

The Advent of Marxist thoughts to Iran: The Formation of Economic Historiography in Iran

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Abstract

The oldest document obtained regarding the arrival of Marxist thoughts to Iran is the one which in was published in written form in Akhtar Newspaper in Istanbul (March 1906) and also it was published by Iran Newspaper. The publication of these thoughts later continued by the publication of multiple articles about socialism thoughts in the famous newspaper "Iran-e-Now) which was the official publication of the Democratic Party of Iran. However, new socialist thoughtssince one or two decades before the Constitutional Movementgradually entered thoughts, history and literature of Iran and influenced some of the modernist intellectuals such as Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, Talebov, Akhundzadeh and other scholars of the realm of politics. These thoughts caused that in the field of historiography there would be formed a movement and Iranian writers, influenced by Marx's thoughts, create some works in the field of historiography whose dominant forms were society and economy. By exploiting Marx's theories in two axes, Feudal mode of production and Asiatic mode of production of Iranian society and history are investigated and analyzed sociologically.

Key words: Marxist thoughts, Leninist thoughts, Feudal mode of production, Asiatic mode of production.

Introduction

The intellectual and political ground of leftist party in Iran in the early 20th century appeared firstly in the form of Marxist cores and then in the form of parties, organizations and socialist and communist groups (Ahmadi, 2008: 17). Most of the historians of Marxist in Iran agreed

that the advent of the Marxist movement in Iran is related to the presence of Iranian workers and immigrants in the Caucasus and their participation in social-democratic systems in Baku; therefore, Social-Democratic Organization of Iran (IjtimaiyounA'mioun) an Hemmat Organization and Armenian parties (Hunchakian and Dashnaktsutyun) whose some branches were set out in Iranian cities caused that Marxist and Socialist thoughts entered Iran (KhosroPanah, 2009: 13; Alamuti, 1991: 25). With this theory and different documents obtained regarding the advent of Marxist and Socialist thoughts or the Leftist thoughts in Iran, the role of Iranian workers or immigrant in the Caucasus and Iranian Armenians and scholars working in Tsarist Russia and Western Europe were significant in promoting these thoughts. However the Modern Soviet Union's historiographers of Iran and Iranian authors influenced by their ideas believe that the advent and evolution of Social-Democratic and Marxist thoughts in Iran is assigned to Stalin, such a thought led by Stalin came to Iran and while Armenian authors particularly Khosrow Shakeri believes, by referring to Kautsky's archive, this hypothesis is rejected, and he believes that socialist thoughts and institutions in Iran was proposed by Armenian intellectuals (Shakeri, 2009: 32). The Constitutional revolution in Iran contributed to the advent of Marxist thoughts in Iran and paved the path of entering these thoughts to Iran. Communist movements and raises in Iran (Jangal), political parties and groups and figures took roles in advancing socialist and Marxist objectives in Iran however for a short time, by forming Pahlavi government and the advent of Reza Shah, who Marxist thoughts was in conflict with his government and structure the expansion of the thoughts stopped, these parties were not be able to freely promote their ideas and consequently resorted to secret and underground groups to be able to promote their ideas. However, since the government of Reza Khan, these thoughts have been oppressed, prisoned, exiled and pushed into peripheries and this period was a fearful one for Marxist and Leftists. By dethroning Reza Shah in 1941. Again these parties started their activities and became the most influential ones in Iran or undoubtedly they were considered the greatest parties in Iran and the leaders of the parties declared their independence. It should be considered that however Reza shah oppressed the Marxists' and communists' activities, their leaders were not prisoned. But at the same time (1931), Iranian leftist educated individuals abroad such as Iraj Eskandari and Morteza Alavi acted against Reza Shah's government. In spite of the presence of bottlenecks and limitations for communists in Iran, Dr. Taghi Arani, by publishing Donya Journal in 1937 started his activities in an underground way which later he and his followers became known as 53 person group which has a significant name in the history of Iran (Rajablu, 2010: 6; Rahmanian, 2012: 283-285). After dethroning Reza Shah, 53 person group were released and in September 29 1941, the greatest leftist movement in Iran, Tudeh Party, came forth.

