

Kurdistan between Modernism and Tradition (Case of Study: Mukerian)

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Abstract: *During last century and in a period of time called modern history of middle east, we have seen different changes in life of urban communities as whole, and urban and rural of the mentioned region in particular. The range and power of such changes has been in such a level that we can claim: it has changed the "life world" of people noticeably. Among all parts of the region our field study (Iran's Kurdistan) faces in one way with a weak efforts of first generation for keeping of traditional values, for example; in the fields of religion, family and socio cultural issues, and on the other side, faces with double efforts of new generation who has adapted himself more with modern elements and values like; new education, mass media, secular values and urban life values with orientation toward consuming and welfare. However, it must be mentioned that all human societies among them Kurdistan involves dynamic and consistent process of "de-traditionalisation and traditionalisation". Data of this research considering socio cultural peculiarities of studied subjects 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 theories which related to interpretive sociology especially Engellhart's theory of values evolution, new theory of modernization and reflexive modernity of Giddens have formed our conceptual framework. Anyway, observations, studies and "lived experience" of researcher shows the happening of different "objective- subjective" kind of changes in the "life world" of Kurds under influence of environmental conditions, locating in border age, historical, political and cultural conditions of geographical region called "Mukerian", in different fields; "religion and spiritual values", social interactions, both inter and intra group relations, relation of couples, parents and their offspring, love and sexual issues, divorce, marriage and related traditions, in the fields of economic and life stocks of rural" life style, including; house decorations and material used for building, decorative and cosmetic materials and... also in the field of cultural and ethnic changes, attention paid to clothing and music, art and literature and other ethnic and identity symbols, all shows modernizing of Kurds. In fact we in one side observing "creation of some new and modern tradition" and in the other "modernizing of some old traditions" in Kurdistan. All such changes guided us toward our field theory which we have called it "pseudo modernism with Kurdish Iranian exclusivity".*

Keywords: *Modernization, grounded theory, life world, pseudo modernism theory, interpretive sociology, reflexive modernity.*

Introduction

Modernization discourse has been dominant in the whole Middle East among academics, politicians and social thinkers of development. Changes has been in such a level that contemporary age of the whole region can be named the history of modernization. In transition from traditions to modernity, our region has gone through noticeable changes. In fact, in confrontation with the waves of modernity all aspects of life of third world people, among them, those who live in the Middle East, has changed. Studying of these changes and the way vulgar people perceive and interpret the new modern elements which monopolized their "life world", not only has academic importance, but studies like this help better understanding of the weakness and potentials of traditional and transitional societies. Finally, this research will help to find an acceptable combination of modernity and tradition. Here in this research, we have rejected the idea of the conflict between modernity and tradition. We believe that there a lot of effective elements among all nations culture and historical back grounds. So in this way, among the social, political and cultural structure find elements adaptable with modern values (Milani, 2000; Gershman, 210; Mansur bakht, 2008).

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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 outcomes in rural community, are those issues that haven't been studied and considered by researchers (Azkia, 2011:169; Taleb and Anbari, 2003). So the aim of this research was to explore the consequences of social and cultural changes on the traditional way of life of the Iranian Kurdistan as a traditional society in the Middle East. This research employed a grounded theory approach for data collection and analysis.

So this article is going to answer to the following questions:

1. Due to entrance of new modern elements to the traditional societies of Middle East, especially Iranian Kurdistan, what kind of changes has been happened?
2. How do the studied people percept and interpret the happened changes in their "life world" and everyday life in the fields like; religious values, social interaction, family, economic and life style and cultural changes?

Pre-studies and Literature Review

Pre studies about Kurdistan and its problems, are generally were done under influence of political and ethnical factors and socio cultural aspects mainly neglected or under estimated. Although in recent years and due to extension of higher education among kurds especially attention paid by new generation to humanity courses like; sociology, politics, sociological researches have been increased from quality and quantity point of view, but most of these researches have applied quantitative and positivistic methods and usually used Archived and second data analysis. Most of these studies can be categorized into two grouped: 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 (2008) 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. Inspect of these studies, many aspects of modern-day Kurdish society remain unexplored and unexplained. So 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, 2007, 23). The most relevant and specific of these were those conducted by Nikitin (1999).

