A Sociological Study of the Culture of Development in Hawrami Proverbs

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Abstract: *The present study investigates the culture of development in Hawrami proverbs. Analysis of development-related variables is the basis of sociology. As collective phenomena, proverbs are part of the oral culture of a society and their investigation can sociologically explain cultural and social foundations of the society. This research attempts to specify 6 development-related parameters in Hawrami adages combining the ideas of Max Weber and the current viewpoints in modernization theory. Documented data is analyzed through content analysis technique. Statistical population of the study includes 4500 Hawrami proverbs 299 cases of which are analyzed as they involve development-related variables. Unlike the prevalent outlook in modernization theory that anti-development components have a significant role in local communities like Hawraman, research results illustrate that pro-development variables in these proverbs are more than anti-development ones and that Hawraman's underdevelopment stems from the inconsistency between development programs and social and cultural context of this society.*

Introduction

There is no agreement among development theorists concerning the role of culture in development. "Modernization theorists from Karl Marx to Daniel Bell have argued that economic development brings pervasive cultural changes. But others, from Max Weber to Samuel Huntington, have claimed that cultural values are an enduring and autonomous influence on society" (Inglehart & Baker, 2000: 19). Modernization theory has particularly subscribed to the dissuasive role of traditional cultures in development. This theory argues that each society develops only when they move away from their heritage and traditional values. Over the recent centuries this approach has affected development programs in Iran. Consequently, development programs have been designed based on modernization theory and—consciously or unconsciously—with the assumption that there are no substructures and cultural values in line with sustainable development in a local society like Hawraman. However, development planners in Iran have argued for the necessity of providing conditions for the institutionalization of positive cultural values in local communities through operating modernization principles—with a special focus on economic and technical aspects. As a result of these programs, social problems in Iran did not decrease, they increased instead. In addition, the rate of economic growth in other countries shows that "During the second half of the century, non-Western societies unexpectedly surpassed their Western role model in key aspects of modernization. East Asia, for example, attained the world's highest rate of economic growth" (Inglehart & Baker, 2000: 19). Several studies have considered proverbs as one of the most important elements of culture. Durkhiem (1997) argues that a proverb is a statement of compressed sense, thought and collective beliefs and since it is shared among a number of people, it will take shape as a rule. Proverbs "have undergone changes of human societies but maintained the core of culture" (Zhao, 2012: 2073). They "usually express common sense and collective wisdom" (Ennaji, 2008: 168). And since proverbs are spread by people, they can exhibit social attitudes. According to Zhou (2010),

> Proverbs have been collectively created by folk people of the human society since ancient times. They are spread widely from mouth to mouth. As concisely and comparatively stereotyped by

artist statements, they have summed up the rich wisdom and universal experience of the masses, becoming the important carrier of the history of social attitudes. (p. 96)

Hence, studying proverbs can make us familiar with social attitudes and clarify the extent to which social attitudes are adapted with development discourse. Page and Washington (1987) argue that "The word proverb has Greek origins and means, literally, a wayside saying. Cervantes described proverbs as 'short sentences drawn from long experience'" (p. 50). The current paper seeks to explain the culture of development by content analysis of proverbs in Hawramn. The issues addressed in this study are: a) identification and explanation of the positive factors for development and, b) identification and explanation of the negative factors for development.

Study Field

According to MacKenzie (2011), Hawrāmān is a mountainous region on the western frontier of Persian Kurdistan. It extends for approximately 50 km, from a point west of Marīvān south-eastwards to the confluence of the two branches of the river Sīrvān. The Kūh-e Owrāmān range has several peaks of over 2,000 m, the highest being Kūh-e Takht, 2,985 m. It is continued south of the Sīrvān by the Kūh-e Šāhō, which rises to 3,223 m. Parallel to these, east of the Sīrvān, is the Kūh-e Sālān, 2,597 m. The chief products of the area are various orchard fruits, walnuts, gall-apples (for tanning), and terebinth mastic. The territory has four divisions: Owrāmān-e Lohōn, southwest of the main range; main village, Nowsūd: Owrāmān-e Takht, north of Kūh-e Takht; main village, Šahr (Šār)-e Owrāmān: Dezlī, further: Razāb (Razāw), around the Kūh-e Sālān. The population of the valley numbers perhaps 10,000 persons. They are distinguished from the Kurds, who surround them on all sides, to some extent by their traditional dress, but especially by their language, which is an archaic dialect of the Gōrāni group. The Lohōni branch, in particular, acquired Bīāra and Tawēla, both the seats of Naqæbandīshaikhs, among other villages in Iraq, and Pāva, to the south of the Sīrvān. The dialect of Avroman, properly Hawrāmi, is the most archaic of the Gōrāni group. All Gōrāni dialects exhibit a number of phonological features which link them with the dialects of central Iran and distinguish them from Kurdish. While the main Gōrāni language area, to the west of Kermānshāh, is an island in a sea of chiefly Kurdish dialects, the Hawrāmān now forms a separate islet to the north. It is clear, however, that the neighboring Kurdish dialects have encroached on a much wider Gōrāni area and have been considerably affected in the process. There has also been much interchange of vocabulary. (pp. 110-111)

