



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***MALKOM KHAN'S THOUGHT ON POLITICAL MODERNIZATION  
IN IRAN***

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**By**

**KAMYAB SHAHRIARI**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**January 2016**

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## **DEDICATION**

To my parents

For their support and encouragement

With deepest expression of love and appreciation



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in the  
Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## **MALKOM KHAN'S THOUGHT ON POLITICAL MODERNIZATION IN IRAN**

By

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**January 2016**

**Chairperson : Ku Hasnita Ku Samsu, PhD**  
**Faculty : Human Ecology**

This research studied the subject of *Malkom Khan's Thoughts on Political Modernization in Iran*. The objectives of this study are to evaluate Malkom Khan's ideas toward political modernization in the first and second period of his thoughts (1857-1908) and to assess reasons that led to a change in Malkom Khan's political thoughts on political modernization.

To do this research, the biographical method was used to analyze data collected during the whole period of the research. As a biographic research, this research was conducted by using both the primary and secondary data together. The primary data in this research was obtained from Malkom Khan's books and documents (letters, correspondence and reports) and the secondary data was obtained from books, articles and critiques written by other researchers. In this research, the theory of political modernization was used to analyze Malkom Khan's political thoughts on modernization. As a political scholar Malkom Khan, introduced a modernization program in the framework of *Saltanate Motlagheye Montazem* (Law-based Absolute Monarchy) in his first period of his endeavors in order to modernize the structure of government. This method can be named as top-down political modernization and here, he paid more attention on modernization of political structure and his main goal was creation of modern and new structure. In fact, this type of government Malkom tried to establish was a government based on the concept of nation-state, although his approach to nation-state was focused predominantly on state building.

However, a number of historical and personal events during Malkom Khan's life occurred later which led him to change his initial ideas and he adopted a bottom-up political modernization course. These events were: Lottery affairs and Malkom Khan's subsequent dismissal, the Tobacco Movement, and failure of Sepahsalar's reform. In the second period, Malkom's idea changed and he introduced parliamentary constitutional monarchy and proposed separation of powers in order to limit the power of the king and national consultative assembly; his main goal on political modernization during this period was nation - building by bottom-up political modernization from bottom-up. Additionally, Malkom Khan during this period of

modernization of political structure also paid attention to modernization of political culture and also the religious and cultural aspects of society. Malkom Khan in the second period of his political thought and activity realized the important role of religion and religious culture of the people and found it imperative to take into due consideration the religious culture of the people in order to promote his thoughts. He concluded that no bottom-up modernization plan would be successful unless he could reconcile modern and Western thoughts with Islamic beliefs and thoughts.

Therefore, he attempted in his writings to bring evidences from the *hadith* and *Quran* to achieve this reconciliation, and attempted to illustrate that there was no contradiction between Islam and modern and Western thoughts. This was to prevent possible opposition from the clergy and conservatives to his thoughts and also in order to attract the support of the progressive class of clergymen with his political modernization thoughts, which were developed on the basis of parliamentary constitutional monarchy.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

## **PEMIKIRAN MALKOM KHAN MENGENAI PEMODENAN POLITIK DI IRAN**

Oleh

**KAMYAB SHAHRIARI**

**Januari 2016**

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Penyelidikan ini mengkaji subjek *Pemikiran Malkom Khan Mengenai Pemodenan Politik di Iran*. Objektif kajian ini ialah untuk menyelidik idea Malkom Khan ke arah pemodenan politik dalam tempoh pertama dan kedua pemikiran beliau (1857-1908) dan mengkaji sebab-sebab berlakunya perubahan tersebut.

Kaedah biografi telah digunakan menganalisa data yang dikumpul sepanjang tempoh kajian ini. Sebagai kajian biografi, kajian ini dilaksanakan dengan menggunakan kedua-dua data utama dan sekunder. Data utama diperolehi daripada buku, dokumen (bahan surat-menyurat dan laporan) manakala data sekunder didapati melalui buku, artikel dan kritikan yang ditulis oleh penyelidik lain. Dalam kajian ini, teori pemodenan politik telah diguna untuk mengkaji pemikiran Malkom Khan tentang modenisasi. Sebagai seorang cendekiawan politik, Malkom memperkenalkan program modenisasi dalam rangka kerja *Saltanate Motlagheye Montazem* (monarki mutlak berdasarkan undang-undang) dalam fasa pertama usaha beliau untuk membawa pemodenan kepada struktur kerajaan. Kaedah ini boleh dikatakan sebagai pemodenan politik dari atas ke bawah, dan di sini beliau menumpukan lebih perhatian terhadap pemodenan struktur politik dan objektif utama ialah mencipta struktur politik baru dan moden. Sebenarnya, kerajaan sedemikian yang cuba diasaskan oleh Malkom berlandaskan konsep 'negara bangsa' (nation-state), walaupun tumpuan utama beliau adalah dalam pembinaan negara. Namun beberapa peristiwa sejarah dan peribadi dalam kehidupan Malkom Khan menyebabkan beliau menukar idea-idea awalnya, dan mengikut hala tuju pemodenan politik dari akar umbi. Peristiwa berkenaan termasuk skandal loteri dan pemecatan Malkom seterusnya, gerakan tembakau, dan kegagalan reformasi Sepahsalar.