Conceptual Framework

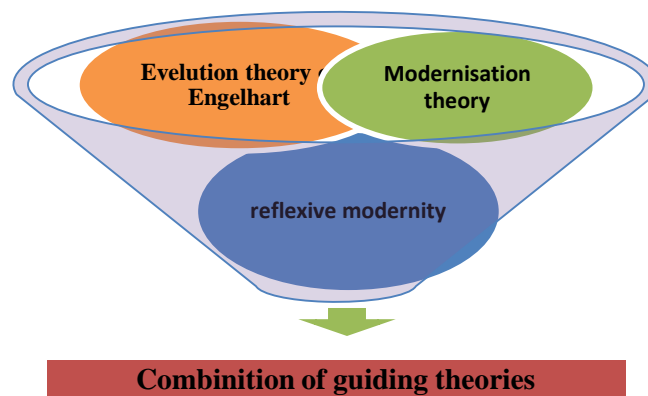
"We are living in a period dominated by rapid social changes, a deep crisis of established values, and the initiatives of elite groups, who are able to elaborate complex strategies"(Touraine,1992:63). Modernization, on the other hand, basically means to remold a cultural system into a new mode (Naofusa, 2012). About modernization of societies, especially third world countries, there is two main some hat separated approaches, quantitative 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). Hall (1969) points out some characteristics of a modernized society as follows:

1. A comparatively high concentration of population in cities and the increasingly urban-centeredness of the total society.
2. A relatively high degree of use of inanimate energy, the widespread circulation of commodities, and the growth of service facilities.

3. Extensive spatial interaction of members of a society and the widespread participation of such members in economic and political affairs.
4. Widespread literacy accompanied by the spread of secular, and increasingly scientific, orientation of the individual to his environment.
5. An extensive and penetrative network of mass communication.
6. The existence of large-scale social institutions such as government, business, industry and the increasingly bureaucratic organization of such institutions (Hall, 1969:19).

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, Maclelland, Rogers etc.) and theories originated from works and thoughts of Webber which is famous as Verstehen or commentary sociology with emphasize on reflexive modernity of Giddens which shown in figure (1).

Figure (1): Combination of theories used as guiding theories



Research Methodology

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 quantitative 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 (Zakae, 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 compared the finding with some more internal and external before done researches like ;(Azkia, Rafifar, Mhammadpur). Due to Lincoln and Goba (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**"and "**multifying the method**".

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 chosen and studied; Boukan, Mahabad and Piranshahr and referred to more than 80 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 interviewees, places and time of collecting data 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 concepts, sub and main categories extracting are shown in Table (1) below:

Table (1): The process of concepts, sub and main categories extracting

Rows	Fields	Concepts	Sub categories	Main Categories
1	Religious values	78	12	4
2	Social interaction	87	13	4
3	Family changes	166	21	4
4	Economic and life style	176	18	5
5	Cultural and echtnic changes	126	21	4
	Total	468	85	22

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).

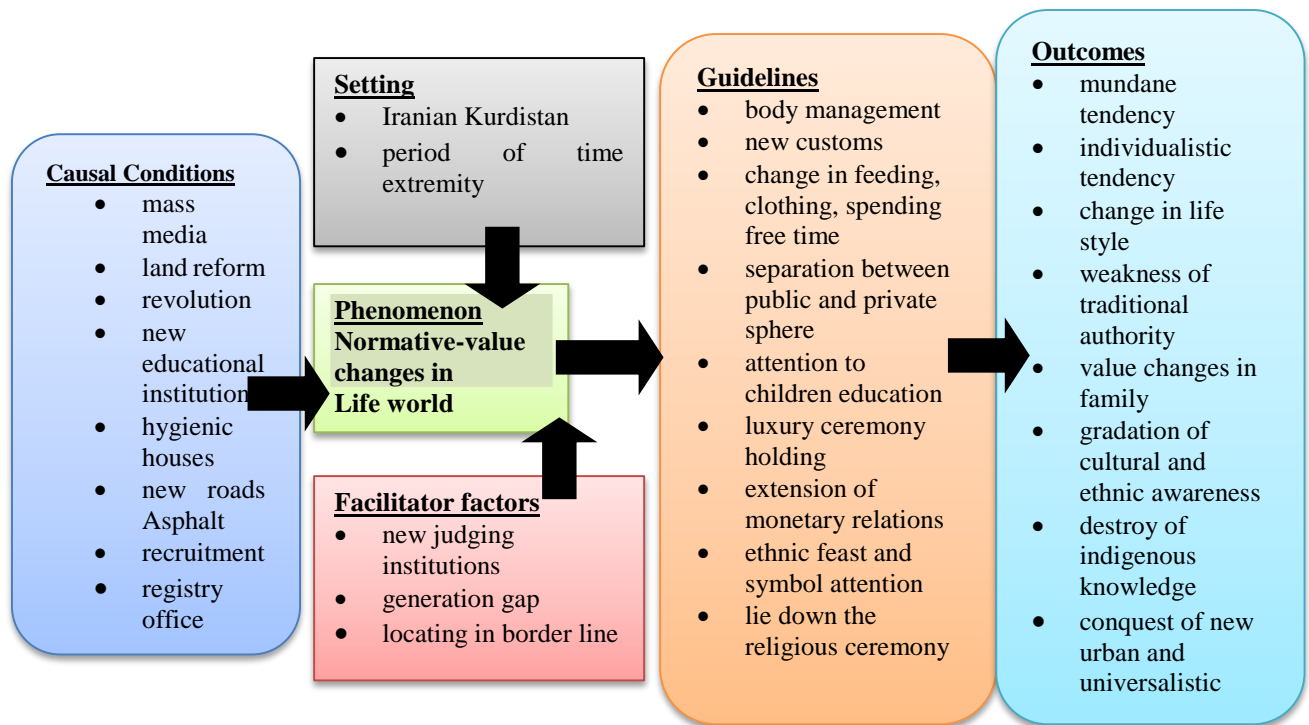


Figure (2): Final paradigmatic model of outcomes of modern factors into Kurdistan

