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THE EFFECT OF THE 1962 IRANIAN LAND REFORM  
ON RURAL SOCIAL CLASS STRUCTURE

presented by

Abdolali Lahsaeizadeh

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Sociology

  
Major professor

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BY

Abdolali Lahsaeizadeh

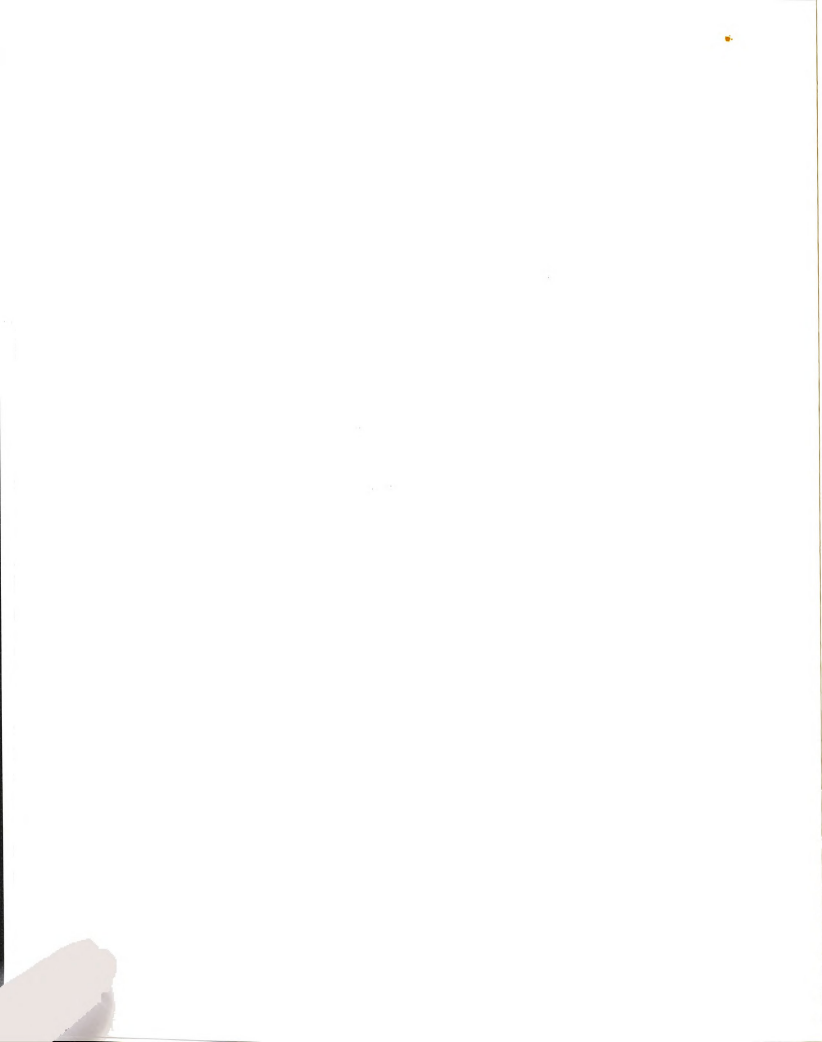
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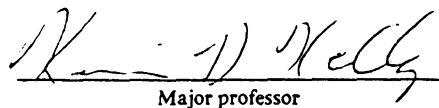
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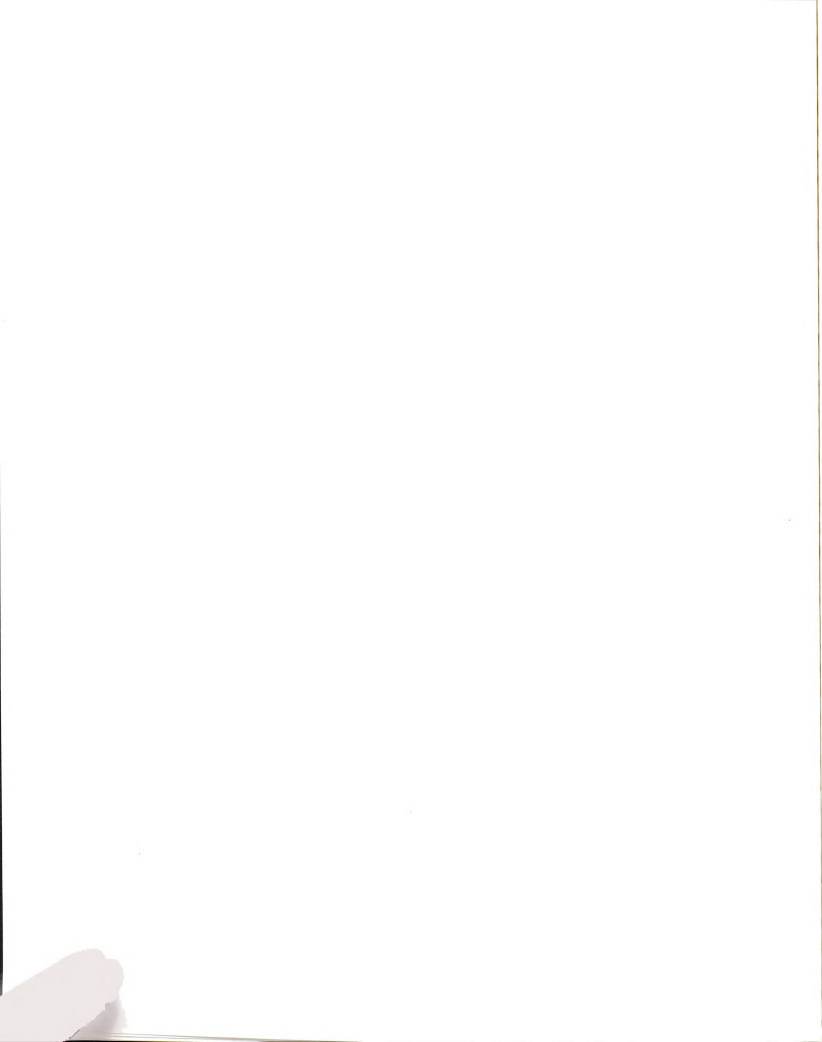
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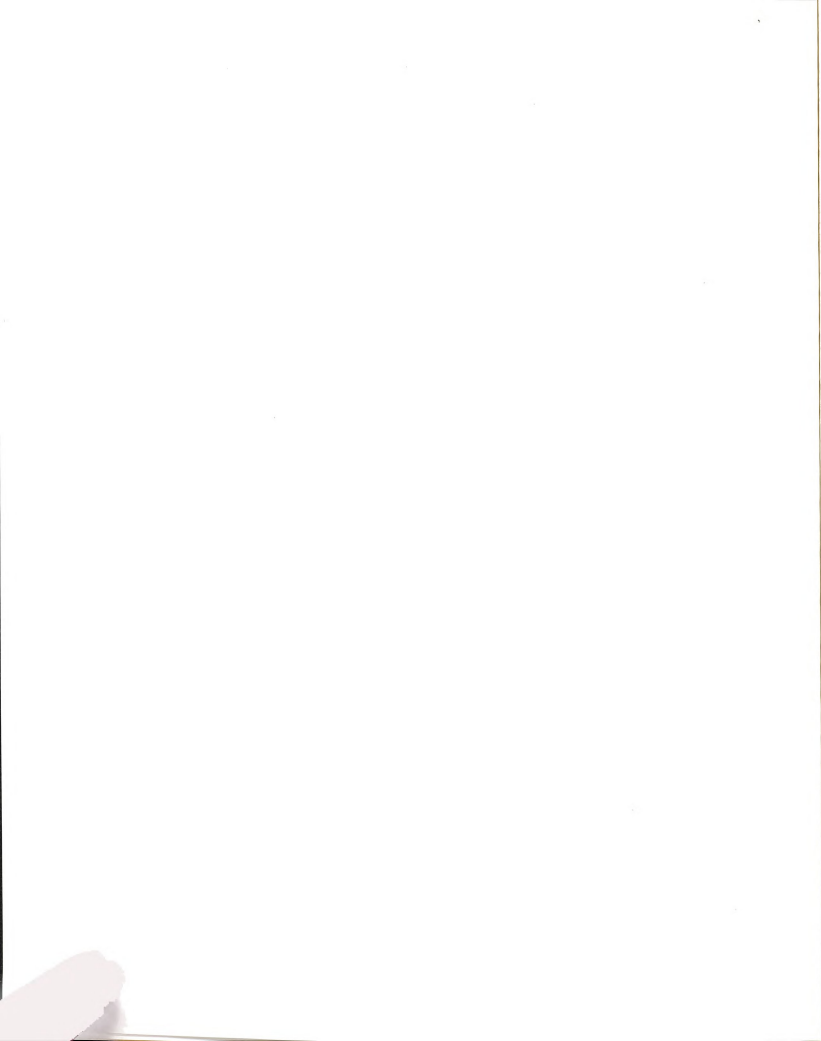
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## ABSTRACT