Tudeh Party which was considered as the most outstanding Marxist movement in Iran from 1941 to 1953 had a great role in political and social upheavals of Iran and undoubtedly it was the main and basic role in Iran in the mentioned period.

Reflections on Marxist Thought (Asiatic and Feudal modes of production)

To know Marxism, it is necessary to be aware of the social conditions of 19th century particularly in Britain; the life conditions of working class and philosophical and economic works and outcomes which they had, which from Marx's viewpoint and Marxism's followers they were significant because in 1849 when Industrial Revolution was coming -Marx was born in Germany but lived in Britain- the situation of workers and occurred upheavals in Britain resulted in transformation in Marx's attitude and with Engels's coordination, he published

multiple works in different social fields. In fact, they could change the history of the West. In the time when Marx entered the world, Europe due to the occurrence of basic innovations and patents in the field of industry and technology and the society of that day of Europe particularly Britain was divided into two working and employer classes. By observing the existence of such class tendencies in Britain, Marx considered the occurrence of a revolution as imminent and took that the status quo would not survive and be changed. Marx was born in Terrier region in 1818. His parents were Jewish but Marx was Protestant. In 1841, he received his PhD from Bonn University and by his degree in Law, he could have a relatively valuable future for himself and his family. In 1849, he worked as a journalist, however, he was exiled in different European countries and finally, after a long journey around Europe, he resided in London (Saleki, 1990: 216-217). His mode of difficult life is full of ups and downs in London influenced his thoughts and views severely which revolutionized his works and undoubtedly transformed the history of Europe and world. Such a philosopher was born in such occurrences and events and learned the western thoughts in order that nowadays, theorists, whether agree or disagree, write influenced by Marx's theories. Concepts and theories which Marx created are indicated in his works objectively. Marx's theories have been challenging and however his errors are identified, his ideas are challenging and some revolutions in the world are influenced by his thoughts and ideas. Researchers and experts are trying to investigate the roots and nature of the ideas of Marx who the most important of them are Asiatic mode of production and historical materialism although the traces of these theories can be observed in the works of scholars and philosophers before Marx. Some scholars of social issues are to analyze the quiddity of the creation and function of governments using Asiatic mode of production both theoretically and conceptually. The trace of this thought can be observed in the works of authors who believed in the influence of climatic and geographical conditions on forming social systems. Aristotle, Machiavelli, David Hume and Charles de Montesquieu each due to lack of appropriate feudalism or social-economic arrangements in different societies, considered an independent economic domain related to environmental factors or oriental tyrannical traditions (Azghandi, 2006: 19). Marx's dreams for living in a free society caused that he published regularly books and articles with Engels's cooperation. Among these books one can refer to *Critique of Political Economy* (1859), *Der Kapital* (1867), *the Civil War in France* (1871), *Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte* (1851) and "investigating Gutt's plan" (1891). According to Marx, the basis of his philosophy is Hegel's works and thoughts (Hues, 2010: 327).

Hegel, in his work *Phenomenology of Spirit* discusses that humans who are not aware of themselves are parts of spirits and look at each other as competitors and compete with each other, some of them enslave others because Hegel believed that Absolute Spirit is not immaterial force which penetrates in the world, but reversely, he believed that the realm of spirit is produced by human beings (Ashley and Orenstien, 2004: 186-187). In fact, Marx is influenced by Hegel philosophically. The most important Marx's theories and ideas is Asiatic mode of production which is challenged and criticized and his theories are debatable. However, theory and concept of Asiatic mode of production was called by Marx; this concept is the focus of an extensive international debate among Marxists in recent years. However, in 18th century, attention to issues and functions of geographic ideas were firstly shaped in Turkey and on the eve of colonial exploration and development, quickly was expanded towards the east, i.e. Iran, India and at last China. By this geographical expansion of conceptual extension, a set of indices were presented from which the concept of political tyranny" was born. According to Perry Anderson, Thomas Hobbes was the first figure who

spoke of a tyrannous power in 17th century (Anderson, 2011: 651-652). However, the most comprehensive research regarding Marx's theories and the quiddity of the function of the nature of this concept conducted by Perry Anderson could reinvestigate the history and root of Marx's theories by contemplating in his works. Therefore, he concluded that the trace of Marx's theories can be observable in works of European economists, philosophers and historians.