Dalam fasa yang kedua, idea-idea Malkom berubah dan beliau telah memperkenalkan sistem raja berperlembagaan parlimen dan mencadangkan pemisahan kuasa supaya kuasa raja dan majlis perundingan kebangsaan dapat dibendung; matlamat utama beliau berhubung pemodenan politik pada masa ini ialah membina negara melalui pemodenan politik dari bawah ke atas. Dalam tempoh masa ini, selain pemodenan struktur politik,

Malkom juga memberi tumpuan kepada pemodenan budaya politik dan budaya keagamaan di kalangan masyarakat.

Oleh yang demikian, Malkom melalui tulisannya cuba memberi bukti dari hadith dan Al-Quran untuk mencapai perdamaian dan cuba meyakinkan bahawa tidak ada percanggahan di antara pemikiran Islam dan pemikiran moden barat. Ini bertujuan mengelak tentangan yang mungkin berpunca daripada golongan ulama dan konservatif. Ia juga bertujuan meraih sokongan golongan ulama progresif terhadap pemikiran pemodenan politik Malkom Khan yang berasaskan raja berperlembagaan parlimen.





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This thesis is submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

At the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Iran was in a chaotic and backward situation in terms of social, political, economical and cultural conditions. Political characteristics and the structure of the Iranian government were also traditional and undeveloped. Such backwardness that had its roots in the tradition and traditional structure of previous governments was intensified by the chronic inadequacies of Qajar dynasty.

According to many scholars, including Katouzian (2003), Foran (1993), Lambton (2007), Keddie (1999), Afary (1996) and Abrahamian (2004), before the 1906 revolution the political system of Iran was an absolute monarchy having features such as hierarchical power structure, lacking in democratic legitimacy, and being based on tradition. Absolute monarchy with retardation of socio-economic reforms led to a deplorable situation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Absolute government has been always one of the most enduring characters of the political power structure during the history in Iran. Absolutism, absolutist monarchy, increasing oppression of court and government officials and cruel, repressive measures towards the Iranian general populace were the main traits of the Iranian government at that time (Avery, 1993). The laws comprised orders and edicts, which came from an absolute and despotic ruler and was apt to be altered at his whim. The king was considered as the shadow of God on earth to whom everybody owed full and unquestionable obedience. There was no modern concept of nation and citizenship rights.

The shock of defeat in the wars with Russia in 1813 and 1828, in which Iran lost large chunks of the country, brought into contrast the inefficiency and backwardness of political-social structures of Iran. The defeat showed the government officials and political authorities the need to reform and to modernize Iranian society. An increase in the number of travels to overseas made by some diplomats and business men provided them with the opportunity to be familiar with the political situation of the western countries, governing structure of European countries. Moreover, it gave them the chance to comprehend issues such as press freedom, the workings and mechanisms of political parties and movements, the sanctity of law, the limitation of the ruler's power and the responsibility of the government towards the nation's elected representatives. All these along with modern sciences and inventions illuminated Iranian people and pushed them forward to ask for change and reform.

The pioneers of modernization in Iran were Abbas Mirza, Ghaem Magham Farahani and Amir Kabir. They undertook some measures to reform and modernize Iran. Indeed, the modernization of Iran was initiated by Abbas Mirza by means of military modernization. After Iran's defeats in the wars with Russia, Abbas Mirza strove to modernize the Iranian army with assistance from the French and for this purpose; a French military delegation led by General Gardan visited Iran to modernize its military.



Abbas Mirza's attempts at reforms, however, did not go beyond Iran's military modernization, and even in that, he had limited success.

The second phase of modernization in Iran was undertaken by Ghaem Magham Farahani, who tried to bring elements of modernization to the bureaucracy and the court and made attempts to organize them in accordance with that of Western developed countries (Rahmani, 2005b). His reforms too, did not endure and was brought to an abrupt end when he was murdered by Mohammad Shah Qajar. The third step of the modernization in Iran was undertaken by Amir Kabir, the Shah's chancellor. The establishment of the Dar al-Fonun School, and the *Vaghayeh Etefaghiyeh* newspaper, modernization of the tax system, military modernization, reforming the judicial system, establishment of the post office, and reformation of Iran's foreign policy were among his most notable reform actions (Adamiyyat, 2007). In fact, Amir Kabir's actions were more extensive and meaningful than those of Abbas Mirza and Ghaem Magham, but they did not extend into the realm of political modernization. The first person who proposed a specific program for political modernization in Iran was Malkom Khan. He was the most distinguished and influential political scholar and activist in the period leading to the Constitutional Movement and formulated a comprehensive plan for the political modernization of Iran.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

In traditional and transitional societies, political modernization is a necessity because in these societies, political modernization is considered as a socio-political necessity more than in other societies as people can gain the needed political awareness under such a process.