Literature Review

Nakhavaly and Sharifi (2013) study sex discrimination in Persian proverbs and show that Persian is not a gender language, but studying 12000 Persian adages through this research illustrates that there are elements of oppression in some of these proverbs which relate to women and violate the rights and dignity of them. 179 out of 12000 proverbs include discrimination against both sexes. 84% of them include elements of semantic derogation against females and 16% include sex discrimination against males. Semantic derogation in Persian language shows women dominantly as: "evil and capricious", "The root of disasters" and "inferior and worthless" beings and men dominantly as "avaricious" absolutist and "cruel".

Lahsaeizadeh and Homafar (2009) attempt to identify the cultural factors in folkloric stories of Fars province which are effective on development. In this article, the authors have designed the theoretical framework of the research on the basis of creating the common and fundamental understanding according to the categories of culture, text and development. In this theoretical framework, analogous cultural factors have been divided into two groups each including six factors. According to the findings of this research, cultural actors in developing societies could be taken as a basis to create motivation for moving toward development. Yousefi (2012), in a comparative study, examines culture in Kurdish and Farsi proverbs. This study reveals that Kurdish and Farsi proverbs have spoken of two categories of values and norms, and anti-values and abnormalities. First, positive values and norms such as encouraging to truthfulness, effort, patience and tolerance, pragmatism, wisdom, etc; and second, blaming negative values, anti-values and abnormalities, such as lying, avarice, cruelty, etc. Also, as Yousefi has notified, based on Malinowski's theory, three individual, social and combined functions are conceivable. Research on Iranian Kurds to date has tended to focus on historical and political dimensions rather than cultural and social aspects. Few studies have been conducted on the impacts of modernization on Hawraman. More important studies on Hawraman have been carried out by Daneshmehr and Ahmadrash (2009), Iman and Mohammadpur (2010), and Mohammadpur and Abdollahi (2011) . But, no research has yet engaged to survey culture of development in Hawraman.

Theoretical Framework

In sociological literature on the relationship between culture and development, Max Weber's approach is the most famous. Weber (1996) has tried to explain industrialization and the development of Western societies through interpreting the roots of capitalism and effective factors on forming capitalism in Western societies. Then he has discussed elements like rationality and authority, and, based on these elements, has identified processes like society and community. In his seminal article, Weber discusses the relationship between culture, values and social changes. Clearly, Weber's article has proposed some subjects that nowadays stand exactly in the framework of development studies. The attitude of social actors towards neo-behaviorism and its relation to cultural and social structures have been considered by different theorists (e.g., Deutsch, 1961; Durkheim, 1997; Giddens, 1990; Habermas, 1984; Lerner, 1958; Moore, 1978; Parsons, 1991; Weber, 1978; Webster, 1984). In particular, in social mobilization theory, Karl Deutsch (1961) focuses on the role of modernization and sociability and believes that modernization influences sociability and sociability in turn forms political views and behaviors. He believes that "social mobilization is a process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior" (p. 494).

Moreover, Alex Inkeles's (1960) theory introduces 9 characteristics for 'Modern Man'. For instance, defining time as the third indicator of modern man, he believes that a man is considered to be modern if his mind is directed to the present and future more than the past and he believes that a man is more modern if he accepts division of time into hours. Also, in the fourth criterion for modern man Inkeles focuses on planning and purpose in life. He argues that modern man tends to plan and organize his affairs and believes it to be a type of life management. Paul Harrison (1981) distinguishes between static and progressive cultures and considers time orientation—one of his ten-step outlines—in this differentiation. He claims that progressive cultures emphasize the future while static cultures emphasize the present or past.

