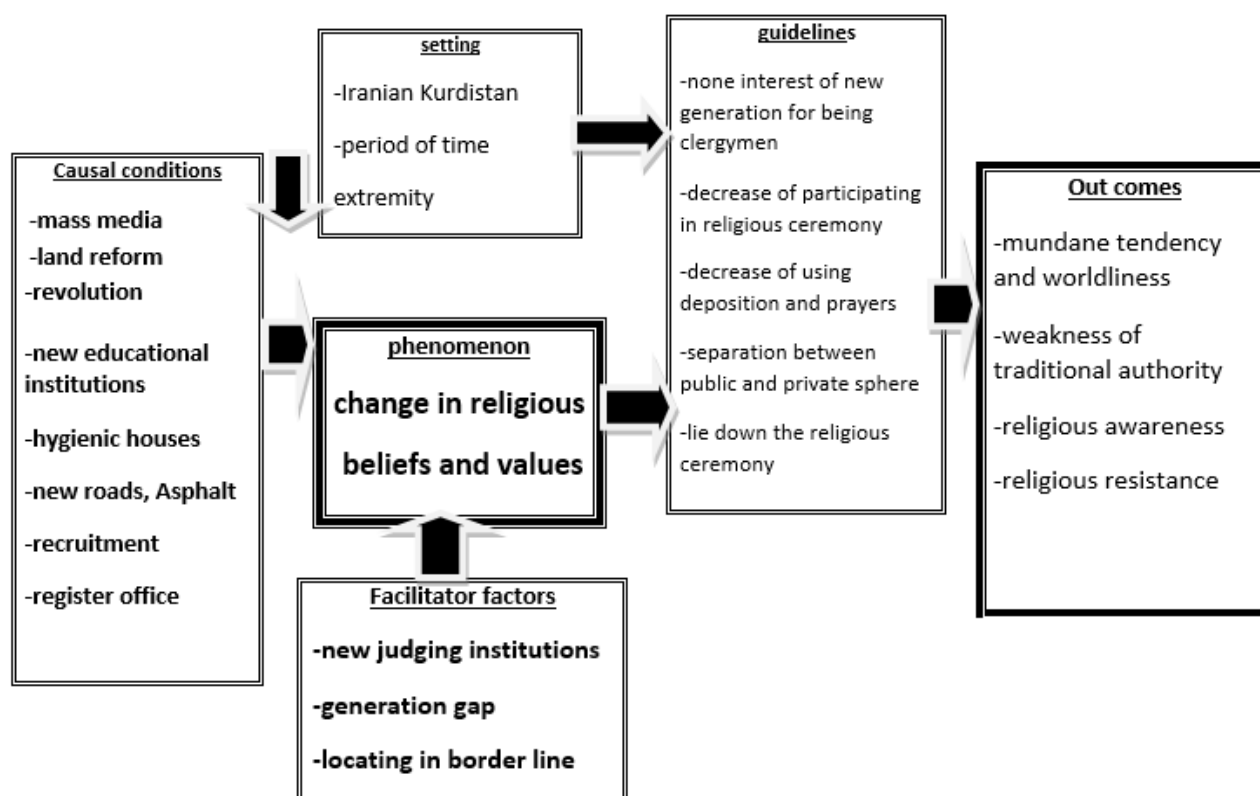
Figure (2): final paradigmatic model of outcomes of modern factors into Kurdistan

Description of the Model

As we can see in figure (3), a set of factors which here in this article named them as "modern factors" caused changes in the field of religious value and beliefs. Among them the most effective ones are; "modern education".

Although establishment of new schools have been done before the revolution and where by a large numbers of teachers under title of "Sepahe Danesh "(army of knowledge) and some fewer sepahe Behdash (army of hygienic) entered Kurdistan, but this was mainly limited to villages which were big and closed to cities. So most distant and high land Kurdish villages were aggrieved from this facilities. Soon after the 1979 revolution and after a little break, the Kurdish areas received those facilities and some others like; electricity, roads, telephones, water pipes etc. These factors which to some extant were mainly new to villagers were welcomed by them and little by little changed their "traditional life style" although at the beginning the most illiterate people prevented their children from going to new schools, especially under influence of clergymen and stringency of the lords. Many of clergymen due to their fear of losing and weakening of their "traditional authority" referred to new education as "Satanic lessons" and "circulation of atheism. "Kurdish society as whole and especially in rural areas, before land reform and epidemics of new formal education and mass media, had religious nature and clergymen n and hierchs (Sheiks) had high respect and altitude. Although their popularity and high position has been decreased especially among second and third generation, these two religious crust never had good relation with each other- sill among first generation have respect and some Khanagha (abbey) especially in workless times and in Autumn and winter are busy and have some pilgrims, but changes in people's religious values and beliefs is to some extant evident.

