

## Viewpoint

# The Necessity of Passing Through the Transition Theory

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## Abstract

Given the people's understanding is the reason for interpreting the meaning of phenomena, the thinking structure that makes this understanding possible is very significant, as it can be supposed that any objectivity outside our understanding organization would not be achievable, so that we are required continuously a situation (time-place based or a physical structure) to interpret the phenomena, as being neutral is impossible and favoritism is an inevitable outcome. Acknowledging this prelude represents the vital nature of these concepts and principles, and its necessity for constituting the foundations of the thinking structure, as a possible way of understanding; thereby if these structures are facing issues, they may encounter any other type of action with problems, despite initially looking a solid precise concept; *Anyone who does not comprehend the imaginary nature of this magic words (Hafez), his/her depiction is not acceptable, even if he/she be a skilled Chinese portrayer.* One of these thinking foundations that requires criticism is the principles derived from the ideas of western orientalist or the local areas under their influence. In a complicated process, the presumptions of these groups have led to the statement of "transition theory" as an obvious idea. The presumption of this theory says that the road to progress is the exact one that has been experienced in the West and it should be followed step by step to achieve development and live a happy life. Therefore, any type of subject that is realized under the influence of transition theory requests criticism to be passed through and not to get stuck at the level of localization.

**Keywords:** *Transition Theory, Orientalism, Understanding of Precedents.*

## Introduction and Problem Statement

It is quite long time that, "transition theory" has been criticized in the field of humanities (Toofigh et al., 2018), while examining its consequence on other disciplines and referring to theories beyond it have still accounted for a small percentage of research studies. The initiation of what is recognized as transition theory is the occurrence of 'industrial revolution' in the West. With the beginning of

industrial revolution, the expansion of Western hegemony began in the world and consequently in Iran, under the certain conditions from the Qajar era, and grew up increasingly in the world and in Iran for several years after the World War II, when Reza Shah came to power; this flow continued until now, but with a decreasing rate. The influence of the 'theory of transition' on the minds of some Iranian researchers affected the exploitation of precedent knowledge

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and prevented its wide spread to cross over the local borders, and did not allow to 'project a new plan'. *There is no way for wealthy lavish people to enter to Kooy-e Rendi (place of astute mystic people / A wayfarer is required to fire the world (In its mystical sense), not an immature carefree person/ A complete person cannot be found in an earthly world / another world must be created and an emerging human being again (Hafez, 2016).*

### Structure of Criticism

One of the movements that has gone beyond the theory of transition and had the courage to overcome the common situation to passed through it and take another plan corresponding to field manifestations of the territory of Iran, based on the time-place (physical structure) includes opinions to reveal the "Politics of dislocation" (Zia-Ebrahimi, 2016). These kind of ideas criticize those presumptions that block our understanding, as they have enough courage to cross the boundaries of knowledge and go into the unknown worlds. In line with these ideas of 'politics of dislocation', there is an attempt to elucidate three possible thinking mistakes when encounter with those precedents. Having knowledge on this issue will navigate the researchers and designers to not trap in some pitfalls and overcome the stagnant situation influenced by the transition theory: 1. Desire to get the glory before Islam, 2. Considering Islam and Iran as black and white situation, and 3. The admirable terrifying idol called the West. Mistakenly being in "desire for the glory before Islam", cause to suppose the Iranian Islamic history as an extended long of decline, whereby Iran has abruptly and permanently fallen from its glory in the world. Due to this presumption, the great scientific and literary achievements of the Islamic era are overlooked, or they might suppose as a time of renovating the pre-Islamic mastermind in Islamic cover. A large number of figurative and symbolic interpretations of "Persepolis" and "Cyrus" are the manifestation of

such desires for "reviving the pure Persian essence/sprit". Repeating the same Persian icons like soldiers lined up, the kings sitting on a throne, winged cows with human heads (Lamasou), Faravahar, symbolic icons of lions, cedar trees and Apadana columns, and holding Ferdowsi millennial celebration as the protector of the Persian ancient golden time in almost all implications of the landscape, from buildings and urban furniture to business environments, restaurants spaces, the worlds of fashions and even virtual spaces as an Iranian identity are examples of such a wrong presumption in the thinking structure. The characteristic of such mistake is arising from the idea of returning to the Persian sprit in the form of a calendar based on ancient history, which is in conflict with the fact that the majority of Iranians have a Muslim background and have emerged over the centuries based on religious, cultural and administrative concepts which represents ignoring a part of physical structure of a territory.