Malkom Khan was the first scholar who was aware of the fast-paced and relentless efforts of the modern West to dominate the Third World, especially Iran. According to Malkom Khan, Iran's transition from a traditional society to a modern society had been inevitable and the only way for Iran to survive was modernization - specifically political modernization. In most of his books, treatises, letters and reports, he noted the necessity for change and modernization of social and political structures, the need for law and order in society. As he explicitly stated in the treatise *Dastgahe Divan*: The government must be based on law and order as European governments are or they will be broken down or subdued by their strength (Malkom Khan, 2002a).

Malkom Khan believed that modernization of the political structure of the country was the only way to establish security, order, justice and equality as well as the development of the country. In his view, converting the political system from an arbitrary government into a law-based government having rule of law, could protect people's rights, lives and property legally, within the framework of national interest.

In fact, political modernization was Malkom Khan's political ideal, and central to this idealist concept was the rule of law. Law was the golden key to Utopia while an absolute and lawless government had acted as an impediment for the creation of this desired vision of an enlightened government. A deeper study of Malkom Khan's works

showed two phases of intellectual transformation in his thoughts. In one phase, he first brought up the idea of a law-based absolute monarchy and considered it as a substitute for an absolutist government. In fact, Malkom Khan was a propagator of the idea of law-based absolute monarchy, (law as the basis and method of its operation). In the second period of his political career, after publishing the *Qanun* newspaper and revising his political thoughts, he advocated Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy as the best model of government for Iran and he also started advocating the political modernization process from bottom.

Political modernization in the transitional society of Iran, which experienced long period of despotic governments, is of utmost importance. This was because Iran society after the defeat in the war with Russia in the first two decades of eighteenth century tended to lean towards political modernization and advocated of constitutional government. The Constitutional Revolution of 1906 was the outcome of the efforts of Iran society to meet these demands. However, the revolution and its goal, which was political modernization, failed and consolidation of despotic government was the outcome of this failure. The Islamic Revolution of 1979, which held similar goals of Constitutional Revolution, also suffered the same fate and none of those goals have been incarnated in a tangible way. Malkom Khan as reformist was the first Iranian scholar who attempted to struggle for individual rights and freedom, law, rule of law. He was the first scholar who spoke about the necessity of establishment of Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy and national consultative assembly. Constitutional Revolution of 1906 was propelled based on the same model Malkom Khan had depicted in *Qanun* newspaper years ago (Adamiyyat, 2009; Ajdani, 2007a). The secret associations were affected by Malkom Khan's thought either in the form of organization or political thought. Secret proclamations which printed and distributed in this period and encouraging the people to rebellion and revolution were influenced by Malkom Khan's thought (Abadian, 2009; Lambton, 1987).

Malkom Khan was the first political activist to establish an organized political party in the modern sense (Adamiyyat, 2009; Panahi, 2004). His actions and thoughts were the most important intellectual resources of the 1906 Constitutional Movement and the most important intellectuals of that period such as Akhundzadeh, Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, Talebof and Seyed Jamal al-Din Afghani were influenced by his ideas (Safari, 1998). Malkom Khan's greatest significance in the Iranian society lies in his quest for law (*Qanun*) and the establishment of strong centralized state. Malkom Khan presented many separate laws and several articles containing all the basic elements of a constitution in Iran. The importance of the intellectual and political thoughts of Malkom Khan in the political modernization process in contemporary Iran thus, warrants a study and analysis of his political ideas in detail. Although content of reforms and modernization program in the period of Malkom Khan to some extent differs from with the content of political modernization in the current period; but critical study of Malkom Khan's thoughts and activities as most prominent scholar in the Constitutional era can contribute to understand the nature of political modernization process in Iran. Because political modernization process in Iran is still in a state of flux and has not reached political maturity.

In reviewing the literature on Malkom Khan, the researcher has found a lack of research about Malkom Khan's thought on political modernization. Therefore, the major contribution of this study is to examine the concepts of political modernization in Malkom Khan's political thought, written in two different periods of his political life. As a result, the research will look at Malkom Khan's political thoughts to uncover his ideas on political modernization in the first period of his political thought, and then go on to find out why and how Malkom Khan's thought on political modernization had shifted during the second period.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What were Malkom Khan's thoughts on political modernization in the first and second period (1857-1908)?
2. Why did Malkom Khan's thoughts on political modernization shift in the second period (1889-1908)?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

1. To evaluate Malkom Khan's thought towards political modernization in the first period and second period (1857- 1908).
2. To assess the reasons that led to the change in Malkom Khan's political thoughts on political modernization in the second period (1889-1908).