Description of the Model

Changes in all fields of our study, is ongoing, for example, in the field of religious value and beliefs, religious ceremony, respect and position of clergymen and hierarchs etc. In the field of social interaction changes in things like; the rate of cooperation, trust to each other, norms of mutual bargaining, visits and rates of participating in wedding and mourning ceremony, has gone tremendous changes. The most changes can be seen in the field of family relations. Nowadays, urban and modern areas not only has imported its values, but its problems like; addiction, divorce and sexual deviance etc. Confrontation of Kurdish traditional family with modern factors among them; mass media and especially T.V. and satellite, has put it in a none-fixed position.

So we can see tendencies toward using decorative and luxury materials, fast foods, high rate of cosmetic using. Although gradation of hygienic indexes increased the life expectancy. It also cause the formation of nuclear families, obligation of forced marriages and encouraged exogamy. There is considerable changes in the field of sex and love making. For example, one of the interviewed man says:

"... everything has changed. Earlier parents behaved due to the habits of their ancestors. Men and women had less expectance of each other .But now, women’s expectations has increased. They work out of their houses. They spend much of their free times on watching T.V. and usually look at film and serials having sexy scenes. In the past, women and girl used local plants for their cosmetic. They were using handmade clothing but now they prefer to use the advertised materials...."(Mohammad, 35 years old and married)

Along with those factors, we must mention; establishment of new judging houses, gradation of peoples 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 Ottoman 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 extent 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.

The Story Narration

Historical studies shows 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 forties a peasant tolled Lembtan: "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. 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 extent were mainly new to villagers were welcomed by them and little by little changed their "**traditional life style**" 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. Many of clergymen due to their fear of losing and weakening of their "**traditional authority**" referred to new education as "**Saitanic lessons**" and "**circulation of atheism**," 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 old).

Facilitators

Along with those factors which cause the changes in "**life world of Kurds**" 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. Another two main facilitators are; economic state and the generation gap which have affected the changes in the life world of the people.

Research Findings

The studied people reacted the changes both as **acceptance / resistance**. In the field of religious values we can see that tolerance has been increased and some new trends like; tendency to commodification of Haj especially among young and rich men and using it as means of their "**distinction**" with others, are observed. In the "social interaction" field the "**monetary relation**" is established. "**Weakening of traditional networks**", "**extension of our group relations**" and "**decrease of social interaction**" is seen. In the field of family, people chose the guide lines like;

"attention to the education of their children," new modern mating", **separation of private and public parts of their houses**" and tendency to **"equality among the members of family"** exercised. Another important thing in the field of family relations must be mentioned is the relation between the members of family; parent with each other and with their children. Structures of family relations is becoming more and more democratic. In the case of the women problems, the considerable decrease of "circumcision" rates of girls, caused better sexual behaviors. In fact women and children have more rights to express their selves and participate in the family deciding. Another guide line which people in Kurdistan have used in confrontation with modernity are; new ceremony (birth days, marriage days etc.), **"attention to body management," "leisure and indolence"** and looking at the body as media. Today body is not just as means of doing jobs, for breeding or survival. It is a media that reproduced in every day relations and shows itself in tendency toward cosmetology, beauty of the skin and hair and fashion.

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 hierarches". Due to high up of the level of education among people refereeing to religious men has decreased considerably. But these changes 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 at those jobs. Today our youth are more aware...." (Man, 55 years old).

Another outcome is; **"extension of individualistic tendency"** which is refers back to the nature of modernity, but in our field study **"individuality"** has not been happen in a sociological point of view. The last but not the least, is the change in the cultural and ethnic values. Culturally, Middle East as whole and Iran specifically, has mosaic nature. There is a colorful range of ethnic located within the borders of Iran. Due to modernization process what we named **"cultural awareness"** of people has increased. Ethnic like Kurds with glorious history and culture, used the new technologies to express their distinction and cultural values. 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.

Concluding Remarks

Emersion of any phenomenon in Middle East and 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. 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 Kurds"**. The specificity of this phenomenon is in such a level that we can formulate our grounded theory as **"theory of pseudo modernism"** with Iranian and Kurdish exclusivity. We can conclude that modernity is unavoidable. Modernity is a universal process that every nation and society can experience it differently. Societies should embrace the modernity with having a glance on their cultural and historical past.

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