

An Analysis of Rural Studies in Iran

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Abstract: *In this article, having reviewed studies done through historical and documentary methods, on rural communities, the process of emerging rural studies was analyzed in three groups. The first group included monographs and writings which studied the rural society in general. These studies didn't have theoretical orientation to rural society and could be divided into two categories as general and special. However, monographic reports were of two types. Some of them were supplements to socioeconomic studies that had been conducted in rural areas and others were independent reports. The second group was historical and theoretical studies. They had theoretical orientation, the methodology of which was based on historical documents and historical analysis, and often had been affected by ideological values. The rural studies focused on political dimensions of rural areas and criticized the consequences of land reforms in 1340s (1960s). After the revolution, more emphasis on negative outcomes of land reform and systems of rural exploitation, changes in the systems of ownership, the forces of production, management changes, new social stratification system and changes in the power structure and developmental outcomes of the Islamic Revolution can be traced. The third group of studies had educational orientation. They discussed rural issues in the form of social science academic courses such as rural sociology and rural development. The final section of the article focused on weaknesses, needs, new subjects, problems and the use of new methodologies in rural studies.*

Key words: Rural studies; rural sociology; rural development; rural evolutions

Introduction

The history of studying the rural community in social sciences, especially in sociology, is simultaneous with the establishment of this discipline in the field of education and research. The academic circles and research institutes, including the Research Institute for Social Researches and Studies, Economical Research Institute, and the Cooperative Research Institute of Tehran University and the research centers that are involved in rural issues play a more fundamental role in this regard. Based on the history of these centers, we can claim that the scientific review and the study of rural communities in Iran date back to almost 50 years ago. Any kind of scientific recognition of social conditions of rural communities requires considerable information regarding the historical process of development of this section, especially in recent decades, because such changes have themselves turned into foundations for newer reviews. The debates in social sciences, relations with the foreign scientific and research circles, utilizing modern sciences, and introduction of different theoretical approaches have resulted in identification of newer topics. The works on rural section are dividable into three groups: The first group includes monographs and writings which studied the rural society in general. These studies don't have theoretical orientation to rural society and can be divided into two categories as general and special. The first group includes monographs and writings which studied the rural society generally. These studies don't have theoretical orientation to rural society and can be divided into two categories as general and special. The third group of studies has educational orientation. They discussed rural issues in the form of social science academic courses such as rural sociology and rural development.

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Methodology

In this essay after reviewing studies on rural communities with historical and documentary methods, the process of emerging rural studies have been analyzed in three groups: General works and writings, historical and theoretical works, works and writings with educational orientation.

General works and writings

This group presents a general, impartial outlook towards the rural community under consideration, and contains works mainly focused on the introduction and description of rural community. Such works are dividable into two classes of general and special works. General works, with a relatively long history, include works such as travel accounts, historical writings, and especially the writings by geographers. Particularly, a collection of books written by Islamic geographers of the third century (A.H.) onward may be mentioned that are generally called *Masalek va Mamalik* (religions and countries) and contain information on regions, cities, villages, economic conditions, type of activities, taxes, distances, and road conditions. Among special writings, one can mention rural monographs starting from 1883 with the book "*Matla`-ul-shams* (Where the Sun Rises). In this monograph that may be considered as the first book that specifically introduced some of the northern villages of Iran, we may find accounts on a number of northern villages of Iran. In 1937 and 1938, in his trilogy called "Rural Culture" (or Agrarian encyclopedia), Taghi Bahrami has presented interesting information on Iranian villages. It was followed by "Geographical Culture of Iran" in 1949 published by the Geographical Organization of the Army that for the first time, provided very useful, valuable information on geographical coordinates, political divisions, climatic conditions, natural conditions, population, language, religion, type of drinking and irrigation water resources, main products, and types of subsistence activities in all villages of the country (Zahedi Mazandarani, 1994, 158). Paralleling these studies, we see a number of monographs written by scholars through scientific, systematic methods. *Al-e-ahmad* is among forerunners of these monographs who tried to depict a vivid picture of the production relations, cultural images, and other aspects of rural life in Iran. Some of these monographs are presented below:

Orazan, Djalal Al-e-ahmad, 1952

Taatneshins of Bloock Zahra, Djalal Al-e-ahmad, 1952

Khark, the Unique pearl of Persian Gulf, Djalal Al-e-ahmad, 1960

Deh Fashandak Monograph (with Taleghan geography), Houshang Pourkarim, 1962

Looking at the social and economical life of villagers in *Dasht-e-Moghan*, by Cornelis Itland, with assistance of Aziz Rakhsh Khorshid, 1962

Yoush Monograph, Sirus Tahbaz, 1963

Illkhchi, Gholamhossein Saedi, 1963

Khiav or Meshkinshahr, Gholamhossein Saedi, 1965

Monograph of *Talebabaad* Village, by Djavad Safinejad, 1966 (Zahedi Mazandarani, 1994, 163)

Monographs by researchers in the Institute for Social Studies and Researches, such as *Hassan Langi*, a village in Bandar Abbass (1967), *Abrood*, a village in *Heydarieh* (1972), *Deljkhah*, a village in *Tabas* (1973), *Ebrahimabad*, a village in *Kashmar* (Azkia, 1997, 53)

Furthermore, establishing a M.A course in Social Sciences at the Institute for Social Studies and Researches motivated some students to write monographs on some villages (Zahedi Mazandarani, 1994, 161). In addition to the above monographs, we shall mention economical and social reports based on the general Census of population and housing and other statistics related to rural and agriculture section. At the beginning of 1960s, a group titled " the Research Group for Agriculture Economy " in the Institute for Economic Researches affiliated to Law Faculty of Tehran University launched field researches in rural areas and published their works that were mainly on topics related to Land Reforms in the Quarterly for Economic Researches. In 1964, a special section established under the supervision of a geographer and university instructor, Kazem Vadie, the Institute for Social Studies and Researches of Tehran University. This section launched the first part of its sociological studies in Ilam villages and published its findings in September 1965 as "The Economic and Social Review of Ilam Villages" (Zahedi Mazandarani, 1994, 162).