Along with those factors, we must mention; establishment of new judging houses, gradation of people's religious awareness and generation gap which have accelerated the changes in this field.

Setting for Extension of Guidelines
Historically our field study has had specific importance. Because of locating in border line, the relation between Iraq, Iran and Turkey has effected on people's lives differently. For example, during wars between Otteman and Safawi empires each of them misused Kurds for their beneficiaries. So the region always has had strategic importance. This has caused the formation of numerous social, political and military movements in the Kurdistan. All these events made it to some extant exclusive. As the most important socio- political movement of the contemporary Kurdistan i.e. the autonomous republic of Kurdistan (1946) established in Mukerian Kurdistan with centrality of Mahabad.

Facilitators
Along with those factors which cause the changes in "religious values and beliefs" we can name some other factors like; "gradation of education level" which helped the "gradation of religious and juridical awareness" Our study shows that although old on generally illiterate ones commit to religious and traditional beliefs, young and literate ones have more" tolerance" in this field. The weakness of "religious beliefs" is seen among new generation and so the generation gap has been occurred to some extent.

Guidelines of Interaction
The studied people reacted the changes both as acceptance / resistance. Among the guide line decrease in using prayers for cure, none eagerness of youth to participate in religious classes, decrease in referring to sheukh and clergymen can be named. As whole, there is more tolerance on indifference toward the religious ceremony.

Outcomes of the Interaction
Among outcomes of the interaction "worldliness" and the "mundane life style" especially by second and third generation must be named. Gradation of people's awareness caused "weakness of traditional authority of clergymen and hierarchs". Due to high up the level of education among people refereeing to religious men has decreased considerably. But these change has not been happen suddenly, because some resistances has been done by some religious groups and crusts which has urban roots. As one of the participants says:

".....Those works which we did few years ago, today no one dose it. For example, for exclusion of evil and calamity, clergymen were asked to write us some prayers and we hanging it on a piece of tree in our farms or at night new born baby was fastened tightly in order not to be stolen by elf named "Shawa". Now I myself laughing it those jobs. Today our youth are more aware...." (Man, 55 years old).

Almost among all families "the value – normative changes" is seen. But the range and the extremity of changes is different among generations, genders and ages. By time passing, such mentioned changes in values and attitudes of new literate generation, is become clearer and so considerable.

The Story Narration
Historical studies show that before Land reform in Iran all generation in rural areas, behaved, talked, clothed similarly and have had similar attitudes and thoughts. The changes happened soon after the relation between villagers and others started due to entrance of new modern elements. Rural who had little connection with outsiders and socialized by their family in traditional ways, soon after modernization process became aware of unknown environment especially new urban life styles (Taleb, 2008: 66). As at mid of fortees a peasant tolled miss Lembton: "earlier we obeyed the land lord only, now we must obey all who order us." (Foran, 2000:4770).

Our observations especially those done by oral history from elders of rural, shows that perhaps Land Reform by itself is the most important factor which caused many changes in the hierarchy of authority, weakening of traditional authority, changes in production relations, which made over whole changes in rural life style and accelerated the changes in values and beliefs of rural.

Here the role of Army of knowledge must be emphasized, since attendance of thousands of teachers into distant villages and extension of new education caused wide range changes. These changes were at a level that two main dominant groups due to their different interests opposed the new education, both Land lords and clergymen. Both of them did not see the erosion of the traditional relations which reproduced the traditional arrangement on their behalf. As one of the rural who has the little experience of religious schooling says:

*"...it wasn't so in past days. In most villages clergymen were asking people not to send their children to new schools, because there they will learn the "Saitan lesson" and making them far away from the God and the religion. Land Lords too in their turn, when a teacher came from the city, they provided them place and the food in turn wanted the teachers to teach just their mainly male children. Lords prevented the children of the peasantry from going to school..." (Man, 50 years ol*d).