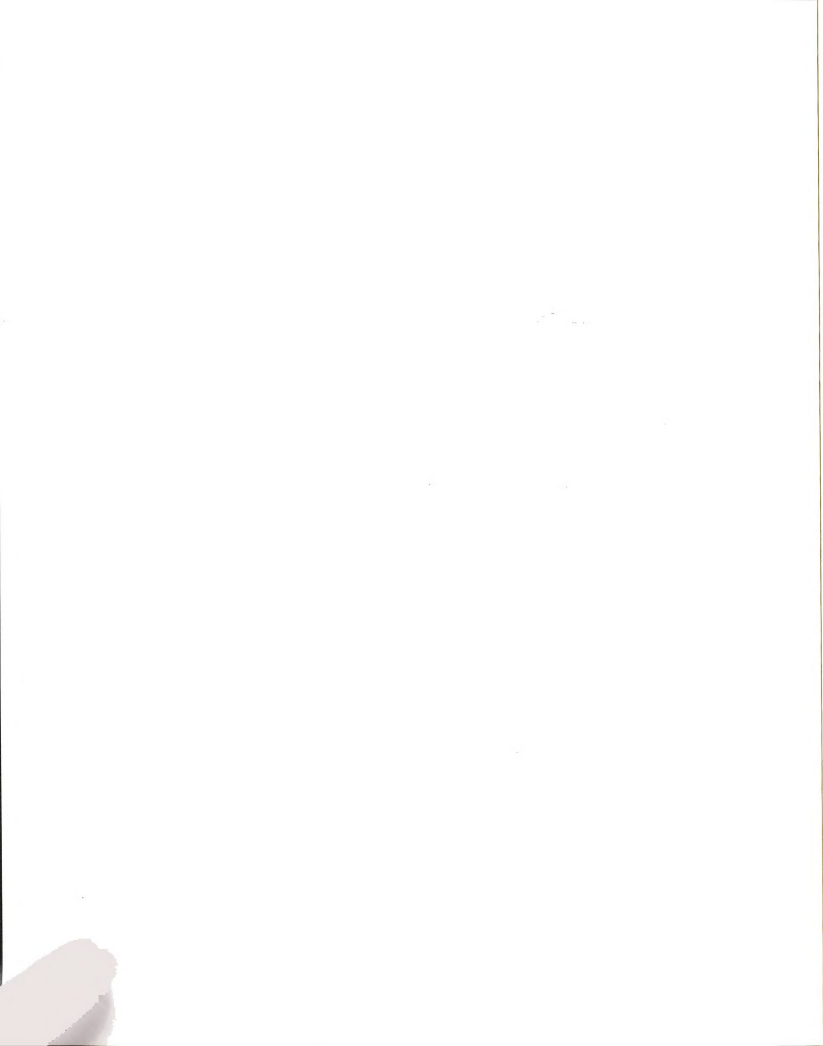
### THE EFFECT OF THE 1962 IRANIAN LAND REFORM ON RURAL SOCIAL CLASS STRUCTURE

BY

Abdolali Lahsaeizadeh

This dissertation was concerned with applying the theory of the articulation of modes of production to the analysis of social change in Iranian rural society. In order to analyze the agrarian structure and its transformation in the postwar period through the combined forces of the development of capitalism and public reforms, the study developed a theoretical framework based on the concepts of mode of production, articulation of modes of production within a specific historical social formation, and social classes within modes of production. The most general objective was to study the nature of class relations before and after the land reform in Iran's rural areas for the period between World War II and 1979. The specific aim was to analyze the process of annihilation of some rural classes and the emergence and expansion of others after the 1962 Iranian "land reform from above." The analysis took into account the interplay of major internal, as well as external, structural forces.





The research found that a characteristic peculiarity of Iranian rural areas prior to the land reform was the combination of predominant feudal relations of production and scant independent peasant production. The pre-capitalist relations of production were subordinated to the capitalist system through a system of commercial relations. In this regard, capitalism preserved the pre-capitalist relations of production in Iran.

The research suggested that in relation to the stage of New Dependency, the existence of the pre-capitalist agricultural system and the type of ownership of land was an obstacle to the development of dependent bourgeois and foreign capitalist activities in agriculture. Therefore, the foreign supporters of the landowners stopped supporting their old allies (feudal landlords) and forced their new allies (dependent bourgeoisie) in power to move and eliminate feudalistic relations of production in order to pave the road for capitalist agriculture. The means to overcome this obstacle was the land reform.