Although these writings are sometimes based on field studies, but for the most part, they are based on data generated from general Census and the information furnished through official state organizations. Of course, establishment and expansion of a new organization order that considered itself as the custodian of rural sector,

despite its frequent organizational and managerial changes, have been very effective in rural studies. The formation of the Ministry of Land Reforms and Cooperation, the necessity of vast studies on the outcomes of land reforms and execution of new programs including formation of rural cooperatives and Farming Joint Stock Complexes, motivated the Ministry of Cooperation to request the Institute for Social Studies and Researches to launch several studies. The outcome was to reinforce the research personnel in rural studies. From 1966 to 1970, this research institute launched about 14 major socio-economic studies under the request of Cooperation Ministry (Zahedi Mazandarani, 1994, p. 164). The Planning and Budget Organization, and the studies of Consultant Engineers on rural and agricultural issues have also played a significant role in generating a literature on rural studies. Such works took mainly the form of research plans or applications for providing information for development plans and projects or their evaluation. We can also refer to the researchers who have mainly embarked on descriptive, rather than analytic accounts of rural regions and have merely presented a general picture of rural life in Iran. The studies on collective and cooperative activities of villagers, such as Safinejad study on *boneh* and Farhadi on rural irrigation systems, are good cases in point.

Historical and theoretical works

In 1968, the publication of the masterpiece of Ilia Pawlich Petrovsky , "Agriculture and Land Relations in Iran at Mongoloid Era" , translated by Karim Keshavars and published by the Institute for Social Studies and Researches played a very significant role in promoting the science of historical sociology of Iranian villages and expanding the investigative approach of researchers to rural issues. (Zahedi Mazandarani, 1994, p. 166) In 1960, the great work of Mrs. Lambton, "The Landowners, and Farmers in Iran", attracted all researchers of rural community. In addition, the works on Iranian Feudalism contain significant information about the rural community.

From 1970s onward, the studies on rural regions of the country took on a political-sociological aspect and reviews of the consequences of land Reforms formed the bulk of works in this period. Furthermore, the works on rural utilization systems that addressed the changes in ownership system and production factors captured the attention of rural researchers. Such works described the condition of production and the share and influence of different production units and sectors in rural communities.

The works published after the Islamic Revolution: Since the consequences of land reforms in different aspects of social, economic and political life came to the fore after the Islamic Revolution, the rural researchers, inspired by the common theoretical frameworks in sociological reviews, launched systematic studies on the situation of rural communities. Mustafa Azkia (1985 and 1986) believes that the land reforms benefited the groups of big, well-off peasants and the proprietors who exempted their fertile lands from division, and harmed the poor villagers. The land reforms and other rural development programs of Pahlavi Dynasty merely intensified the economic inequalities among Iranian peasantry .Land distribution among peasants was on an unequal basis , so that over 65% of peasants received plots of lands below five hectares. The peasants` dept, tripled compared with the period before land reforms and a high portion of the resources allocated to agriculture was channeled to big farming units. With land reforms, the government entrenched itself in the villages, because the political power of landowners was in fact devolved to the state. Masoud Karshenas (2003), who has devoted the sixth chapter of his book , "Oil, State and Industrialization in Iran" to land relationships emerging out of Land Reforms believes that this reform program had profound effects , especially on the entrance and intervention of the state in changing the traditional system of agriculture. In the era of Land Reforms, the agriculture sector received a huge amount of oil resources, with undeniable detrimental effects. Karshenas believes that the land reforms destroyed the traditional agriculture as an obstacle for industrial development, but resulted in uneven distribution among villagers and led to rural poverty. He thinks that eradication of rural poverty requires migration of rural labor to urban centers. According to Amjad (2001), the land reforms program did not follow an egalitarian goal and consequently, deepened the gap between the poor and rich villagers. The rich villagers became wealthier and turned into rural Bourgeoisie, while the poor farmers became poorer and were turned into paid workers in villages or left the village to find job in cities (Amjad, 2001, p. 138). Holliday (1979) has launched numerous researches on international relations of Iran with Western countries, especially the U.S, and shown that the reforms presented under the rubrics of White Revolution were a response to the request of Kennedy administration .He considers Iranian state as a capitalism that sees Iranian Development a fruit of its closeness with the capitalist system. Holliday considers Land Reforms as a top-down

program that reinforced the influence of state organizations, devolution of landowners' power to urban bureaucrats, and powerlessness of Iranian peasantry. As he puts it, the most fundamental point to remember about Iranian State is that it is capitalist, and Iran is probably the world's only constitutional monarchy that capitalism has expanded in all its sectors. Shah (the king) has been able to strengthen his position through well-trained military forces and his terrible SAVAK. Regarding agriculture, Holliday has not mentioned the huge investments of the government in large, state-run units (like Joint stock Farming companies) or units formed through foreign participation (such as Agro-industrial companies). As mentioned before, compared with small units managed by peasants, productivity of these companies was very low despite government investments in large production units. In addition, Holliday has ignored the dependence of agricultural and non-agricultural activities to foreign countries regarding the supply of agricultural machinery and factories for changing agricultural materials to fabricated materials and more importantly, the foreign experts that were active in different sections of economy (Azkia, 1986, p. 83). Moadel (2003) has also considered the international conditions and dependence and connections of the government with the capitalist world economy as the real cause for implementation of land reforms and changes in the policies of agricultural development. "The connections of the government with international investments were the background against which the land reforms were implemented at early 1960s and therefore, laid the foundations for the agricultural development that followed later (Moadel, 2003, p. 88). Moadel believed that the incomplete reform program, lack of strong connections with the farmers who were freed from the feudal system, the authoritarian approaches of the King, supporting large plantations and agro-industries dependent on the international capitalism, and the wide spread state bureaucracy are among the root causes behind the failure of land reforms program. Eric Hoagland (1982) believes that the land reforms led to stabilization and strengthened the presence of the government in the villages. According to Shirazi (1993), the authoritarianism and centralist approach of the regime that did not allow independent thinking even at the highest levels of state bureaucracy has caused the agricultural policies of the regime to lack participatory, open characteristics. One of the consequences of the so-called White Revolution that was based on land reforms was the intervention of the state in rural and agricultural areas. Such an intense intervention when the state even interferes with agricultural affairs, including setting prices for agricultural commodities, plays a fundamental role in issues such as land ownership and running every day affairs of the villages was unprecedented in rural community (Shirazi, 1993, p. 271). Fisher (1977) sees land reform as a top-down revolution aimed at formation of a class of landowners who supported the regime.