Materialism is undoubtedly one the most conspicuous attributes of modern man. It refers to the tendency towards the pomp and luxury of everyday life. Regarding wealth accumulation and tendency to optimal consumption, Harrison (1981) believes that frugality is the mother of investment in progressive cultures and a threat to egalitarianism in static ones. Moreover, according to Harrison, work is central to the good life in modern communities but is a burden in non-modern cultures. It is evident that when a community pays more attention to material issues, people will be more attentive trying to gain financial ability. An American psychologist, David C. McClelland (1967), in his *The Achieving Society,* mentions a type of mind virus which he believes to be affecting societies' progress periods. He takes the mind virus as the need for achievement and believes that this need is an aspect of personality on a par with mental motives having two personal and social dimensions. He recalls material needs as a basic attribute of developed communities.

Parsons (1991) introduces the concept of "pattern variables" to distinguish between traditional and modern communities. Pattern variables are important social relationships in the context of the cultural system—the most important and elevated system in Parsons's theoretical framework—which are durable and repeatable (So, 2008, p. 34). Parsons (1991) believes that the choice of actors in traditional and modern societies is based on the following dichotomies: affectivity vs. affective neutrality, particularism vs. universalism, collective orientation vs. self-orientation, ascription vs. achievement, and diffuseness vs. specificity. Peasantry subculture theory has been investigated by scholars—such as Foster, 1965; Redfield, 1947; Rogers & Svenning, 1969; Rosen, 1964; Tax, 1972—within the framework of structural functionalism. Rogers (1969) emphasizes the significant role of limited time perspective in traditional communities as one of the most important obstacles to the development of these societies. He underlines the individual and personality variables of people within rural subculture and addresses the barriers to modernization process in rural communities. He mentions the lack of innovation as another important obstacle to the modernization of rural societies.

With regard to the above theoretical framework, the present research attempts to study and specify the content of positive and negative variables related to development in the proverbs of Hawrami culture and literature.

Methodology

Some scholars believe that undeveloped and developed societies are different in terms of scientism, democratic thinking, rationality, universalism, innovation, pragmatism, and time perspective. Various researchers have measured these parameters in different ways. This study is an attempt to measure the following parameters: rationalism, materialism, pragmatism, lack of innovation, limited time perspective, and particularism. These parameters have been studied through the following variables.

Rationality:

a) Discipline and punctuality
b) Having long-term goals and plans in life, and
c) Calculability.

Materialism:

a) The worth of worldly possessions in life
b) Improvidence and waste**,** and
c) Accepting the role of financial ability and its importance in life.

Pragmatism: the variables related to the practical aspects of thoughts and beliefs.

Lack of innovation: the variables related to people's readiness for invention and accepting new methods to achieve goals.

Limited time perspective: the variables related to lowering the wishes and expectations of actors in life.

Particularism: the variables related to the promotion of social relationships associated with particularistic and non-contractual norms.

In this study, following Wen Duanzheng (2005), proverbs are divided into two categories. Wen classifies proverbs in terms of their content or subject; these two major categories are: a) Natural proverbs containing the experience of production and relevant knowledge about production and b) Social proverbs that are about the social life of people. (Wen, 2005: 36-49). This paper focuses on social proverbs. Each analysis unit in the current study is a proverb. In the present research, the qualitative method has been applied and data has been collected as in documentary studies. Amini's (2013) book entitled *Hawrami Proverbs* was chosen in order to gather data. Amini has collected more than 4500 Hawrami proverbs and this study, instead of sampling, examines and analyzes all of the proverbs in his book. 299 folkloric proverbs that include factors and variables considered for measuring the culture of development in Hawraman region were picked. Hence, statistical population of the study includes 299 Hawrami proverbs; in order to assess the content of these proverbs, the "content analysis technique" was applied.

Main Research Hypothesis

Considering the common standpoint in the ideas of Max Weber and modernization theory about developing societies, the basic hypothesis of this study is the following: "The number of negative cultural components associated with development in Hawrami proverbs is more than positive cultural variables and themes." This hypothesis underpins all the other hypotheses in this research which will be covered separately in research findings.

Research Findings

1. Discipline **and punctuality:** Discipline and punctuality refer to the behaviors among individuals within a population established in the process of sociability; the behavioral patterns emerged from a culture can play a key role in people's sense of order. Based on the theoretical framework of the study, it is expected that Hawrami proverbs should not encourage discipline and punctuality in people. Such a hypothesis suggests that the number of negative variables about encouraging people to order and discipline should be greater than the positive variables in this regard. With regard to the above indicator, research findings illustrated that 17 cases of the examined proverbs—such as "*Jherejhî wyarene gîryo*" (LT[1]: "Everything must be done in its own time"—are related to discipline and time and, among these 17 proverbs, 13 instances have a positive orientation towards discipline and punctuality variables in social affairs and 4 instances have a negative orientation.

