

ESTABLISHING MARITAL BONDS BETWEEN HISTORY AND SOCIOLOGY IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

History provides opportunities to nations to determine productive line of actions towards development. To this effect, history as a science has travelled from the conventional approach of mere recording towards a scientific cultural-based analytical approach. It has, in this way, proliferated and permeated into almost all fields and sciences. The West has been utilizing and utilized history as a science for identifying feasible strategies for development and productive innovations. Its infiltration into different fields such as military, economy, development, and politics has resulted into the emergence of innovative fields that have proved successful in reflecting the overall and reality-based picture of the issues. In Pakistan, the situation is not yet mature enough to realize it so. Here, history and historical researches are carried out in isolation and are mainly confined to presenting the chronological records/history of the issues. This state of affairs has led, on the one hand, to the paralysis of the subject and, on the other hand, to its inability in reflecting the historical issues in broader and comprehensive way. We believe that history in isolation unearths no reality; rather overshadows the broader perspective of the issues.

To provide scientific grounds to history and historical researches, Ibni-Khaldun's work occupies pivotal place in giving new direction to it. He maintains that history and sociology are inseparable. Historical events, he holds, need to be studied in the light of sociological or, in other words, cultural forces/factors. However, despite of his futuristic vision and scientific outlook, history is still treated in Pakistan as a subject permanently divorced from sociology. The available historical literature and researches furnish detailed record of the issues/events and ignore the sociological forces causing them. As students of sociology in particular and social sciences in general it looks quite illogical to undermine the relevancy of the issues and subjects and the modern inter-disciplinary approach in dealing with the problems. To ensure a realistic reflection of the events, marital bonds are required to be established between history and sociology and, henceforth, the historical researches are suggested to be carried out with in-depth reflections of sociological outlook. This triangulation while necessitating orientation of historian in sociological knowledge would provide a new direction to the history and innovative strategies for feasible development in Pakistan. In other words, it may help history as a subject to proliferate to unprecedented levels by presenting and exploring the historical problems.

Introduction

This paper is primarily concerned with reflecting the perceived epistemological and methodological deficiencies in historical and cultural studies carried out in Pakistan. However, this is worth-mentioning that these problems are deeply associated with the continued disinterest exhibited by government of Pakistan in particular and other stakeholders in general. In Pakistan, normally the historical researches are considered confined to narrating/producing the historical events—which is its conventional definition—with no relationship with the socio-economic, religious and development issues that altogether negates the principles of current interdisciplinary and dynamic approaches. This kind of isolated treatment has led to historical paralysis that reinforces parochial and conventional methodological and epistemological approach to realism. Furthermore, this segregated treatment not only shrouds realism but also cripple its strength to proliferate and

permeate into all relevant fields. Hence, to ensure reality-based historical facts and making them productive, historians and historical studies need not to be divorced from sociological research orientation. To present the argument more understandably, the following part first delineates the current status/nature of historical and cultural researches accomplished normally in Pakistan while the second part justifiably presents the proposed nexus between sociology and history.

Current status of historical and cultural research in Pakistan

As reflected above, the premise of this paper is not challenging the subject matter of history or historical researches that mainly revolves around narrating/exploring the historical events¹ rather it questions its methodological orientation in Pakistan in particular. The historical researches or the historical events described and presented in the discipline of history mainly expose the readers to the chronological record of past events. Of course, this presentation is similar to some extent to the general description of its subject-matter the way explained by Aristotle² and contemporary historians, however, it provides a partially hollow picture devoid of holistic presentation. Its best available example can be traced back in the earlier times sub-continent history where the historians partially recorded the dictates of the rulers and presented their success stories. These stories that reached the succeeding generations and continue until now did not provide any in-depth information with regard to the common man and gender relations etc. Furthermore, those researchers did not employ the scientific methodology to understand the issues in more realistic fashion. Unluckily, still in Pakistan historical researches are undertaken mainly to represent the events with little recourse to rigorous scientific procedure and sociological analysis. This kind of pathetic situation has marked history as an exclusive/independent discipline with no relation to other social sciences. In other words, these conditions relegate history to qualify for a 'science', or in other words, a 'critical history'.

Critical or true history, according to Louis Bouyer³ emerged with the Renaissance when the records and events were critically evaluated. Bouyer provides an indirect support to this critique; however, his assertion also suffers from imperfection to realize a complete depiction of the issues. Nonetheless, he can be appreciated for evolving an academic debate and this effort not only introduces the concept but also inform the stakeholders of the future benefits of the intended triangulated approach in historical researches. In Pakistan the historians normally rely on historical method and explore the histories of historical events, personalities, nations, dynasties etc. Its employment does generate the secondary and empirical based information but stands deficient to unearth the fundamentals of the issues and its relationship with grand narratives. Such inherent deficiency has also been reflected by Edgar and Hechter⁴ who have emphatically described the fundamental weakness underlying historical method. They explain that historians deal with complex events that can not be completely uncovered by relying only on historical method/tool. They need to get converged with sociology and employ sociological methods or sociological analysis as well while dealing with such issues. Thus utilizing sociological methods or carrying out sociological analysis would also help historians in Pakistan to escape the general criticism that they '... do not discover a past as much as they create [it].'⁵