The literature on land reforms is dividable into two broad categories: the first category contains the studies that support land reforms. For instance, Lambton and Warnier have defended land reform for breaking the cruel feudal relationships. The most important research of Lambton on Iranian villages, a book titled "the Landlords and Farmers in Iran", is a comprehensive study about the peasants' life. The writer has used historical resources and his personal experiences in Iranian villages, but the book lacks any statistical information and its descriptive dimension outweighs its analytical aspects. Most of the researchers who have studied Iranian villages have cited this book among their references. In 1960s, Lambton made numerous trips to rural areas of Iran and visited over 200 villages. The findings of these trips appeared in another book titled "Land Reforms in Iran: 1962-1966". According to Lambton, land reforms freed peasants from the chains of cruel feudal relations. He draws on some case studies for supporting his theory. Lambton has not made a systematic qualitative study on the economic life of villagers and the effects of land reforms on their life, and his book lacks any reference to the amount of divided lands, the average land plot for each rural family, etc. Most importantly, the writer has not noticed how the land reforms affected social structure of the villages.

Katebi (1972) evaluates the performance of farm corporations by using state statistics and endorsed their successful economic performance. He goes as far as calling the Farming Joint Stock companies as a model and solution for Iranian rural development. Denman (1973) praises and defends agricultural policies of Pahlavi dynasty in a work based on the statistics taken from the Ministry of Cooperatives and State Affairs. He evaluates such companies as very successful and considers them useful in promoting the level of peasants' life. Armvic (1976) sees the growth of gross national product in Iran as indicator of economic stride of the Iranian society, supporting the idea that outcomes of the state support from large farming units will leak into the lower social groups, and considers it as an effective mechanism in Iran.

Some other researchers, including Caddy, Katouzian, Abrahamian, Richards, and Khosrovi consider land reforms as a form of bourgeoisie: a plan that tries to create a rural bourgeois stratum to the disadvantage of other

strata of poor peasants. Some other researchers including Hoagland, Mclakhan, Graham, and recently Holliday have criticized land reforms as state response to peasant unrests.

The second group contains researchers who used modernization theory to understand how Iranian traditional rural society transformed into a modern one. This approach considers the internal structural –functional deficiencies of the society as the real cause of underdevelopment. In other words, it blames factors such as traditional viewpoints, lack of progress motivation, lack of investment spirit, existence of fatalism, and the like as the obstacles to development of these countries. They believe that these elements can be uprooted by cultural activities. Ajami, Arsevic, Katebi, Albert, Amirsadeghi, Ferirer, Denman, and Djal are among researchers that have adopted this approach to analyze the rural and agricultural issues in Iran and their studies on Iran are void of any critical evaluation. In *Sheshdangi* (1971), Ajami, inspired by modernization theory, especially social and psychological modernization, has studied some of the villages in Fars province, and in 2005, has studied the developments in Iranian rural communities from a functional- structural viewpoint.

Hoagland study is among the valuable studies on Land Reforms in Iran and combines library work and observation in different rural areas of Iran. He studied Iran rural regions at different periods and had a close relation with the Institute for Social Researches and Studies. His book contained information on rural life before Land Reforms and the implementation of these reforms, with special focus on the influence that landowners, assisted by state officers, exerted for preventing the division of their land. He believed that the personal will of the ex-Shah has been among the main reasons for land division in Iran, because he saw that Iran is the only country without land reforms in the Middle East. This book does not contain any analysis of the external pressures, especially from the U.S, for land reforms in Iran.

Katouzian, Hossein Malek, and Ebrahmanian are among researchers living outside Iran who were nevertheless able to write many economic papers and books on Iran due to their access to required resources.

Some other researchers including Ajami, Katebi, Denman, and Arsevic have supported and justified the rural development plans of the previous regime. Ajami has written numerous papers supporting Shah`s Land Reforms program. Katebi evaluated the performance of agricultural joint stock companies and, based on analyzing the state statistics, concluded that these units had significant economic performance and therefore, suggested this model as the only solution for Iran rural development. Denman (1973) based his work on the information collected from Ministry of Cooperation to justify the actions of the previous regime. According to Denman, the establishment of Farming Joint Stock Companies resulted in significant increase in the acreage of cultivated lands and the amount of water needed by villagers. Regarding improvement in economic conditions, Denman believes that the peasants` revenue has increased 500% compared to the period before the establishment of these companies. Arsevic (1976), without analyzing the government agricultural policies, concentrates more on the effect of potential regional resources in agricultural development. He believes that despite huge potential resources of Iranian agriculture, this sector is lagging behind compared with the other sectors of economy. He suggests that eliminating some economic obstacles, including access to credits, may help agricultural progress. Like other international experts, Arsevic admires the growth of Gross National Product that according to him is a leap towards development. Nevertheless, he does not indicate which groups gain more from this GNP increase, or the effects of specific agricultural policies in the economic structure of Iranian villages. Arsevic advocates the theory of downward leakage of economic benefits among different groups. Based on this theory, the government can help the poor classes through financial reinforcement of rich classes: the rich people push the economy forward and its benefits gradually leaks to the poor classes.