2. Having long-term goals and plans in life**:** For Inkeles (2013), as previously noted, the fourth criterion for modern man is to have a long-term goal and plan in life. Accordingly, the hypothesis can be presented as "in Hawrami proverbs, the number of negative factors about encouraging people to have a long-term goal and plan in life is more than the number of related positive variables." In general, 57 proverbs about

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[1] Literal Translation

planning and goal in life were extracted—e.g., "*Serey bêsewda, pey çêrû xakî khasa,*" i.e. "A man without a goal and dream is better to be dead"—among which 47 cases have a positive orientation towards the related variables and 10 cases have a negative viewpoint. Consequently, based on research results, it can be argued that among the proverbs associated with this variable, 82% indicate that in order to achieve their goals, people need to have a plan and goals in life; and 17% of the adages have considered planning and goal setting unnecessary.

3. **Calculability:** Calculability refers to the trade-off of affairs by people and has been discussed by scholars like Inkeles (1960) as one of the most important traits of modern man. Following Inkeles, it is expected that people in traditional cultures should act without calculability and assessment. Therefore, the hypothesis can be presented as "in Hawrami proverbs, the number of negative factors about encouraging calculability in people while doing social acts is more than the number of the related positive variables." Research findings indicate that 50 adages are related to people's tendency or lack of tendency to calculability—for example, "*Awell bengakeyt şêle, îja awî horkere*" which means "Before doing anything, evaluate its advantages and disadvantages"—among which 47 proverbs are in line with the related variables and the rest 3 have the opposite orientation. In other words, 94% of the proverbs have emphasized calculability and assessment before the action and 6% have ignored this trait and have focused on reliance upon God and other variables as chance to achieve success.

4. **The worth of worldly possessions in life:** Establishment of materialistic thought in societies can play a positive role in their progress and, with regard to McClelland's (1967) emphasis on the tendency of individuals in modern societies to materialism, the following hypothesis can be proposed: "In Hawrami adages, any attempt to acquire material assets is taken to be a negative deed." Research findings reveal that 19 instances of the examined sayings—such as "*Horamî be kollî sûko mezano blo rare*" (LT: "A well-known Hawrami proverb indicates their tendency to work hard"—indicate materialistic factors in life among which 13 cases are in line with the variable related to the worth of worldly possessions in life and 6 proverbs are out of line with the above variable. This means that 68% of the adages have emphasized the positive role of material possessions in life and 32% of them have disavowed the attempt to reach for earthly welfare.

5. **Improvidence and waste:** Following Harrison (1981) who takes frugality as an attribute of progressive cultures, the related hypothesis can be stated as "the number of negative variables related to improvidence and waste in Hawrami adages are more the related positive variables." The related research findings indicate that 13 cases of the examined proverbs—like "*Qenaet gewreterîn dellwetmenîn*" (LT: "Contentment and providence are the largest capitals"—are related to spending. Eleven instances of these proverbs encourage people to avoid improvidence in life. And 2 adages have denied any attempt to manage wealth and being frugal and have emphasized luxury and pleasure-seeking in life instead. Thus, it can be argued that 84% of the proverbs have emphasized frugality and optimal consumption and the rest 16% have not focused on this issue.

6. **Accepting the role of financial ability and its importance in life:** With regard to Harrison's (1981) viewpoint, it can be imagined that earthly life and financial ability should be defined as negative aspects in Hawrami adages and hence the following hypothesis can be proposed: "The number of negative variables related the significant role of financial ability in life in Hawrami proverbs should be greater than the related positive variables." Twenty-five cases of the examined proverbs, such as "*Xwa kero î dese mohtajû ew desî tnebo,*" (LT: "Poverty is evil and a man should not make himself dependent on others"), were related to the role of financial ability in life. Seventy-six percent of these sayings (19 instances) have accepted the significant role of financial ability in life while 24% of them (5 proverbs) not only have denied any attempt to gain financial ability but also have taken it to be unnecessary.

7. **Pragmatism:** Modern societies emphasize pragmatism to mean the practical aspects of thoughts and beliefs. Max Weber (1996) believes that in modern societies rational thought or the related interest form social relationships. Accordingly, it is expected that people in traditional communities like Hawraman should not favor realism and practicality very much. Therefore, the related hypothesis can be put in this way: "In Hawrami proverbs, the number of negative variables related to the tendency towards pragmatism and its importance in life should be more than the number of related positive variables." Research results illustrate that 40 instances of the proverbs—e.g., "*Tîryew dwê insane,*" i.e. "Try to hit two birds with one stone"—are in line with pragmatic acts and 8 cases are not out of line with the related variable; in other

words, 48 adages indicate pragmatism in their content 83% of which have emphasized the practical aspects of thoughts and beliefs and 17% have considered realism unnecessary in life.