The advent of the word and concept of tyranny refers to the Greek texts and in the famous statement by Aristotle that: "Barbarians are in nature inferior to Greeks and Asians are inferior to Europeans; therefore, they endure the tyrannous governments without any protest. Such kings are such as dictators, but they have security because are inheritable and governmental" (Anderson, 2011: 653). Accordingly, the word and concept of tyranny refers to Asian in the European philosophical texts. But Montesquieu indicates that the most important feature of oriental systems is absolute and inherent tyranny; he refers to these systems as "Wilderness of Slavery" and "Individual Absolute Ruling". There is no political organization or social class to be able to stand against them (Barzegar, 2010: 36). In other words, Montesquieu states that Asian societies are deprived of legal regulations and the region of functional successor of law in them. There are governments in which there is no law or they are only dependent on the governors' fickle wills" (Anderson, 2011: 654). Montesquieu investigates the issue of tyranny available in the east and during his journey to the east particularly Iran, these issues are represented in his works particularly that *Letters from Iran* in which, his main theoretical and explicatory analysis for discriminating European and Asian governments is geographical and climatic conditions; he describes the spatial and climatic conditions in the discriminated fates of European and Asian governments in the best form: "Asia has always been the home for great emperors; with its surrounding seas, it is divided into greater lands because it is more southern, its springs are more transient and its mountains are less covered by snow; its rivers are lower and have less barriers. Therefore, power in Asia should always be tyrannous because if the slavery had not the radical aspect, this continent would suffer the division from which the region's geography has prevented" (ibid: 655). After Montesquieu, Adam Smith, the author of the book *Wealth of Nations*, took the next step in completing what is considered as the contradiction between Asia and Europe. Smith views contradiction in their modes of production and refers to the role of watering facilities and transportation in Asian societies and according to his discussion, in Asia, the government is the owner of all lands in these countries. In 19th century, Montesquieu's and Smith's successors continued the same thoughts among them Hegel in German classical philosophy explicated Montesquieu's concepts and notions of with his own expressions from the beginning. As mentioned, Montesquieu's and Smith's ideas and attitudes were regarded by European philosophers and sociologists. Regarding the political and social systems of the east and Asia, these sociologists theorized their ideas and indicated the differences and similarities of oriental and western systems; however, economically and politically, Montesquieu's and Smith's ideas and concepts regarding oriental systems were explicated as such. They had independent analyses regarding Asian systems.

Mill, British economist attained new attitudes regarding traditional notions of Asian tyranny in his research about India and after him, one can name Richard Jones who indicated the most attentive efforts to evaluate property rights of farm in Asia and states that: "all over Asia, governments always have exclusive property right about their own lands and in general, people are sharecropper there while the main owners are the governments (Anderson, 2011: 662). Jones' theory reintroduces this issue that expropriation in the East particularly in four

great regions in Asia, i.e. India, Iran, Turkey and China forms the real basis of tyranny in the East. These four regions are symbols of tyrannous governments. Undoubtedly, the most comprehensive analysis regarding Asiatic mode of production (oriental tyranny) is presented by Jones. But after Jones, other scholars, influenced by Jones's analysis, investigated the social and political systems to analysis of Asiatic systems and concepts of Oriental tyranny. Therefore, understanding this issue is a main one that two main intellectual traditions have roles in forming Marx's and Engels's works in a determining way. They had an old common interpretation of Asiatic political and social systems; a common combination of thoughts whose history refers to the intellectualism before them. Marx and Engels owned their works and thoughts from the previous ones.

Perry Anderson, the intricate researcher, by his critical effort could investigate the roots of Marx's and Engels's political and social theories of east and Asia.