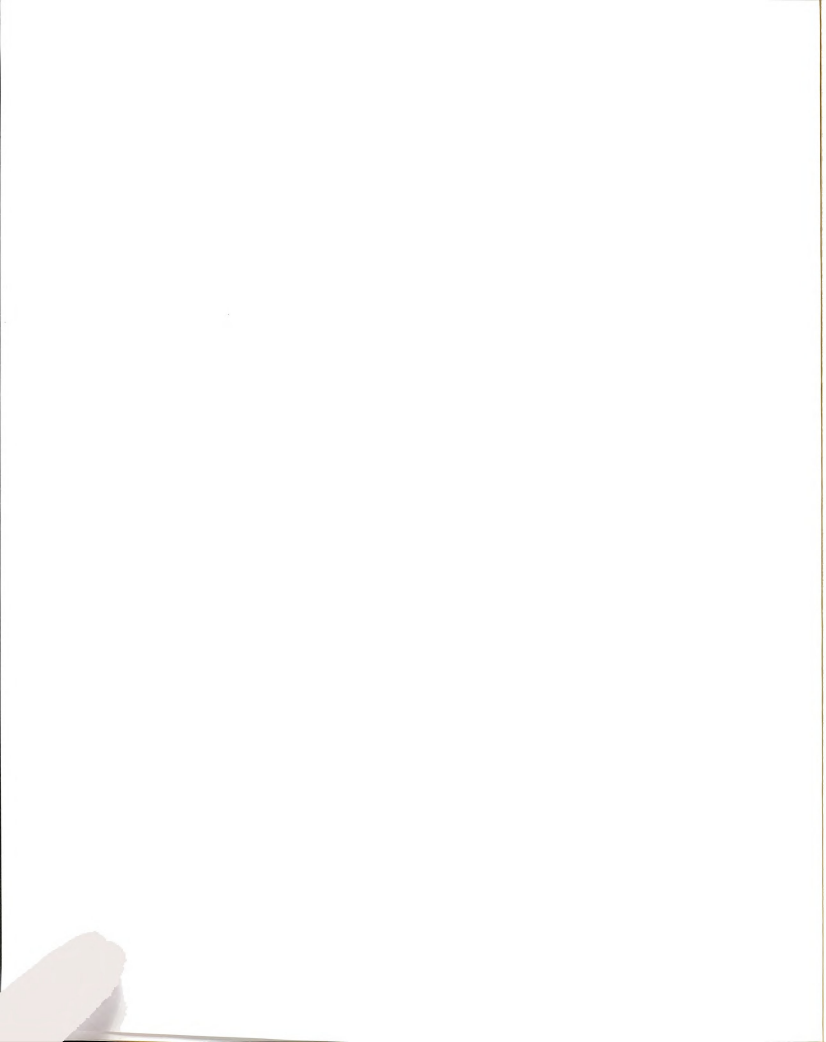
The pre-capitalist relations of production were definitively liquidated in Iranian agriculture and transformed either into a transition system of production, or into a capitalist one. As a result, the new structure is an articulation between the capitalist mode of production and small commodity production.

The consequence of this new articulation was a new class structure in the countryside. The small commodity producers

emerged as the most numerous rural class. Capitalist producers emerged as a relatively satisfied class with a greater stake in the existing society. Finally, the cardinal effect of the land reform was an enormous increase in the number of landless rural proletarians, whose common characteristics are low income, economic insecurity and unemployment. Ultimately, many members of this class migrated to the cities.

Names and Location of the 23 Iranian Provinces





To my wife Mina  
and my son Saba

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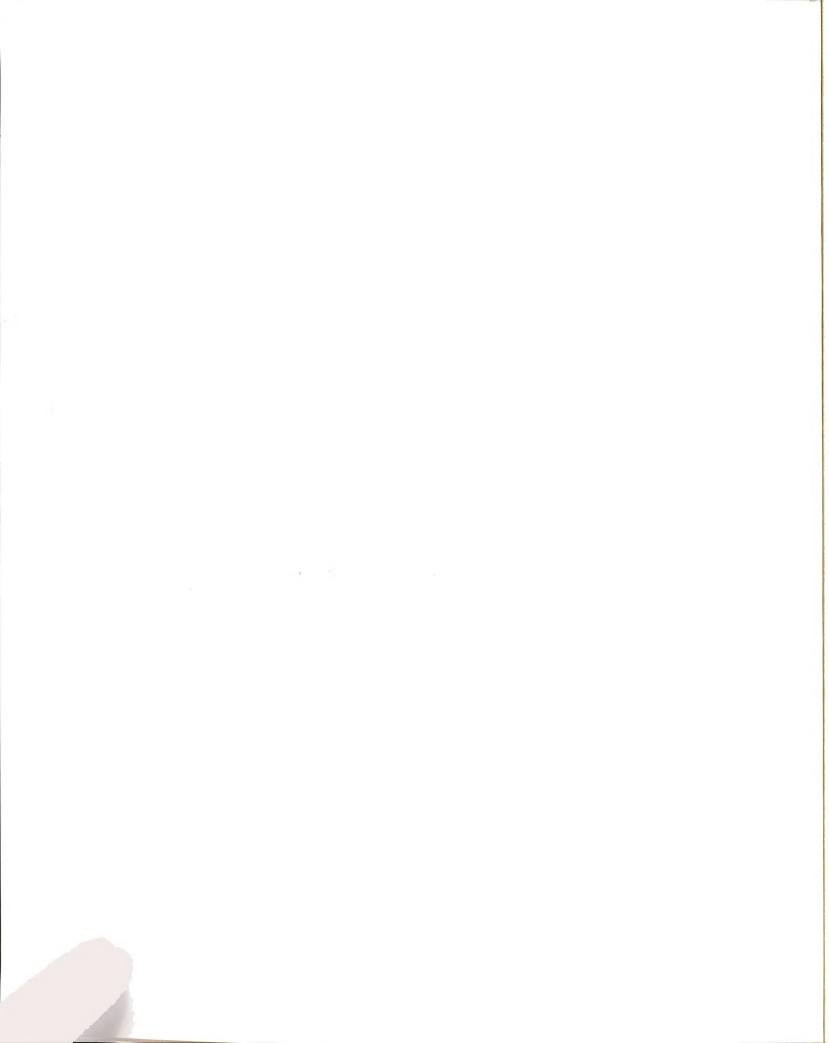
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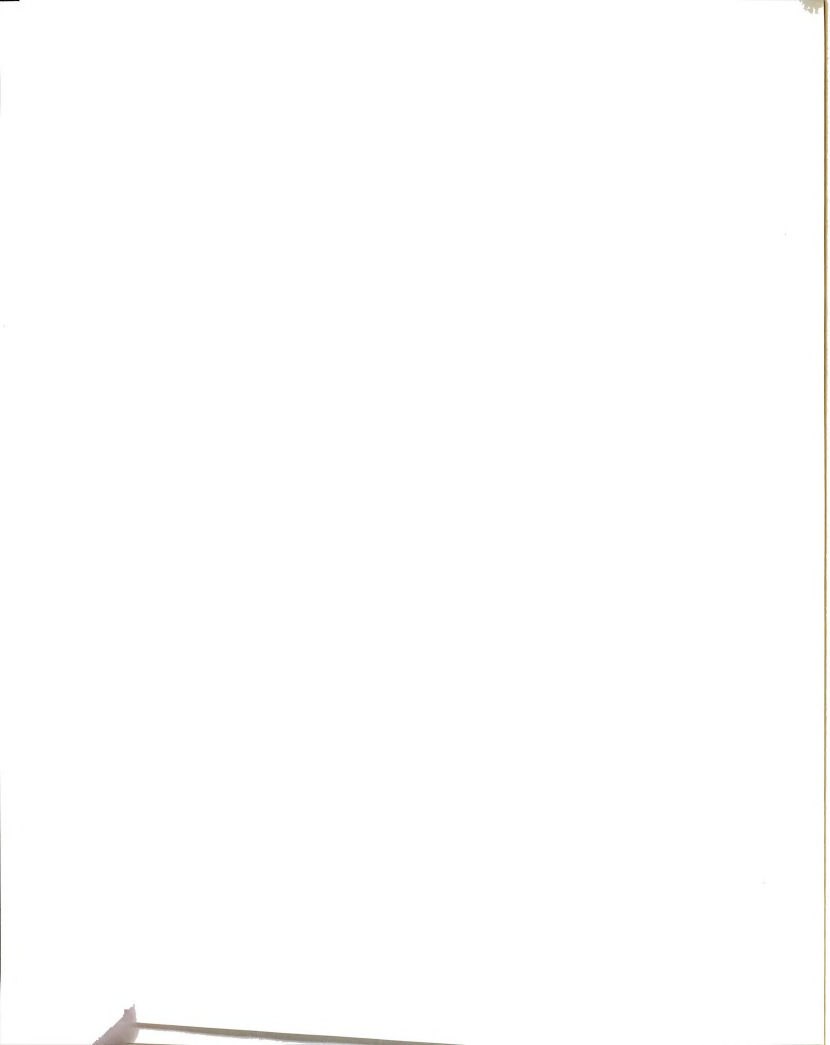