8. **Particularism:** With regard to Parsons's (1991) pattern variables, particularism is an attribute of traditional societies and its non-contractual aspects are emphasized in social relationships; in these societies, people's choice is based on particularistic norms. Thus, it can be argued that "Hawrami proverbs are trying to promote particularism and localism in social relationships." Research findings indicate that there are 41 proverbs related to particularism and universalism—such as "*Be şerae awî mrdo*" (LT: "A man must be obedient to the norms and conventions of society")—and that 33 cases of them have emphasized the importance of universalism in social relationships and 8 instances have stressed particularism and localism in these relationships.

9. **Limited time perspective:** According to Rogers (1969), as long as the limited time perspective is common in traditional societies, underdevelopment will be also prevalent. Therefore, the hypothesis is posed that "Hawrami adages are trying to promote limited time perspective in social relationships." Research findings reveal that 10 cases of the studied proverbs—for example, "*Îse awrama, sewy be mn çêş*" (LT: "Now I'm in need, future profit is to no avail")—involve positive and negative variables related to time perspective of the actors among which 6 instances (60%) promote the limited time perspective in society and 4 cases (40%) emphasize the promotion of unlimited time perspective.

10. **Lack of innovation:** Innovation refers to people's readiness for invention and accepting new methods to achieve goals. According to peasantry subculture theory, it is predicted that Hawrami proverbs should be averse to innovation and acceptance of novel ideas; thus, the hypothesis is presented that "the number of negative variables related to innovation in Hawrami adages is more than the related positive variables." The related research findings illustrate that there are 19 and 6 cases of the positive and negative variables related to innovation in the examined proverbs, respectively—like "*Joye horkere,awîş lwabo pore*," i.e. "Choose a method that is commonly used in the community." In other words, 76% of the adages indicate lack of inventiveness in the society and 25% of them consider innovation a necessary matter in everyday acts.

Conclusion

Some thinkers believe that the position of societies on development, rationality, and universal behaviors are the main parameters of development discourse; in this study, some related indicators have been applied to measure these parameters. In Research Findings section, it was observed that the majority of Hawrami adages were trying to promote rational and universalistic values in society. Findings on materialism and pragmatism revealed that the frequency of related positive cultural components are much more than the negative ones. Accordingly, research findings reject the related hypotheses. Research findings on the limited time perspective and lack of innovation confirmed the related hypotheses, i.e. rural communities have a limited time perspective and lack innovative thoughts to achieve goals. Now that Hawrami proverbs attempt to promote anti-development values in these two aspects, it is suggested that there should be some educational programs on mass media in order to gradually change the related beliefs and attitudes in the villagers; this, in turn, will increase positive cultural values associated with innovation and time perspective. The question could be arisen that despite the presence of proper cultural context related to development in Hawraman, why the community is still undeveloped. It can be argued that Hawraman's underdevelopment originates from the inconsistency between development programs and social and cultural context of this society; in fact, the answer to the above question lies in planning and implementation of development programs in Hawraman because Iranian development reformers have been inspired by modernization and thus have tried to follow top-down planning. In other words, development program designers in Iran claim that this method can promote and institutionalize pro-development values in traditional communities like Hawraman. The present condition of the society in Hawraman and the results of other studies (e.g., Azimi, 2004; Azkia, 1994) point to the failure of linear and non-participatory models of development in different parts of Iran. The emergence of post-development discourses and participatory models of development is due to the breakdown of modernization to obtain sustainable development for local communities.

In fact, the emergence of post-development discourse (e.g., Escobar, 1992, 2000, 2002, 2011; Pieterse, 2009; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997; Ziai, 2004, 2007) as a new theory in development literature is traced back to recent shifts in the sociology of development. First of all, advocators of post-development discourse argue that it should be noted that during the process of development, positive variables in local cultures must be recognized and used.

Moreover, they maintained that involvement of local culture in the development process will lead to the success of development programs. Otherwise, not only development programs will fail—or at least not as successful as they could be otherwise—but also most of them will have negative consequences including cultural, socio-economic and even political outcomes. Thus, participatory management should not be overlooked in the development of societies.

Acknowledgements

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