Focusing on structural changes based on social stratification system that somehow signifies the power distribution system in the rural community is among the topics that have captured the attention of majority of researchers of rural development and is dividable in three periods: before land reforms, from land reforms up to the Islamic revolution, and from the victory of the Islamic revolution onward.

The rural community before land reforms that was managed as a feudal system was a close community consisting of small landowner households, ‘nassagh’ holder farmers and landless farmers (Khoushneshtins), landowners and their agents, and some artisans, tradesmen, and usurers. Such a community had a very weak relationship with its surrounding communities, especially the cities, and despite enjoying a degree of social differentiation, was introvert, independent and self-sufficient, and did not have any political and economic power beyond village boundaries (Ghaffari, 2004, P. 124). The landowners tried to entrench their power by

maintaining the traditional isolation of rural communities. They encouraged geographical immobility through nullification and rejection of the cultivation rights of absentee 'nassagh' holders. In fact, the 'nassagh' right was associated with residence. Through controlling the exchanges between 'nassagh' holders in towns, they limited the relationships between the farmers and market. Safinejad states that even near the end of 1960s, some 'bonehs' could not market their surplus products without special permission from the bailiff. Through opposing to initiatives such as establishment of rural schools, they even restricted the relations between the peasant and the state authorities. In 1940s, the landowners were using high levels of illiteracy, tribal, linguistic and religious disputes and the traditional mistrust of peasants toward the urbanites living in the villages, propagation of subsistence agriculture, and lack of roads, radio and other means of communication for keeping the villages isolated (Abrahamian, cited in Safinejad, 1998, p. 468). In such a community, social mobility was very low and the social division of labor was very simple, merely based on gender and age characteristics in the household production unit. At levels higher than the household and in 'boneh' as a collective production unit, skills and experience were the basis for labor division. The kinship as a unifying factor exerted effective influence on these two production units. In such a system, there were inequitable relations between landowners and farmers and landowners exploited the farmers in different forms. However, due to the close nature of community and because of the dominance of particularistic approaches in the community, prevailing traditions, and respect to higher authorities these pressures rarely turned into riots and protests. In other words, the ethnic and patriarchic links hide the widespread class gaps between landowners and peasants (Abrahamian, 1998, p. 468). The dominant authority and power in this community was traditional, and was exerted either directly by landowner, or indirectly through his agents or bailiff who protected his benefits. In this stage, the state did not play any role in the villages. "The villagers and farmers did not depend on the state for supply and regulation of water and other resources. Rather, the state was dependent on the scattered, isolated villages for the surplus agricultural products that it collected directly or indirectly through landowners (Katouzian, 1989, p. 219). The very uneven land ownership, that has undergone tremendous transformations with the establishment of Reza Khan Government, was the determining factor for social status in rural community. Big landowners and the Royal Court controlled a high percentage of lands. The number of big landowners in Iran was limited and the most powerful landowner families were 400 to 500 families, some of which controlled over 300 villages. Based on an estimate, 37 families owned 19000 villages that make about 38 percent of all villages. The big landowners can be divided into 4 groups. The first group consisted of the ex-royal family, military commanders, and civil service authorities. The second group was the Khans of important tribes. The third group composed of the great religious figures and scholars and the fourth group was made of those merchants that had invested in lands (Azkia, 1986, p. 88). Therefore, the dominant form of land ownership prior to land reforms (1962) was large ownership based on ownership of villages. The general pattern of ownership in this period was a mixture of feudal ownership of big plots of land, small absentee land ownership, and peasant ownership. Regarding the production relations and methods of surplus production, the sharing system was mainly based on five production factors (land, water, plough and seeds), with some regional variations.

Regarding social stratification in rural communities prior to land reforms, the rural researchers (including Azkia, Vosoughi, Lahsaeizadeh, Ashraf, Momeni, Khosrovi, Katouzian, ...) have mentioned '*arbab*' (landowner), '*mubasher*' (bailiff), headman, tenant, 'gavband', 'raayat' (farmer), 'khoushneshins' (agricultural workers, service workers), independent peasant (small land owner), and absentee landlords, each of whom had its own social status in the social hierarchy.

The implementation of land reforms led to huge transformations in the social structure of the villages due to the changes in the component that had the greatest economic, social, and political weight. In a sense, in a community based on agriculture, land division means division of wealth, income, social value, and political power. Therefore, division of lands can be seen as the first step in transforming the social structure (Vosoughi, 1987, p. 177). Such a development was considered as the departure point for urban development program that started with land reforms and was followed by other programs such as establishment of cooperatives, agricultural joint stock companies, agro-business companies, etc (Azkia, 1986, p. 236). Land reforms served as a mechanism for rural development and tried to facilitate the production of agricultural products through redistributing the lands of big landowners among peasants and promoting the use of new technologies in agriculture (Asgari Khaneghah, 1993, p. 27). On the other hand, agriculture was the prelude to the entry of the state into the rural communities as well. According to Holliday, "the land reform was the biggest instrument that enabled

government to turn Iranian villages into capitalist forms and replace the pre-capitalist structure with a capitalist peasant structure "(Holliday, 1979, p. 112). Another claim is that the land reforms are an instrument for a socio-economic drama that was manipulated for political aims. Shah wanted to achieve four aims through land reforms: a) to guarantee the fidelity, faithfulness, and support of the huge masses who were dependent of farming; b) to increase the agricultural productivity; c) to reduce the power and influence of the big landowners, conservative families, tribe chiefs, and the clergy men who controlled the endowment lands (Vaqf); d) to satisfy the internal and external critiques who blamed feudalism as the real cause of poverty and backwardness in Iran (Amouzgar, 1996, p. 326). Based on the ideas of the distinguished figures in rural studies, the effects of land reforms on social structure of villages and its social and economic consequences can be stated as follows:

Land reforms were a top-down development implemented under external pressures (global economy) for the establishment and stabilization of the capitalist system in Iran. As January and Grond put it, all top-down land reforms in 1960s were to implant the capitalist relationships in the agriculture of the third world countries. The land reforms penetrated among the peasants in a process of dividing the peasantry and formed the peasant economy by establishing an independent production system. According to Alavi, "the recent dynamics of dependent capitalism in its satellite states is to establish independent peasant economies (Lahsaeizadeh, 1989, 22) considered as transition to capitalist system. "The expansion of capitalist relationships in rural areas" of Iran has started from Ghajar era. However, in addition to expanding capital markets, legitimating the coup regime in the minds of villagers and consequently, reinforcing the authority of state apparatus in the rural areas, it assisted in the establishment of a social base that composed of dependent capitalists in agriculture, industry and service sectors. The realization of this goal required transforming the socio-economical structure of Iran, expansion of monetary relations in villages and the prevalence of paid works, and disappearance of rural self-sufficiency for expanding the quickly emerging markets required for local and foreign investments to enable the establishment of economic integrity (Razaghi, 1989, p. 327). Therefore, the connections with global economy brought the developments in rural areas into the fore and turned the agriculture sector into a commercial sector.

All thinkers and researchers believe that the land reforms transformed the structure of feudalist system. The main achievement of this program in 1960s was to demolish the traditional farmer-landowner relationship, turn the nassagh holders to small landowners, and support the mechanization of agriculture. Disintegration of farmer-landowner system increased the land utilization from 33 percent to 90 percent of agricultural lands and paved the way for the emergence of different types of peasants' utilizations, growth and development of different types of commercial utilizations, and left unnoticed the huge masses of landless farmers (Ashraf, 1982, p. 12).

Although land reforms started under the disguise of expanding social justice and reducing the pressure of landowners on farmers, in practice, it not only did not alleviate the social and economic inequalities in rural communities, but also intensified and reinforced it. Land reforms did not have a significant effect on Iranian peasants regarding land transfer, but increased the class gap among peasants compared with the period before land reforms. From among the peasants that received some land, 65 percent had less than 5 hectares, 27 percent from 5 to 10 hectares, and less than 8 percent received more than 10 hectares (Azkia, 1985, 218). The landowners class that was the well-off class before land reform, was merged in the urban bourgeois or turned into rural bourgeois, because with losing their mostly unfertile lands during land reforms, they could abuse the land reforms rules to obtain significant compensations, and this led to establishment of the capitalist system. Therefore, the land reforms program benefited the well-off class of rural community and reinforced the position of wealthy peasants or rural bourgeois. Because the wealthy peasants who were more familiar with the cities and their administrative, technical and financial facilities could easily obtain help from state organizations, establish themselves as Board Members of cooperatives, divert a large portion of loans to themselves, buy the required machinery in installments, and exploit the others and occupy their lands. On the other hand, the wealthy peasants deal with groups such as sellers of the new production devices, banks, speculators, and those who run the markets for agricultural products and pocket a large portion of their revenue (Momeni, 1980, p. 379).

Before land reforms, regarding the labor division and production units, the household and boneh were the two units that made the traditional type of production possible. But after land reforms and following the changes in farmer-landowner system, these units, especially boneh, encountered some problems regarding their functions and roles in as units of collective production. The land reforms reinforced personal ownership and individualism in peasants and on the other hand, legalized the existing inequality among peasants. Consequently, the

(collective) production units were totally destroyed and the wealthy peasants could easily deprive poor peasants from landownership (Momeni, 1980, p. 376). It was tried to replace the traditional production units with new units such cooperatives, Farming corporations, and agro-business companies so that the traditional agriculture turns into commercial agriculture. According to Katouzian, "the traditional production methods (despite all problems) outperformed the modern systems because the farming corporations and agro-business companies (at two different levels) both were incompatible constructs placed in a specific social framework without any previous background. These two modern systems destroyed the technical and economic-political relationships in Iranian agriculture (Katouzian, 1989, p. 234). More important, peasants' tendency to maintain individual ownership of lands, non-participatory nature of Shah's programs, and inability of government agents to attract the trust and real participation of peasants caused the new units to be more dependent on the state rather than the people (Abdullahi, 1998, p. 329). The government policies to expand commercial agriculture and merge the rural units to national and world economy led to mechanization of agriculture and the growth of industrial and service sectors. This in turn reduced the labor force occupied in agriculture sector from 76 percent in 1956 to 63 percent of the total labor force in 1976. Under such conditions, we can identify the following strata and social groups in rural stratification:

Absentee landowners: included the Royal family, old landowners that had found the loopholes of land reforms law such as mechanized farming, renting lands, keeping orchards, cultivating tea and citrus, and bribing the land reforms officers, and had engaged in agricultural farming. The land reforms did not reduce their power, but transformed and even strengthened it, because those who had managed to keep their lands turned into landed capitalists and those, who lost their lands, turned into shareholders of factories in urban areas or occupied commercial or political positions.

Independent peasants: this group is composed of those who had kept some plots of land from before land reforms, or gained some lands after land reforms because they had been 'nassagh' holders before the reforms, or had bought their lands. This group's population increased from 5 percent before land reforms to over 76 percent after the reforms (Abrahamian, 1998, 527). The small peasants, framers who obtained some land after land reforms, the headmen, sheiks, surbonehs, bailiffs, and land buyers are included in the highly diversified group that was marked with intense inequality among its members.