Realizing convergence between history and sociology

The above brief description highlights the need and space for establishing marital bonds between history and sociology to catch up with the emerging problems and re-structure the prevalent paradigm dominating historical researchers in Pakistan. The relationship between history and sociology is nowadays highlighted in academic debates to be too close and interdependent. So much that some sources claim history as past sociology and sociology as present history.⁶ Such close relationship is emphatically reflected in different Journals such as 'Journal of interdisciplinary

history' and, more importantly, such attempts have emerged into new areas such as historical sociology, historical ethnography etc. These efforts are actually referring to the methodological issue and, hence, reflect the significance of sociological analysis/methods in historical research.

More succinctly they reinforce the triangulation approach in studying historical facts to ensure 'positivism' and 'realism' - almost complete in all aspects. Sociologists employ different quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods mainly deals with the quantitative analysis employing statistical tools while qualitative methods make use of different methods such as personal biographies, interviewing, personal observation, ethnography, questionnaire etc. Their primary focus revolves the objective and detailed analysis of social phenomena so that to meet the science's requirements like empiricism, generalization, verifiability and precision. History also deals with social phenomena but in historical perspective. Thus fundamentally they meet at a common point (social interaction, human affairs, society) of analyzing the same events but adopt different approaches/perspectives. Hence, the normal academic historical researches in Pakistan lack not only the use of sociological analysis/methods but also the depth of historical analysis. To overcome this deficiency, historical researches need to consider and employ sociological analysis of the historical events by employing, wherever feasible, ethnographic tools and participant observation along with its conventional methods such as interview methods, library method etc. To cover this shortcoming, historians have innovated historiography for ensuring authenticity of the findings but the basic question of comprehensiveness still remains a far cry. Thus, to guarantee comprehensiveness, sociological analysis and, wherever required, ethnographic techniques and participant observation need to be incorporated in historical researches. Ethnography is famous for its in-depth analysis and its ability in enabling researchers of getting deep insight into the real world. More importantly, it:

'... is holistic in the sense that 'ethnographers participate ... in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned'.⁷

Of course, historians, while exploring the historical phenomena, can not participate in the past but it does help in objectively understanding the empirical data with regard to the events as well as in exploring the socio-cultural, political and economic factors associated with them. Furthermore, historians require sociological knowledge while analyzing the past events. This approach while analytically observing and recording the events in relation to other relevant factors enables complete and scientific information. Along with ethnographic approach, historians need to carry out participant observation so that to study the issue in more natural setting.⁸ Perceiving this logic, Ibni Khaldun⁹ recommended the study of sociology, in other words, the social structure in writing the history of histories. If this nexus is developed in Pakistan, it would enable the history as a subject to proliferate and prove effective in dealing with development, political and economic issues in more comprehensive way. In short, it would in this qualify also for 'science' more objectively and would also meet the requirements of interdisciplinary approach.

Conclusion

This paper briefly reflects the possible nexus between history and sociology and proposes the policy recommendations for policy-makers, planners, historians and other stakeholders to consider sociological analysis in carrying out historical researches. This paper mainly targets the perceived built-in deficiencies in historical researches and lacks critical analysis of sociological methods/analysis that needs to be undertaken by future researchers. Furthermore, this attempt would generate debate with regard to the proposed nexus and may also invite/encourage the scholars to

critically analyze the methodological issues in historical researches in Pakistan that seems quite insignificant and incoherent.

Notes:

- ¹ Donald Light, Suzanne Keller and Crag Calhoun, *Sociology* (5th edn) (New York: Random House, 1989).
- ² W.T. Stace, *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy* (London: McMillan and Co., 1962).
- ³ John, F. McCarthy, "Two Views of Historical Criticism" (Living Tradition: Organ of The Roman Theological Forum, November 78, 1998). <http://www.rtforum.org/1t/1t78.html> (August 13, 2009).
- ⁴ Keiser Edger and Michael Hechter, "The Role of General Theory in Comparative Historical Sociology", *The American Journal of Sociology* 97 no.1 (1991): 1-30.
- ⁵ Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: Introduction to Historical Methods* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001.).
- ⁶ John Lukacs, "The Evolving Relationship of History and Sociology" *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 1 no.1 (1987): 79-88; see also Jill Quadagno and Stan J. Knapp, "Have Historical Sociologists Forsaken Theory," *Sociological Methods and Research* 20, no. 4 (1992): 481-507.
- ⁷ M. Hammersley and P. Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London: Routledge), 113.
- ⁸ M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (2nd edn) (London: Sage Publishers).
- ⁹ Muhammad Khalis, *Sociological Theory: A Historical Perspective* (Karachi: Kifayat Academy).

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