Looking at the history of Soviet historiography on Iran's history:

Undoubtedly, Marxism-Leninism thoughts of the Soviet has the most influence on leftist historiography of Iran; the feudalism mode of production which influenced historians' and authors' thoughts was the results of historiography of the Soviet. 1931 conference held in Leningrad which analyzed the history of Asian societies sociologically has main influences on leftist historiography of Iran. In this conference, Iran was among the societies were analyzed by Soviet historians (Saif, 2001: 87). Among the multiple investigations done by Russian researchers and historians' one can refer to writings of Diakonov, Petrushevsky, Aronva and Ashrafian, Abdullahov, Ivanov and Pavlovich. Among their works, one can refer to *Median History* by Diakonov, *Agriculture and Agrarian Relations in Mughal Era* by Petrushevsky, *Nadir Shah's Government* by Ashrafian and Arona and *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and its Social and Economic Roots* by Pavlovich. The main findings or the results of the Soviet historians of Iran's history that from the 3rd century to the Constitutional Movement, the economic and social structure of Iran was feudal. All books written by Russian researchers on Iran is based on this main hypothesis. Some Russian authors considered Reza Khan as the representative of national bourgeoisie. Based on these investigations and research on social-economic structure of Iran was changed as the result of Reza Shah's measures. The same attitude was used for his son, Muhammad Reza Shah some years later and he was called anti-feudalism (Pavlovich, as cited in Saif: 89-91). The Soviet historians could not prove feudalism in Iran with historical evidence in their writings. Issues and research regarding direct producers, position of landowners, conversion of land use types (work, material and cash), the process of advent and growth of cities, economic status and urban systems and the relationship between city and village in Iran in feudalism were investigated; however, Russian historians' attitudes were different with what in European system and structure of feudalism.

Looking at leftist thought and the process of expanding Marxist works in Iran:

It was mentioned that the advent of Marxist thoughts to Iran refers to before the Constitutional Movement, which Marx's theory and then Marxism-Leninism's theories in Iran influenced historiography, literature and politics and these Marxist concepts entered political literature of Iran, some of Iranian historians and authors were contaminated with these concepts and literature and started to write works based on this theory and concept. However Marxist historians and authors in Iran can be divided into two groups: 1. the first group, based on the sociological analysis of the Soviet historians on Iranian society (feudal mode of production) continued the way of the Soviet historians. 2. The second group, some of other

Iranian authors who were few, based on Asiatic mode of production (oriental tyranny) investigated Iranian society. These two groups in different ways investigated the economic and productive aspects of the society. They considered these three forms of production, feudalism, ethnical system and Asiatic mode as the main factors of economic backwardness of Iranian society.

The first theory is referred to as the theory of continuance of the feudal mode of production in Iran after the advent of Islam and particularly after The Seljuks, by an important role which Khajamirza al-Mulk played. This theory considers the same influence and reinforcement as the main barrier on the path of the advent of capitalism in Iran. This theory is adapted by famous historians such as Diakonov, Petrushevsky, Pigolevskaia, and others. Many historians of Iran's economy such as Muhammad Reza Fashahi, Farhad Na'mani, Abuzar Vardabi, Behrouz Amin, Gholamreza Ensafpoor, Ehsan Tabari and others analyzed this style of Iranian society. Their theories and ideas are the linear and comprehensive evolution of history which are to refer the history of Iran to the period before Islam to slavery system. They take the Sassanid era to the Constitutional Revolution as the feudist era and the world capitalism as the barrier of the growth in national capitalism in contemporary Iran (Alamdari, 2002: 48). The second theory the reasons and factors of the backward of Iranian society in the nomadic and ethnical structure of Iran. The main reason of nomadism in oriental lands particularly Iran is the lack of water. The lack of water causes the reinforcement of tribal affiliation and prevents the development and expansion of agriculture in Iran and urbanism was postponed. The book *Historical barriers to capitalist development in Iran in Qajar era* by Ahmad Ashraf investigates the nomadic life and the lack of capitalism in Iran in detail (ibid: 49). The third theory is the main idea of historians regarding the issue of water or Asiatic mode of production. In fact, the theory of oriental tyranny was extracted from within this theory. This theory originated from the theory of oriental tyranny and water economy in oriental societies. In the theory of oriental tyranny is considered as the political surface structure which Asiatic mode of production forms its economic deep structure. The concept of Marx's Asiatic mode of production indicates the economic structure of a society which is basically agricultural and in which the ownership of properties and political government are formed in a centralized state and the oriental tyrannous state assigns to itself the producers' economic surplus in the dual role of governor and landowner (Wali, 2001: 41). In this mode of production there is no private ownership over lands or exploiting class; therefore, this is the state which became a greater exploiter. In the lack of classes, class conflict which is the driving force of history is not formed and a kind of stagnation and lack of dynamicity cover all the society. Here, the lack of private ownership and landowners are the most important features of Asiatic mode of production and are the key understanding for issues of the east. Accordingly, this issue is the focus of Marx's and Engels's discussions regarding the political and social systems in the east and they, answering the question why private ownership, even feudal mode, has not been formed in the east, investigated the issues of the east (Afzali, 2007: 57). However, adopting the theory of oriental tyranny in Iran by outstanding authors in explicating and analyzing Iranian society is conducted. Ervand Abrahamian, Homayoun Katouzian and Muhammad Ali Khonji are the most important Iranian figures who investigated the theory of oriental tyranny or Asiatic mode of production. Abrahamian in an article titled as "oriental tyranny in Qajar Era" has tried to test the Marx's theory of oriental tyranny in Qajar Era. He considers Engels' theory of bureaucratic tyranny and Karl August Wittfogel's the Hydraulic Theory in which centralized bureaucracies of oriental tyrannous governments buried the public survives particularly organizing expansive watering, as more