Khoushneshins: this group was composed of landless villages that in 1976 covered around one million families out of 3.5 rural families and did not benefit from the land reforms. Although in the land reforms law (article 16), some groups were named as 'barzegar', but as Arsanjani puts it, practically, they did not receive any lands. "We had anticipated in the law to transfer to 'nassagh' holders the land they are working on. Next, we will transfer lands to paid farmers or small or big sharecroppers who were working on these lands if it was required and they themselves felt ready. But the progressive goal behind land reforms is to gradually transfer the surplus persons from the villages to other social groups" (Momeni, 1980, p. 138). Ultimately, no land was distributed among Khoushneshins or landless farm labors who had no nassagh rights. This group expanded significantly after land reforms and its economic and social position deteriorated in the social stratification.

Petty Bourgeois: the disruption of landowners' relationship with villages, financial problems of villagers, managerial and financial failures of state organizations (cooperatives as a replacement for landowners in the villages), prevalence of consumption culture in the community, and intensification of inequalities paved the way for the emergence and expansion of the petty Bourgeoisie in rural Iran. The rural petty Bourgeoisie who had an important role in the rural economy in 1970s reform included peddlers, shopkeepers, local moneylenders, merchants and wholesale dealers (Azkia, 1986, p. 130). They have devoted a large share of the agricultural products and benefit to themselves through various policies including high interest loans, selling on credit, and in some cases investment in agriculture and advance purchase of crops.

Ultimately, the land reforms program affected the social structure of rural community in the following way and led to new structural transformations in the Iranian rural community:

It reinforced social and economic inequalities in rural communities, somehow revived and reinforced the existing class structure under new guise, provided opportunities of social mobility for some strata, and stabilized the position of well-off groups in rural society.

It reinforced bureaucracy in rural community, wiped out any form of local participation –although they were marked with inequality and was far from real participation – and turned the state into the omnipotent authority of all rural affairs.

It stopped a large portion of rural population –around 40 percent- from social and economic participation, and since this population could not play its participatory roles in economic, industrial, and productive domains in other locations including the cities, the national accounts were adversely affected and this resulted in imbalance in both villages and urban areas.

The dominant reductionism of Land Reforms Program that had focused on political aspects of the rural community, and ignoring the social and cultural texture of rural community made this program and its expenditures inefficient. Furthermore, the patriarchic, top-down, omnipotent approach of government agents destroyed the participatory capacities of villagers and entrenched a sense of distrust and dependence on government that ultimately led to reduction in the share of agriculture from gross non-petroleum national products between 1963 and 1978.

Land reforms transformed the traditional structure of production dominated by collective activities, and introduced new institutions and organizations such as farming cooperatives and Farming Joint Stock companies for reinforcing cooperation and participation. However, the distribution of credits was uneven and this contributed to polarization of rural community. From 1968 to 1975, the annual state credits to Farming Joint Stock companies were 19 times more than the credits given to Farming Production Cooperatives (Katouzian, 1989, p. 222). Furthermore, the Farming Joint Stock companies received regular grants, but the Farming Production Companies only received credits and even this was not regular.

Iranian rural community benefited from the tremendous structural developments that the Islamic Revolution created in the political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of Iranian society and was not a close, static community composed of masses." Doubtlessly, the land reforms of the old regime was a heavy blow to landowner/farmer relations, but the political and administrative structures and the mentality of the society that was still overshadowed by feudal relations were swept away in the aftermaths of the regime change with a tremendous speed. Now the farmers consider themselves entitled to some individual and social rights and transformed from masses of voiceless, unidentified ghosts into outspoken, animated people (Mahdavi, 1982, p. 73). This mobility in the rural community turned the pre-revolution top-down land reforms in to synthetic land reforms that combined the peasant movements and protests in some rural areas with government initiatives to plan and implement land reforms."After the Islamic Revolution, the local influential people such as landowners, land investors, rural petit bourgeois, and rich peasants lost their social position in rural community and gave way to new institutions including Islamic councils, Basidj, etc. Khadkhodas or the headmen as the main pillar of the existing system in the villages were omitted and their roles were devolved to the Islamic council. Gradually, some new institutions and organizations such as Construction Djihad, the centers for delivering services to rural areas and tribes, rural district, and Development council were established, with some plans for establishing Offices of Rural development and Houses of Development "(Vosouqi, 1994, p. 42). New operation methods such as joint ownership and production cooperatives started to expand the collective activities and revive the traditional institutions of collective activity. All these transformed the land structure of rural community, because: 1) the large proprietors and farming investors who were mainly living abroad were dispossessed, 2) the revolutionary government confiscated the large production units that belonged to Pahlavi family and their relatives y, and 3) most of the joint stock farming companies and rural production cooperatives dissolved.

The land reforms after revolution, accompanied by major debates from different groups started distributing lands among landless villagers and peasants who had very small plots of land. The post-revolution rural community can be stratified as follows:

The proprietors, who can be divided into three groups of large, medium, and small landowners, usually live in cities, engage with farmers through tenure or sharecropping arrangements, and sometimes even leave their lands uncultivated.

The independent peasants who have lands and their number have increased after the revolution. This group is divided into three groups of rich, middle, and poor peasants. The rich peasants usually employ some labor and enjoy relatively high social mobility, purchase the lands of poor peasants and small absentee landowners, and sometimes rent lands from large landowners. The medium peasants employ no worker and use the labor force of

their family. Although they mainly live on agriculture, they do other non-agricultural activities as well. The poor peasants usually sell their lands due to financial problems and insufficiency of their lands. Therefore, the rate of migration is high among them and they engage in different occupations.

After revolution, the higher strata of social hierarchy disappeared due to their relation with the previous regime but the rich and medium peasants occupied a better position. As "Sirous Yeganeh" sees it, after the Revolution, small, medium, and state ownerships enjoyed protection and increased in quantity. The production structure mainly consisted of small households and the new state cooperatives called Joint ownerships started increasing. The absence of large proprietors and higher strata of society enabled middle strata of the villages to move upward in the pyramid of social stratification and occupy the dominant position, while the lower strata of the peasantry are still in their previous position. The landless villagers are in a very grave situation. Neither the agricultural sector, nor the non-agricultural sector of the rural community is able to provide jobs for them" (Yeganeh, quoting Lahsaei Zadeh, 1993, p. 114).