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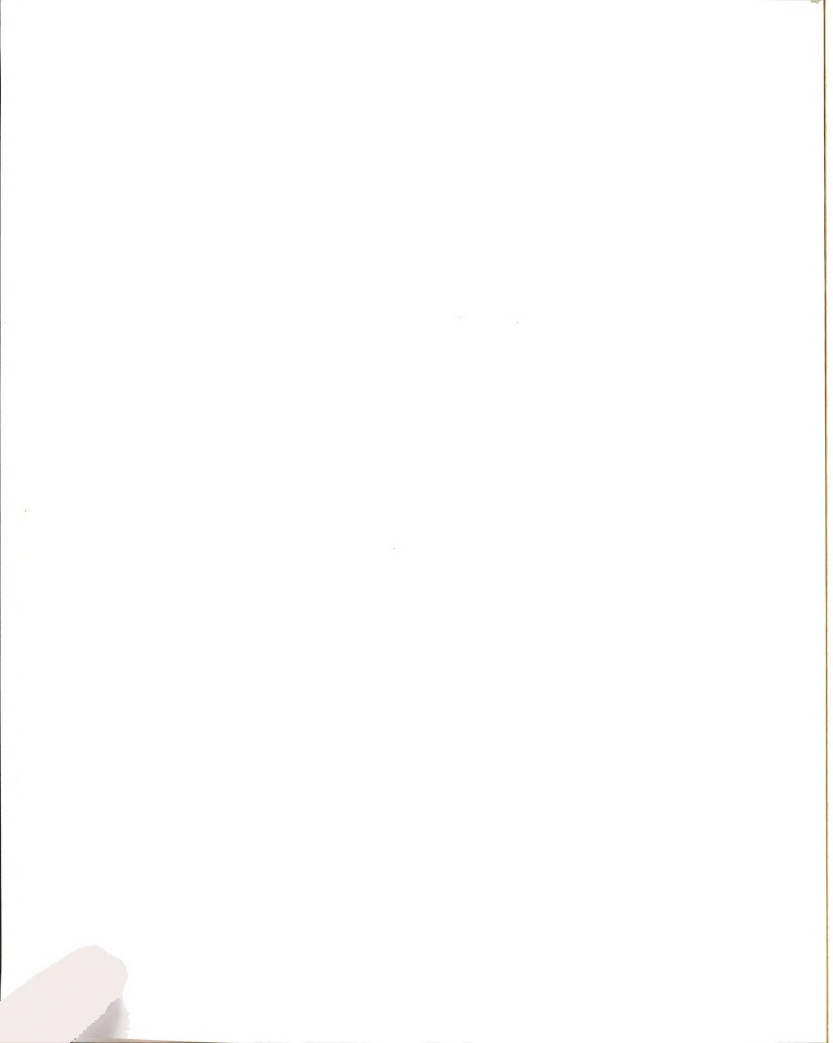
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Abdolali Lahsaeizadeh

