

## Oil Company's approach to healthcare in south oil-rich regions from oil exploration to the Islamic revolution

Shadi Marefati

### Abstract:

The plague, cholera, typhus, typhoid, tuberculosis and many other contagious diseases have been the nightmare of the Iranians, a nightmare that has claimed the lives of many men and women every few years and malaria has been an incubus of southern people. Khuzestan heat, southern humidity, water pollution and lack of sanitation facilities were causing these diseases to increase death toll in Khuzestan. When the British-Iranian oil company started to hire workers, the spread of each single disease was a blow to the fledgling industry. Therefore, healthcare in the petroleum industry is as old as oil exploration in Iran, and from the outset, part of the cost was devoted to the prevention and control of contagious diseases and one of the first preventative measures was to quarantine ports to prevent the entry of sick workers.

Although the oil company has prioritized healthcare from the outset, it seems the company's priority has been more to protect the health of its British staff than to promote the health in the southern regions, and more so as a charity rather than a duty. However, through time, the rise of public awareness, and especially after the 1933 agreement, the development of the health of oilfields became one of the responsibilities of the Oil Company. The main issue in this paper is to examine the approach of the Oil Company to the issue of public health in the southern oil-rich regions. The question is whether the approach of the Oil Company to the issue of health has changed between the oil exploration in 1285 until the nationalization of the oil industry in 1329 with the increase of central government supervision and raise of public awareness or not.

**Keywords:** Healthcare and Treatment; Oil Industry of Iran; Contagious Diseases; Cholera; Plague