Conclusion

The mediator factors like; new education, religious awareness and mass media has affected the people's religious preferences and the weakness of clergymen and Sheukh .Although still clergymen and some famous Sheukh of the region like; those who related to Zanbil[1] and Gasgask[2] especially among the first generation have their own respect. In past years the extremity and the range of the Darawish ceremony and Sofi's collective prayers has been decreased considerably, but still in elders view Khanaghah is a secred place and Sheik is regarded as a respectful and having maturity and they by saying slogans like;"ya sheikh, ya Borhan[3] sheik or ya papa Sheik" in the case of daily problems, ask his excellency spiritual helping.

Emersion of any phenomenon in Kurdistan never was simple and one sided, but due to specificity of the Kurdistan has been changed. So in one way, Kurdistan has effected from modernity and modernity has changed in Kurdistan too. So we can speak about the Kurdish modernity with its peculiarity. Islam although from the beginning has not accepted by Kurds so easily but soon became a part of Kurds identity, but just a part of it and nothing more. Islam in Kurdistan has matched with the culture, so it can be said that it has been "Kordinized". In fact we have encountered with a triangle of; Kurdish culture and identity, Islamic culture and Western culture. Due to the condition of the Kurdistan we have observed the superiority or inferiority of one of these angles. In fact due to entrance of modern element and changes occurred in the religious values and beliefs, all guided us to formulate our main phenomenon; "value and normative changes in the life world of the rural". The specificity of this phenomenon is in such a level that we can formulate our grounded theory as "theory of pseudo rural modernism" with Iranian and Kurdish exclusivity.

---

[1] - Zanbi which is a title for a series of Shukh named Naghshbandi, is name of a village located in about 25 kilometrs away from Boukan. I as researcher have visited this religious- touristic village several times.

[2] - A village in about 15 kilometers away from Piranshahr (West Azarbaijan) which is the home birth of Sheikh Taha- who is still alive and is the leader and Morshed of a large group of people named Sufi. He was abroad at the beginning of Islamic revolution and in seventies returned back Iran and now living and has Khanaghah in Orumieh. His khanaghah is open and has some pilgrims and followers especially in autumn and winter days.

[3] Borhan is a village, located between Mahabad and Boukan. Somewhat populated Khanaghah named Khanaghahe Sheikh Borhan who is very respected and has many followers in the region, located in this village. Among followers of Shekh who is dead few years ago, there are some followers from abroad and he is respected even by Sheik people. Now Khanaghas grave is well settled.