October, 1984, East Lansing



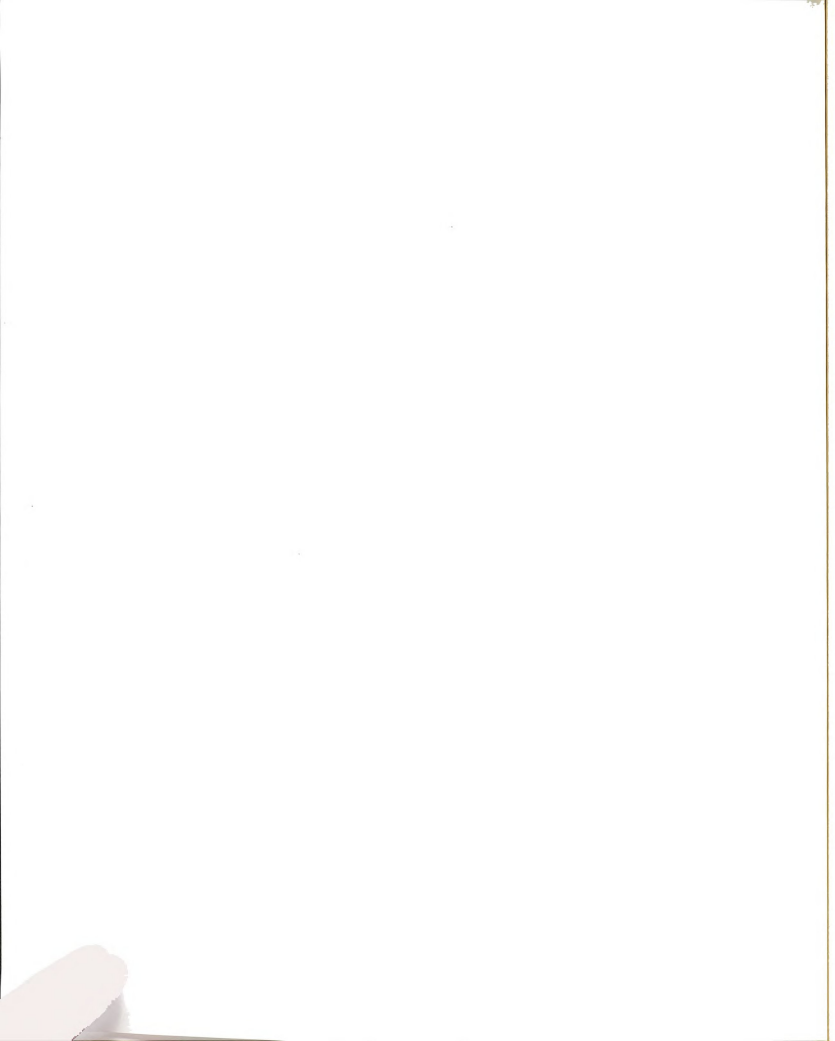


## INTRODUCTION

This research is concerned with following the change in Iranian rural class structure as it relates to the 1962 Iranian "land reform from above". The most general objective is to explore the essence of class relations before and after the land reform in Iran's rural areas for the period between World War II and 1979. The special aim is to analyze the process of annihilation of some rural classes and the emergence and expansion of others after the reform.

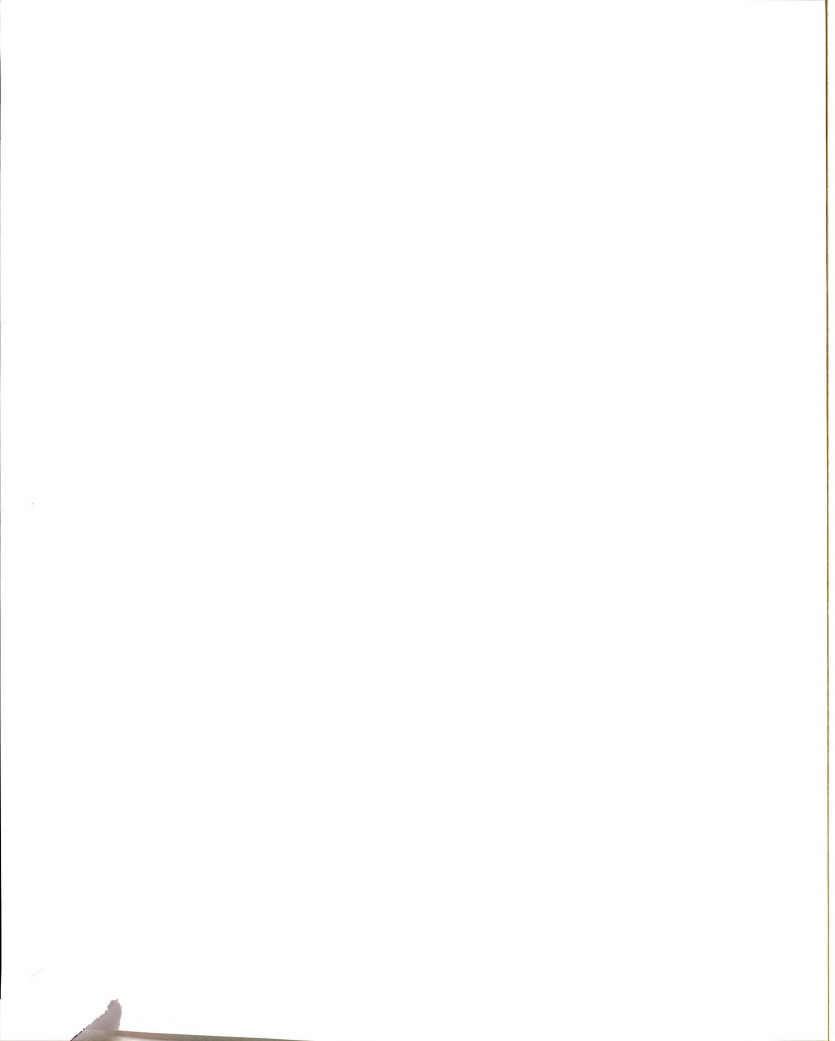
This dissertation is divided into five distinct parts. Part I, consisting of Chapter 1, 2, and 3, provides a conceptualization of the research problem. In Chapter 1, the controversy over the cause and effect of the Iranian land reform is discussed, because it makes a great deal of difference to our understanding of the nature and logic of the land reform and the way we should conceptualize the issue and its effect. In this chapter, the research with the radical view on the cause of the Iranian land reform and its effect on the rural structure have been reviewed.

Chapter 2 sets up a theoretical framework for analyzing the process of change in the rural class structure of peripheral societies. The issue is the usefulness



of putting the problem of peripheral agrarian structure within the world capitalist-economy. Since in the peripheral countries the capitalist system has been imposed upon a pre-existing social structure, study of change in rural class structure must take into account the interaction between the pre-capitalist and capitalist structures. For this purpose, I utilize the "articulation of the modes of production" approach. In other words, to analyze the agrarian structure and its transformation in the postwar period through the combined forces of the development of capitalism and public reforms, the study develops a theoretical framework based on the concepts of mode of production, articulation of modes of production within a specific historical social formation, and social classes within modes of production.

Chapter 3 establishes a methodological base for this research. Since we are dealing with the question of "development" in history, we are actually studying an historical movement from one phase to another phase. Therefore, in order to explain such a movement, our study has to be based on dialectical and historical methods. The dialectical method is a means by which to grasp the basic reality of social groups as totalities. The historical approach in sociology is an approach which finds its expression in an investigation of the successive stages of historical development. This method of investigation provides us with an understanding of the connection between various stages of historical development.