suitable for analyzing the state of some governmental periods of Chinese, Indian, Achaemenian and Sassanid emperors; however, he takes it as incapable in explicating the state of tyrannous governments in which governors had no intervention on watering affairs and supervision on great bureaucracies (ibid: 59). But Katouzian does not consider these two theories to describe conditions in Iran; therefore, he himself proposes a model titled as "the dull and isolated and Iranian tyranny". The main theme of this theory is that water shortage has resulted in creating autonomous rural units in such a way that the surplus of none was not enough for creating a feudal power basis. But, regarding the expansion of the region, these units produce a collective surplus which in case of taking its ownership by an external organized force, could be used as an economic resource by an overall tyrannous power. This resource had such a great direct and indirect collective agricultural surplus by which tyrannous governments could survive the ground for transportation, communication and feudal military organization and they could not only survive their ownership over lands, but also prevent from the feudal independence in agriculture or bourgeois citizens in cities (Katouzian, 1998: 82-83). Muhammad Ali Khonji, on the other hand, has tried to discuss Asiatic mode of production in a series of articles. However he is considered as the critic of Wittfogel's ideas, views this theory as indicative of a kind of geographic determinism and as the defender of the theory if Marx's Asiatic mode of production considers it as a theory which confirms the important historical facts and in spite of the ambiguities it has, can explicate the historical realities (Khonji, the value of Asiatic mode of production, economic-political journal. No. 89, 84, 83, 90).

Conclusion:

The advent of Marxist thoughts to Iran caused a modern upheaval in historiography which this historiographical movement was based on economy and society. By exploiting Marx's theories, political and social histories of Asiatic countries particularly Iranian society were analyzed and explicated sociologically. The Soviet historians' interpretations and explications (feudal mode of production or classification of Iran's history) and Asiatic mode of production interpretations of Iran's history was linear and teleological and its upheavals were historical. However the movement of Marxist historiography of Iran's history were not immune of errors, the formation and evolution of this kind of modern historiography are considerable in the dominant flow of traditional historiography. The trace of Marxist thoughts, from the beginning, can be observed in political thinkers, which this issue is related to the presence of Iranian workers in oil regions of the Caucasus. One can find these Marxist concepts in the fields of history and literature and the political concepts of that day. In the first step, Russian historians and then Iranian authors explicated and investigated the Marxist movements of Iran's political and social history. In spite of changes and upheavals in the field of historiography, this upheaval resulted in the formation and evolution of economic historiography in Iran. The evolution and development of economic historiography in modern historiography of Iran was considered as a modern one in traditional and king-oriented historiography of contemporary Iran.

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