In this wrong presumption of "Islam and Iran as black and white" concept, and at the differing point of desire for the Persian glory before Islam, some Islamic forms and rituals are renovated at its lowest level and permission. It means, it is supposed that the repetition of Iranian-Islamic forms like domes and arches can certainly increase the quality of landscapes. The inception of such a wrong idea is arising from separation and racial superiority of Aryans to Arabs or vice versa. In fact, on the opposite side of a horror to racial mixing, that exists in anti-Arabism, it is wrongly thought that Islam is that constant superior appearance in any context; in other words, it means that there is no other way for novel interpretation and creating new compositions. This approach is opposite to what is known as Iranian talent, which has been able to make a composition of technical, cultural, religious, and methods even from other languages which were either pleasant or beneficial to him. It is a fact that individuality of landscape should be protected from undesirable

mixing; however, it should be distinguished from refining the landscape with predetermined criteria. Therefore, similar to the attempt of removing Arabic words from colloquial Persian language and the risk of destroying the continuity and coherence of this language, which might bring a generation of Iranians who are no longer be able to comprehend the ideas of great poets of pre-modern era, even Persian poets, such as Ferdowsi, without using Persian lexicons, the black and white idea toward Iran and Islam in urban landscape of Iranian cities also disconnect the historical continuum of this land and cause its separation from the physical realities of the territory. According to the “admirable fearful idol of the west”, the meaning of development is reduced to conform to standard of modern countries, to the extent that it is possible to imagine the end of the world, but it is not possible to imagine any kind of life or growing out of this construction. This wrong idea causes, for example, the substitution of boulevard, parkway, and highway by the conventional concepts of street and square, or what was happened to the central uniformed army which was replaced by the nomadic riflemen. Then, in continuation of this mistake, it is thought that progress will occur if only a plan, strategy or theory is introduced without presenting any forms and techniques; which is not able to be considered as a trigger for the concept of localization in line with the development plans of the Iranian landscape.

It is similar to what happened for students who were studying abroad and gained a tangible experience of European modernity, and learned some rules and regulations, out of the techniques to construct a rather modern administrative building with Persian icons and characteristic in situ to represent the progress of their own traditional city (which was behind the European counterpart)<sup>1</sup>. Finally, it can be mentioned that the idea of progress still exists. For example, for overcoming the urban issues, the knowledge, rules and regulation written for a complete street, public

Transit Oriented Development (TOD), UNESCO guidelines for cultural heritage, environmental issues, traffic rules and many other similar issues, are recommended and implemented either exactly or localized for the landscape of Iranian cities. This wrong thinking structure is arising from a historical current; Prior to Qajar era, Iranians were not considering themselves at an inferior level to anyone and had no desire for Iran to be at the same level of progress of any target idol or entity. However, from the time of Qajar onward, a far-fetched challenge arose in the form of “undefeatable enemies” which impaired the “self - superiority of Iranian noble culture”.

In this encounter, the constant despise of impious enemy is replaced by unquestioning worship of the European achievements, because of observation the strength and power of modern countries – such as the emergence of cars, trains, airplanes, satellites, advanced military equipment, computers, medical sciences and other signs of progress - which had suddenly created an unachievable gap. Therefore, a kind of persuading initiated with the fear experience of destruction and inferiority, which wrongly represented any other kind of European life style as an impossible condition. While according to the physical structure of understanding and growing territory, practicing is inevitable with no negative aspect, but inducing the thought of “remaining at practice position forever” or any “admiration” is a wrong idea. For a monadic graceful land that targets power and knowledge and has ability to grow, it is required to drive its role based on its own time-place based characteristics; even if practicing, as an inevitable necessity, is following a wise man not an opponent.

*Fereydun-e Farrokh<sup>2</sup> was not an angel/ He was not born in Musk and Amber/ He found that goodness by giving and forgiveness/ You also give and forgive, as you are that Fereydun* (Ferdowsi, 1987).

## Endnotes

1. Like what done by a character called Farrokh Bastani, the governor of a small town of Saman in the Persian movie, TV series: Kolah Pahlavi directed by Seyed Ziaeddin Dori.

2. An Iranian mythical king and hero in Shahnameh.

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