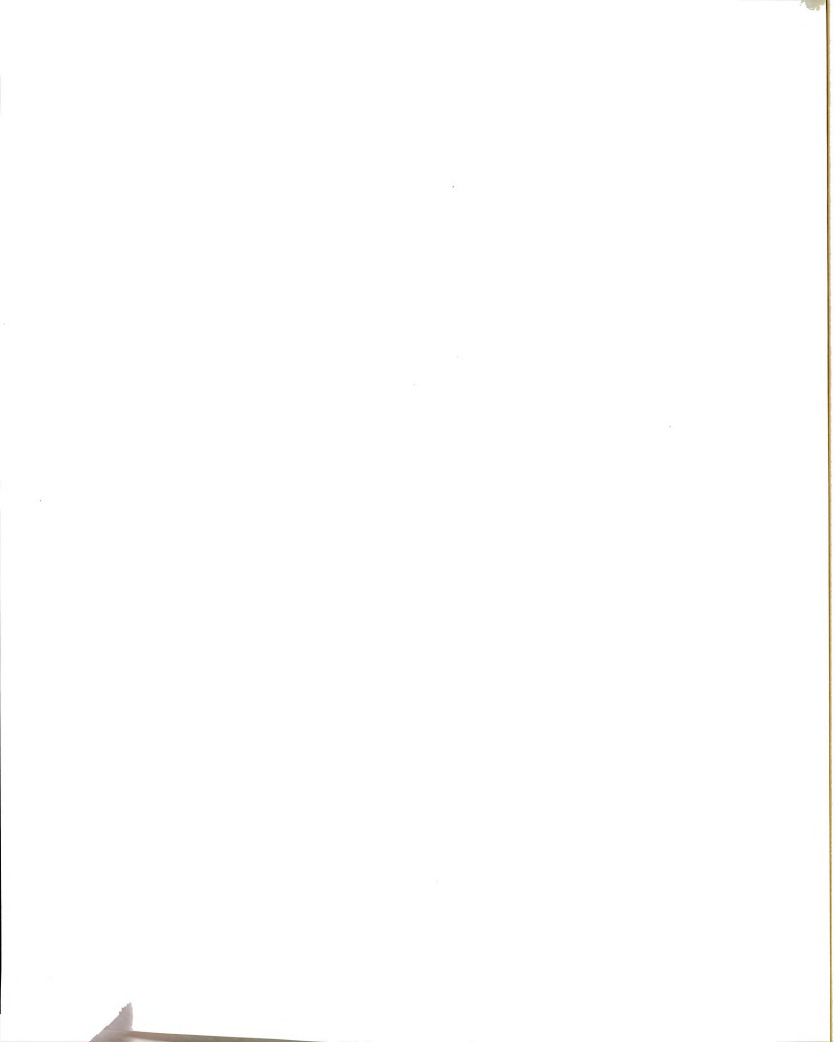


Part II contains the geographical setting and historical background of the country. These two chapters are essential to a full understanding of the issue under consideration. First, the setting for specific kinds of class relations is the result not only of historical and structural conditions of the wider society and economy but also of geographical factors. Social relations of production in the rural areas is connected with geography. One of the general factors that characterizes rural life in Iran is the extraordinary influence of the physical environment. Second, since our method of analysis is historical, it is necessary to understand the historical background of the society under investigation. This background is about the most relative domains to the subject (i.e., pattern of landholding; irrigation system; and agricultural production). It is important to know that the pre-land reform conditions had developed, to a large extent, as a result of several changes dating back to end of the nineteenth century.

Part III covers the content of the different modes of production articulated to each other prior to the land reform. It includes four inter-related levels within the frame of modes of production: 1) the pattern of land-ownership (Chapter 6); 2) the forms of production and division of products(Chapter 7); 3) the predominant division of labor (chapter 8); and 4) the level of the development of the productive forces (chapter 9). Based on these four levels of analysis, Chapter 10 draws a picture of the rural class structure prior to the land reform; and it shows that the

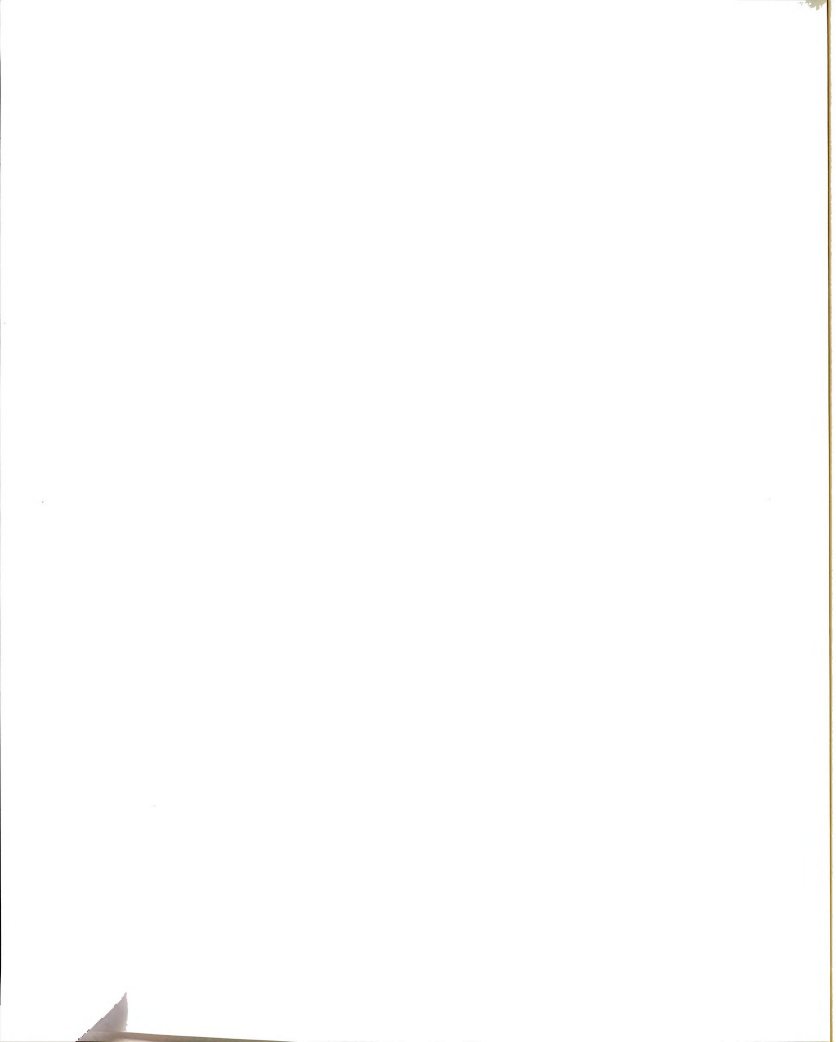
Iranian villages had clearly defined social classes and a hierarchy based on prevailing social relations of production. These classes had definite positions in relation to the means of production. These classes consisted, in a broad sense, of a dominant class and the subordinate classes. It was the landlord who had almost an exclusive contact with the market through the medium of Iranian merchant capital. The Iranian peasantry had a very limited contact with the market. This limitation meant that the Iranian peasantry underwent a very slow process of socio-economic differentiation.

Part IV provides an essential explanation for the cause of the land reform in relation to internal as well as external forces (chapter 11). In other words, it seeks the cause of the 1962 land reform through the main contradiction in Iranian society. On the one hand, the contradiction of the interests of the old ruling elite, and new one is investigated; and, on the other hand, the change in the policies of the core toward the periphery is explored. The task of Chapter 12 is to demonstrate the content and nature of the different laws as well as the process of its implementation. This chapter distinguishes between lands that were incorporated into the "reform" and "non-reform" sectors in the process of land reform. It shows that because of the nature of the land reform, the relations of production in both sectors were changed drastically. The statistical result of the distribution of the land appears in this chapter.