References

1. Ahmadrash, Rashid (2008) An Introduction to socio- cultural obstacles of development in Kurdistan, case study: Piranshahr, Zagros Quarterly, issue, 1, 76-85.
2. Alasutari, P (1996).Researching Culture: qualitative method and cultural studies, London: sage.
3. Amannllahi, Skandar (2001) Changes in Lorestan and its outcomes, Iranian Sociological Association magazine, essay series of Iranian social problem, Tehran, Kalame publication.
4. Azkia, Mostafa (2000) an introduction to Rural sociology, Ettellaat publication, Tehran.
5. Azkia, Mostafa (2001) Sociology of Development, Third edition, Tehran, Kalame Publication.
6. Azkia, Mostafa, and etals (2012) Applied Methods of Research; Applying Frounded Theory, 2nd Valum, Keihan publication, Tehran.
7. Azkia, Mostafa, Emani, Ali (2008) Approaches and Methods of Qualitative Research in Rural Development, Nei publication, Tehran.
8. Blaicki, Norman (2005) Approches to Social Inquiry, translated by; Hassan Chawushian, Nei Publication, Tehran.
9. Charmaz, Kathy (2006) Grounding grounded theory: A practical guide Through Qualitative Analysis, Londom, sage Publication Ltd.
10. Denzin, N.K. (1989b) The Research Act (3rd edn). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prenice Hall.
11. Durkheim, Emile (2004), Fundamentals of Religious Life, Translated by Bagher Parham, Tehran: Center publication.
12. Elliot, J (2005), Using narratives in Social Research, London. Sage.
13. Flick, Ueo (1998), An Introduction to Qualitative Research, translated by:Hadi Jalili, Nei publication, Tehran.
14. Foran, John (1998) breaking resistance: History of Social Changes oh Iran from Safawi to Years of after Islamic Revolution, translated by: Ahmad Tadaion, Rasa publication, Tehran.
15. Fronzosi, R (1998)."Narrative Analysis for Why (and how) Sociologists, Vol. 24.
16. Fukuyama, Francis (1992) The End of History and the Last Man,Free press, New York.
17. Glaser, Barney and Anslem Strauss (1967) Discovery of Grounded Theory, translated by action publishers.
18. Glaser, Barney (1978) Theoritical sensitivity, Sociology Press.
19. John W. Hall, John, w (1965) `Changing Conception of the Modernization of Japan, ed. Marius B. Jansen, Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization, Princeton Univ. Press.
20. Kalogeraki, Stefania(2009)The divergence hypothesis in modernization theory across three European countries: the UK, Sweden and Greece, culture unbound volum1,161-178
21. Kochera, Kris (1994) National Movement of Kurds, translated by: Abrahim Unesi, Tehran.
22. Leftwich, Adrian (1998) Democracy and Development: Theory and Practice, translated by:Ahmad Aligholian and Afshin khakbaz, Tarhe no publication, Tehran.
23. M. J. Cambell (2008) New Technology and Rural development: the social impacts, Routledge, London.
24. Mansurbakht, Gobad (2006) the crisis of periodical changes in modenization in Iran, case study: Kajar period, Letter of social sciences, issue 5, 24- 32.
25. McDowall, David (2002) A Modern History of the Kurds: Third Edition, translated by: Abrahim Unesi, Paniz publication, Tehran.
26. Meier,Gerald M. , Joseph M. Stiglitz (2005) Frontiers of Development Economics: The Future in Perspective, translated by: Gholamreza Azad Armaki, Nei publication, Tehran.
27. Milani, Abbas (2009) Modernization and anti-modernization in Iran. Tehran, Kalame publication.
28. Moghadas, Ali askhar and Ghafarinasab, Eskandar (2006) Modernity and value changes in Dehdar tribe, Anthropology letter, first period, issue 5, 45- 52.
29. Mohammadpur, Ahmad (2003) Survey of Development and social economic underdevelopment of Kurdistan period of (1980-1995), Zirebar quarterly, issue23, 29-45.
30. Mohammadpur, Ahmad (2006) Process and outcomes of modernization and social changes, case study; sardasht, Anthropology Letter, first period, issue5, 56-67.

31. Mohammadpur, Ahmad (2007) Process and outcomes of modernization and social changes case study; sardasht, Anthropology Letter, first period, issue5, 56-67.
32. Mohammadpur, Ahmad (2010) Altra Method: Philosophical and practical Foundations of Mixed method, Sociological publication, Tehran.
33. Naofusa,Hirai(2010) Traditional cultures and Modernization: Several Problems in the case of Japan.
34. Nikitin, Wasili (1999) Kurds and Kurdistan, translated by: Mohammad Ghazi, Nilufar publication, Tehran.
35. Poo, E. Paul (2004) the process of modernization in rural areas and the reasons for the crisis ethical system, Auckland University of Technology.
36. Rondell, Johnatan (2002) Analysis of political issues of Kurdistan, translated by:Ebrahim Unesi.,Paniz publication,Tehran.
37. Strauss, Anselm; Corbin, Juliet (1998) Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory (2nd edition). Sage Publications: London.
38. Taleb, Mehdi and Musa Anbari (2005) Rural Sociology: Aspect of development and changes of Iranian rural, Tehran University, Tehran.
39. Touraine, Alain (1992),Two Interpretations of Contemporary Social Change, In Social Change and Modernity Edited By Hans Haferkamp and Neil J. Smelser University of California Press.
40. Van Broensen, Martin (1999) Sociology of Kurds (Lords, Clergymen, State), translated by: Abrahim Unesi, Paniz publication, Tehran.
41. Zakaee, Mohammad Saied (2001) Theory and method in qualitative methods, quarterly of social science, Allame Tabatabee University ,Issue 17,33-45.