The landless farmers: This group is composed of share-croppers who have 'nassagh' rights, own means of production, and work individually on lands of landowners, and tenants who have obtained cultivation right by owning some of the productions means or land rents. Where the land plots are small, they engage in non-agricultural activities as well and if the rented plot of land is large, they employ some farm labors.

Khoushneshins: This group consists of agricultural workers, workers in service and construction sectors, and those who work in government organizations. After revolution, this group, especially workers in service sector and government organizations has increased in size and due to the decline in the social status of ownership, they have obtained a better social position in the social stratification system.

With the entrance of the state to the rural community and formation of state bureaucracy, we witness the emergence of social and administrative roles in village councils, House of Gilds, reeve, Khadkhodas, and the like. After revolution, these forms disappeared from mid 1980s and even the families that were related with them somehow lost their social status, and those who were directly or indirectly involved in the revolution were organized in Islamic rural councils that were neither purely public nor officially bureaucratic, established based on the prevailing revolutionary atmosphere (Lahsaei Zadeh, 1998, p. 405). Different government institutions such as Islamic councils, Boards of directors of cooperatives, liaison officers with Construction Djihad, Basidj, and other organizations replaced the pre-revolution institutions and different state organizations entered the villages as agents of agricultural and construction development, so that the relations between villagers and the state emerged as a new subject in rural discussions. This was an outcome of the insistence of the government on agricultural self-sufficiency. Before the revolution, the Ministry of Agriculture was the sole responsible for rural affairs but after revolution, a multiplicity of organizations and institutions started interventions in farmers' lives and doubtlessly, each of them exerted its power through its own specific mechanisms. Land utilization in the form of joint ownership and production cooperatives received more attention for increasing the production, achieving economic self-sufficiency, keeping lands integration, helping to expand mechanized and commercial agriculture, and revival of collective methods of production.

The developments in the last few decades have resulted in vast developments in physical and social aspects of rural community so that we are witnessing provision of considerable services such as supplying water, construction of roads, electricity distribution, expansion of communication and media networks, etc, although the productive and occupation generation received less attention. Therefore, a new system of expectations emerged among villagers that had made them dependent on the government. On the other hand, the determining criteria for social status of individuals changed and shifted away from ownership to expertise, professional and communicative information and skills, and interactions with the world outside village boundaries. More welfare facilities, expansion of relations with larger villages and cities, and increasing local and psychological mobility of villagers have paved the way for some sort of social merging and have enabled the villages to break the close loop they were facing before.

Furthermore, increasing number of educated young villagers, entrance of their youth to the universities and higher education centers, and the resulting occupational differentiation resulted in a new social structure in the rural community that is significantly convergent with the social structure of the urban community.

In 1980s, the objectives and goals of revolution caused the sociological studies in rural issues to focus on eradicating deprivations from villages, evaluating land issues, performance of the Land Distribution Board, and plans for integration of lands. In 1990s, defining the social problems of rural communities mainly focused on

rural poverty and employment (Zahedi, 2001, p. 82). In addition, in recent years we have witnessed attention to problem-oriented approaches in debates on rural development that is mainly due to the position of rural development in development programs, the confrontation of villages with newer problems, and ultimately discussing rural development in higher education levels. Under such conditions, the studies on Iranian rural development captured the attention of rural researchers such as Goudel, Azkia, Ghaffari, Taleb, Rafiepour, Lahsaeizadeh, Zahedi Mazandarani, and shakouri, each of whom approaches this topic from his own perspective.

Works and writings with educational orientation

Considering presentation of rural topics as courses in social sciences, especially the formation of courses such as rural sociology and rural development brought the production of educationally oriented texts to the fore and forced the scholars to write and translate on this domain. In 1963, Motadel wrote a book titled "Promotion of Modern Thoughts in the Villages" that discusses the mechanisms for transferring the cultural development to villages. J.Behnam and S.Rasekhj (1969) devoted the third chapter of their "An Introduction to Sociology" to Iranian rural sociology (before Land Reforms) that focused on subjects including definition of the village, living in villages, the population, economic, legal, social, and administrative composition of the villages, and the culture, spirit, and behavior of villagers. In 1969, "An Introduction to Understanding Villages in Iran" by K. Vadii, and "Sheshdangi" by E. Ajami were published and remained in focus for several years. In 1971, the Publication center for Tehran University, College of Social Studies and Cooperation, published "Iranian Rural Sociology" by K. Khosrovi was published as the first independent textbook on Iranian rural sociology (Zahedi Mazandarani, 1994, p. 168). This book consisted of five sections titled "Ownership and Landownership Relations", "The Structure of Iranian Rural Community", "The Rural Household, Social Stratification of Iranian Rural Community at the Time of Land Reforms", and "Land Reforms and Their Impact on Iranian Rural Community". In 1976 and 1977, Khosrovi published "A Research in Iranian Rural Community" and "Iranian Peasant Community". In 1972, Publication Center for Tehran University published "Boneh" by Javad Safinejad that has studied boneh as one of the collective production units. In 1973, the Nobel Publishers in Tabriz published "Rural Community: Identifying Rural Types" by Ahmad Zarforoushan that mainly focused on morphology and different types of villages. In the same year, Nobel publishers published two books: "Rural Sociology" by Ali Akbar Torabi, and "Rural Sociology: Research Methodology of Villages" by Nasrullahj Pourafgari.

Ali Akbar Nikkholgh wrote a book titled "An Introduction to Iranian Rural Sociology" in 1979 that was the outcome of the writer's researches and was more comprehensive as a textbook of rural sociology compared with the books written up to that time. This book discussed on topics including rural sociology and its relation with other sciences, sociological differences between city and village, housing in villages, manifestations of industrial cooperation in villages, geographical and social mobility in rural community, family in the villages, work system in traditional rural family, marriage and its forms in villages, motivations, tendencies and wishes. Attached to this book is a monograph that serves as a guide to monographic research.