Part V contains the emergence of the new rural socio-economic structure. Chapter 13 through 16 demonstrate how, as a result of the land reform and its supplementary measures, the precapitalist estate was transformed either into a transitory system of production, or into a capitalist one, thus changing the basis of the social relations of production. In fact, these chapters explore the emergence and the structure of the new rural enterprises in order to be able to draw a comprehensive picture of the post-land reform class relations. Based on the contents of these chapters the final chapter (chapter 17) explains the new rural structure in terms of the articulation between the capitalist mode of production and the petty commodity mode of production in which the former is the dominant mode and later is subordinated under the mechanism of the market. The new articulation of the modes of production and the unequal development of capitalism in agriculture after the land reform provided a material basis for a rural class structure specific to the Iranian countryside. The rest of the chapter is a manifestation of the new rural class structure in the rural areas. This includes explanation about the rural petty commodity producer and its differentiation; the rural capitalist and its expansion; and finally, the rural proletariat and its migration. In short, this chapter demonstrates the process of rural class differentiation in relation to the land reform and its related measures.



PART I  
CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION: The Problem Defined

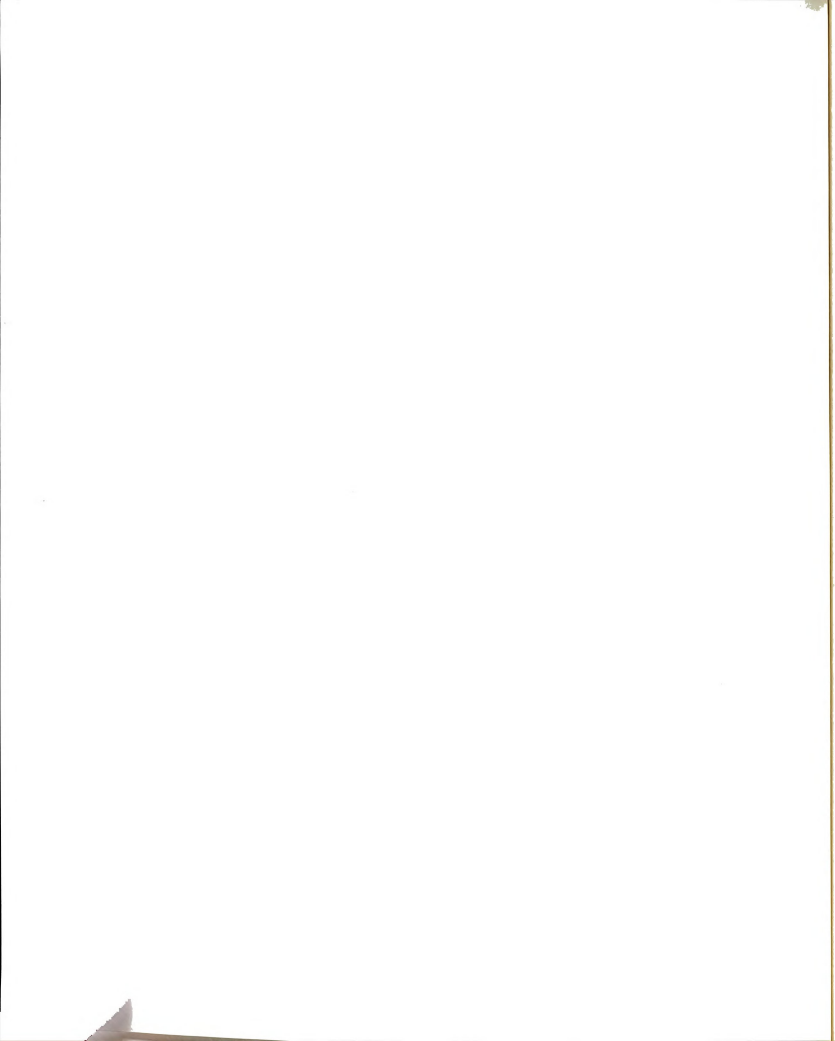
The vast majority of humans live in agrarian societies in the so-called underdeveloped countries of the Third World. Yet it was not until recently that sociologists and anthropologists began to give any systematic attention to these societies. To be sure, anthropologists and ethnologists have long been carrying out studies of tribes, primitives, and even peasants, no doubt taking special care to record their exotic customs and strange cultural traits. But it has been the peasant wars and upheavals of the twentieth century that have captured the attention of social scientists and turned their thoughts seriously to the political and revolutionary potential of the peasantries of the world (e.g., Alavi, 1973; Mechriakov, 1927; Moore, Jr., 1966; Paige, 1975; Stavenhagen, 1975; and Wolf, 1966, 1969).

This research is concerned with tracing the change in the Iranian rural class structure as it relates to the 1962 Iranian "land reform from above". The most general objective is to study the nature of class relations before and after the land reform in Iran's rural areas for the period between World War II and 1979. The specific aim is to analyze the process of annihilation of some rural classes and the

emergence and expansion of others after the reform.

A striking aspect of the radical approaches concerned with the history of change in the Iranian rural class structure in the dependent capitalist age is that, despite claims of class analysis, they have not understood the peasantry in terms of class relations. In other words, the historical processes engendering the division between different classes of the rural population in general, and peasantry in particular have rarely been analyzed in terms of class relations. The peasantry has been defined in relation to amount of lands they have held rather than in relation to modes of production (e.g., Halliday, 1977, Kazemi, 1978). As a consequence, the class dynamics of the countryside were and still are a confusing matter for Iranian intellectuals as well as for revolutionary forces. The proposed study is an attempt to provide some insight into the class dynamics of the countryside.

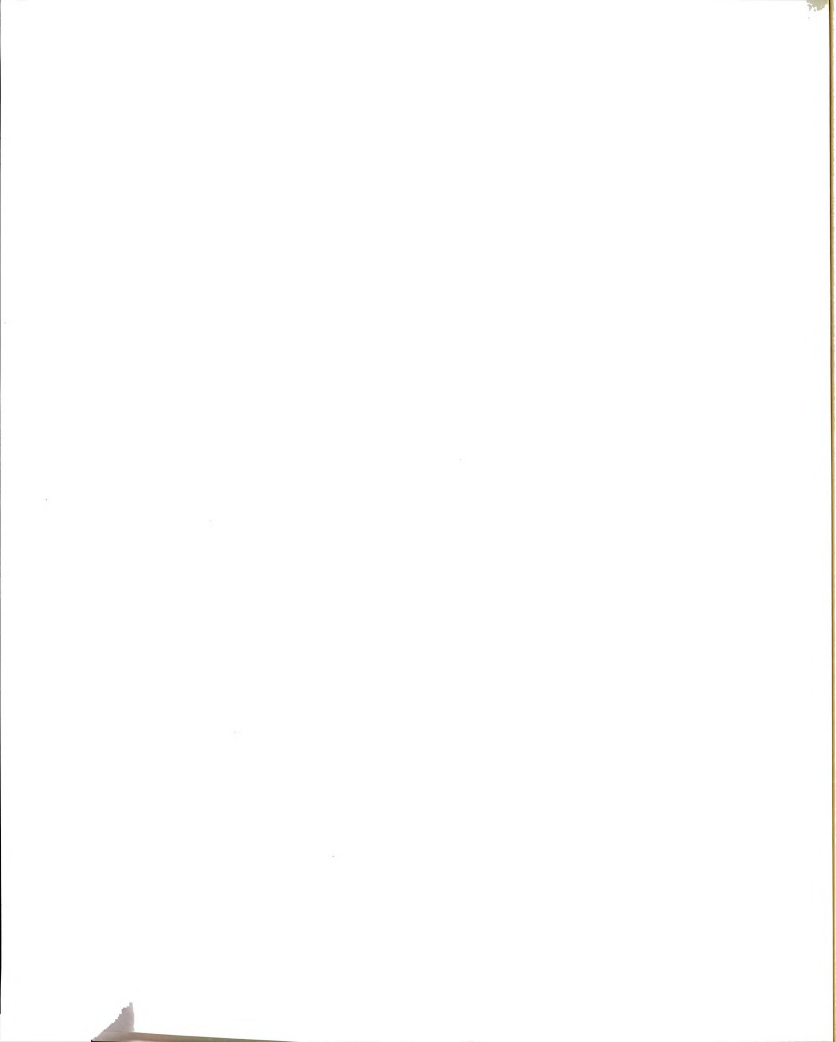
The reason for the selection of this topic is at least partly rooted in my own intellectual and political development. In Iranian society, the sociology of class has received only scant attention. This is particularly true as regards agrarian society. The reasons for this were partly because of coercions which have existed in Iranian society. On the one hand, the intellectuals were not allowed to develop any class analysis especially at the academic level. On the other hand, revolutionary groups did not develop an original class analysis of Iranian society. First they used the Soviet Union's official