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Political modernization in the transitional society of Iran that underwent a long period of despotic governments is of utmost importance. Because Iran society due to the defeat in war with Russia in the first two decades of eighteenth century tended to political modernization and advocated of constitutional government. Constitutional Revolution of 1906 was the outcome of the efforts of Iran society to meet that demands. But the revolution and its goal which was political modernization failed, and consolidation of despotic government was the outcome of this failure. This was subsequently followed by the Islamic Revolution of 1979, which held somewhat the same goals as Constitutional Revolution. It too suffered the same fate.

Although 100 years have passed since the victory of Iran's Constitutional Revolution and in spite of 150 years passing since Malkom Khan introduced modern political concepts and inclusive struggles to establish modern political system, none of these have been incarnated in a tangible way. As a result, Iranian society is still in search of the rule of law, freedom and democracy, which had been introduced for the first time by Malkom Khan more than hundred years ago.

Since Malkom Khan is considered as a most important scholar in the constitutional era, therefore the study of Malkom Khan's thoughts on political modernization can contribute and help Iranian society to gain a better and deeper understanding of the major reasons behind the failure of the process of political modernization in Iran.

Although there are sporadic studies on the issue of Malkom Khan, the importance of this study rests upon the fact that there has been no serious attempt to conduct this type of study on the basis of political modernization theory and concept. It is hoped that this investigation will serve as a launch pad for further similar researches on the concept of modernization in Iran according to Malkom Khan's thought.

The findings of this research may also contribute to the advancement of the intellectual movement and democracy in Iran and in those countries, which aspire to be democratic. Intellectuals have a significant role to play in the process of revolution and democratizing countries but significant research cannot be found in Iran. Therefore, the few existing studies have not been able to solve the problems in terms of clarifying complexities and viewing issues in proper perspective.

This research will help to shed light on hidden facets of the ideas of Malkom Khan about political modernization that have not been deservedly taken into consideration so far. It can act as a point of departure for further research in order to make possible a comprehensive political modernization study of the country.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitation**

Since this research engages the concept of political modernization in Malkom Khan's thoughts, so it needs to indicate its scope and limitations in this research. This study focuses on the concept of political modernization in Malkom Khan's political thought between the years of 1833 to 1908. Malkom Khan was chosen because he was the most prominent political thinker in Constitutional era and considered as the father of Constitutional Revolution. He was the first scholar who formulated one specific plan for political modernization in Iran society.

The concept of political modernization was chosen because because political modernization process in Iran is still in a state of flux and has not reached political maturity. As a result, Iranian society is still in search of the rule of law, freedom and democracy, which was proposed for the first time by Malkom Khan more than hundred years ago. Therefore, analyzing Malkom Khan's thought on modernization can contribute to understand the nature of political modernization process in contemporary Iran. However, because of the vast scope regarding the understanding of the concept of modernization, this study will only deal with the questions of political modernization in Malkom Khan's political thought, by observing the works of the mentioned thinker and works of other researchers on the topic. Then the scope of this study is limited to the works directly deal with his political modernization thought.

Finally concerning generalization of this study, the result of this research is not able to generalize because it focuses only on the specific issue, time and place such as Malkom Khan and political modernization in Iran from (1833 to 1908) so it is not generalizable to other countries and times. Therefore, the results cannot generalize to other situation or populations. Finally, as Blaikie (2000, p. 253) has noted: "qualitative data do not lend themselves to the kind of generalization commonly used in quantitative research,

such as using statistical techniques which are based on probability theory”. Therefore, due to the nature of this study, results are not generalizable to other times or societies.

## **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The thesis is organized into seven chapters.

- Chapter 1 provides the introduction, the problem statement, research questions and objectives, scope and significance of the study.
- Chapter 2 covers the literature review, in which main theories and approaches and books related to the subject of the study are explained. In this chapter, the theoretical framework is also explained.
- Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology. The main method used in conducting the research is the biographical method, which will be explained in detail.
- Chapter 4 discusses biography of Malkom Khan from (1833-1908).
- Chapter 5 provides answers to the research questions, which will be elaborated in the chapter, and then Conceptualizing of political modernization in the thought of Malkom Khan is also explained in this chapter.
- Chapter 6 answers the research question. Malkom Khan’s thoughts regarding political modernization and his approach in dealing with the political structure and political culture discussed.
- Chapter 7 provides the summary and conclusion of the study. This chapter also summarizes the results and conclusions of the study.

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter contains a general explanation about the process of the research. The chapter clarifies the background, problem statement, questions, objectives, scope, significance and organization of the study. The following chapters have been undertaken based on the process that has been outlined in this first chapter.



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