In 1986, Etelaat Publishers published "Sociology of Development and Underdevelopment Iranian Villages" that was the first book that applied the dominant theoretical and practical approaches of development sociology for exploring and analyzing the rural problems in Iran. The main and second part of this book on Iranian rural community includes these chapters: a review of rural development studies in Iran, agricultural structure on the verge of rural development programs, Land Reforms and its legal phases, Land reforms and transformations in social, economic and political structures of rural communities, Land reforms and underdevelopment in peasant agricultural section, Rural cooperatives, transformation of agricultural production systems and its impacts on peasant community, and rural joint ownerships, and rural, agricultural and tribal service centers. In 1987, Keyhan Publishers published "Rural Sociology" by Mansour Vosoughi, that consisted nine chapters: Village and its Characteristics, The Structure of Rural Population and its Movement, Rural Family, Social Stratification in Villages, Forms of Agricultural Utilizations, Pseudo-Feudal System of Large Landowners in Iran, Developments in Land Structure of Rural Communities, Land Structure in Traditional Communities and Collective and Cooperative Activities, and Iranian Rural Community after the Islamic Revolution.

The advantage of this book, compared to the previous ones, is that for the first time it raises the important discussion on Asian production methods in a textbook for Iranian rural sociology (chapter 6) and devotes an independent chapter (chapter 9) to the conditions of rural community after the Islamic revolution. In Social

Developments in Iranian Villages (1990) , Lahsaeizadeh criticizes the studies on the ground that a majority of them are not based on structural views , ignore the external factors in rural developments, and are not successful in combining the internal and external factors for analyzing rural developments . Using historical research method and documentation technique, he has studied the developments in Iranian rural community into three historical periods: before 1962 land reforms, after land reforms, and the effects of the Islamic revolution on Iranian rural community. He believes that the land reforms of 1962 and the Islamic revolution in 1979 have tremendously influenced Iranian rural developments .He studies the effects of these historical developments on the ownership pattern for agricultural lands, division and allocation of rural products, social division of labor in villages, and level of development for means of production. The writer believes that prior to land reforms the structure of Iranian rural community has contained a collection of feudal and independent peasant relations, but the social configuration of Iran under the dominance of international capitalist relations, have resulted in an unbalanced , limited social development.

This has led to land reforms for expansion of capitalist agriculture that resulted in destruction of pre-capitalist relations and emergence of dependent capitalism in the villages. Regarding the effects of Islamic revolution on villages, the writer has emphasized on the growth of non-agricultural sector and its consequences for social status of villagers. Hogglund (2009) wrote an article titled "The Islamic Revolution at Iran" that discusses the Islamic Republic Policies. He believed that these policies aimed largely at achieving social justice, but they didn't close the income gap between rural and urban households. However, the Iranian villagers were healthier, better educated and more engaged in politics than they were before the 1979 revolution.

In 2005, Mahdi Taleb and Mousa Anbari have studied rural community, focusing on dimensions of change and development in the Iranian rural community in "Rural Sociology". This book contains the summary of 30 years of study in different rural areas of Iran , reviews the definitions and concepts that are related with sociology ,rural community, and the relation of rural sociology with different disciplines of social sciences ,and studies the environmental features of rural communities including the natural and human factors and the relations between city and village, rural family, its characteristics and changes, the horizontal and vertical system of rural social relations ,land reforms and its aftermaths in the rural community, rural development, rural promotion, rural development in Iran , and different types of rural production units. This book contains useful information on rural sociology and studies, but as its title and divisions imply, it contains several subject, each of which can be the subject of an independent book.

Conclusion

The history of studying the rural community in social sciences, especially in sociology, is simultaneous with the establishment of this discipline in the field of education and research. The academic circles and research institutes, including the Research Institute for Social Researches and Studies, Economical Research Institute, and the Cooperative Research Institute of Tehran University and the research centers that are involved in rural issues play a more fundamental role in this regard. Based on the history of these centers, we can claim that the scientific review and study of rural communities in Iran dates back to almost 50 years ago. Any kind of scientific recognition of social conditions of rural communities requires considerable information regarding the historical process of development of this section, especially in recent decades, because such changes have, themselves, turned into foundations for newer reviews.

General works with a relatively long history include works such as travel accounts, historical writings, and especially the writings by geographers. Particularly, a collection of books written by Islamic geographers of the third century (A.H.) onward may be mentioned that are generally called *Masalek va Mamalik* (religions and countries) and contain information on regions, cities, villages, economic conditions, type of activities, taxes, distances, and road conditions. Among special writings one can mention rural monographs starting from 1883 with the book "*Matla`-ul-shams* (Where the Sun Rises).

Paralleling these studies, we see a number of monographs written by scholars through scientific, systematic methods. *Al-e-ahmad* is among forerunners of these monographs who tried to depict a vivid picture of the production relations, cultural images, and other aspects of rural life in Iran. Furthermore, establishing a M.A course in Social Sciences at the Institute for Social Studies and Researches motivated some students to write monographs on some villages (Zahedi Mazandarani, 1994, p. 161). From 1970s onward, the studies on rural regions of the country took on a political-sociological aspect and reviews of the consequences of Land Reforms formed the bulk of works in this period. Since the consequences of land reforms in different aspects of social,

economic and political life came to the fore after the Islamic Revolution, the rural researchers, inspired by the common theoretical frameworks in sociological reviews, launched systematic studies on the situation of rural communities. Considering presentation of rural topics as courses in social sciences, especially the formation of courses such as rural sociology and rural development brought the production of educationally oriented texts to the fore and forced the scholars to write and translate on this domain.

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