class analysis derived from Stalin's linear interpretation of social change. Then, during the late 1960's the Chinese model of class analysis was copied for interpreting the rural class structure. Consequently, both of these efforts were wrong from the beginning since they were not based on research on Iranian society. During the 1970's some works were done by the revolutionary groups which unfortunately were not based on empirical research (e.g., Jazani, 1978; GOF, 1976).

If the purpose of social science is to understand the society, this could not be achieved unless first we understand the basic parameters within which social change will take place. Since the structure of class relations in rural areas establishes the basic parameter within which social change in those areas will take place, it is necessary to provide a comprehensive understanding of the social class structure of Iranian rural areas.

To investigate the nature of the rural Iranian class structure, this research is guided by premises of the political economy perspective. Specifically, the research is developed on the basis of world capitalist-economy view and the mode of production framework by using the "articulation of modes of production" model. The reason for such a choice is that this framework provides instruments for an internal as well as external understanding of the subject under investigation.



## CHAPTER ONE

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 1.1. Introduction

Most research, from a radical perspective, on the cause and effect of the 1962 Iranian "land reform from above"<sup>1</sup> does not provide an adequate picture of changes in rural class structure. One reason is that these do not develop a sufficient analysis of the class differentiation of the peasantry. Since I will be attempting to develop such an analysis as an improvement on existing research, it will be useful to begin by looking at the interpretation of the Iranian land reform developed with a radical perspective.

#### 1.2. The Radical Interpretation of Iranian Land Reform and its Effects on Social Class Structure

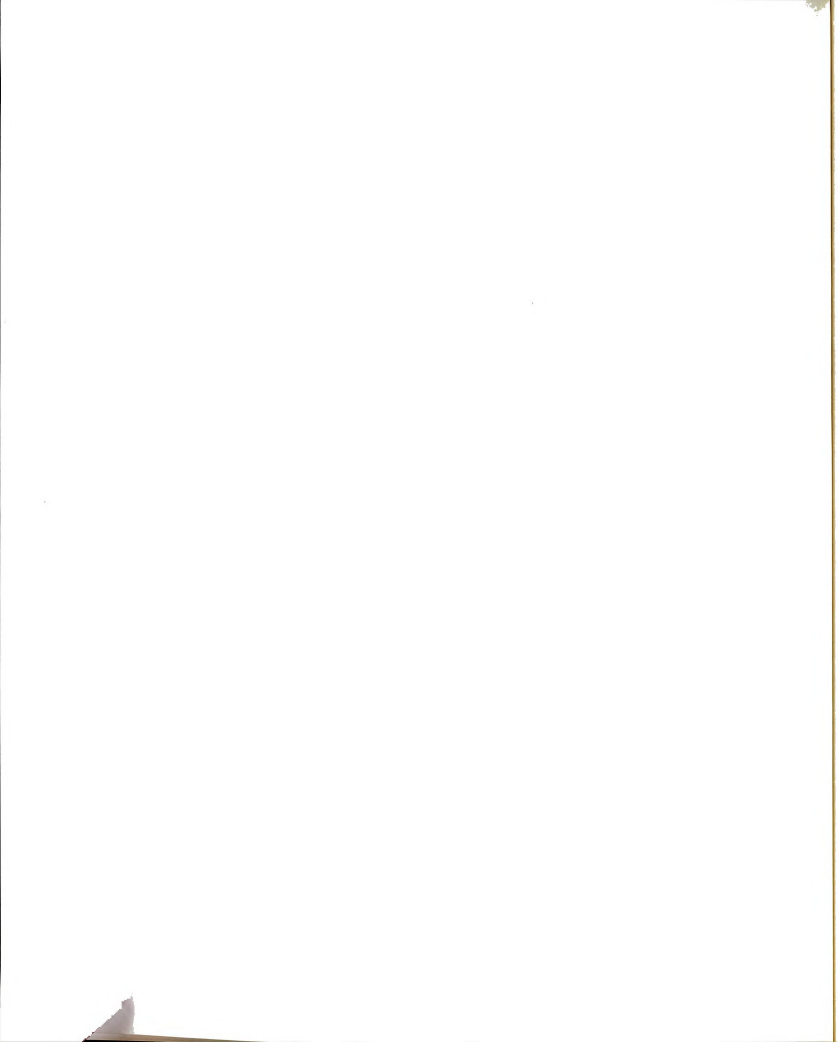
The radical view (Jazani, 1978; Halliday, 1979; Kazemi, 1980), considers the Iranian land reform in relation to both internal and external pressures. Most discussion about the Iranian land reform is posed in terms of the specific conditions under which it was launched: most prominently, the crisis of the early 1960s and the pressure of the Kennedy administration. As Halliday pointed out, "in January 1962 an initial land reform decree was promulgated, with the encouragement and advice of U.S. officials" (1979:110). The land reform law was conceived partly under pressure from



the American government, which was concerned about instability in the Middle East, especially in the wake of the Iraqi revolution of 1958 and fears of possible similar mass uprisings in Iran. The Americans hoped that land reform would stabilize the countryside and prevent the development of major pressures from below (Kazemi, 1980:34). Because at that time Iran needed financial assistance, "American government demanded land reform as a condition for financial assistance to Iran" (Kazemi, 1980:34).

There were economic, social and political objectives of Iran's land reform. The kind of reform carried out in Iran was a product of the capitalist character of the Iranian state and the particular options it chose (Halliday, 1977:136). In view of Iran's general political and economic orientation, the government chose the bourgeois-individualist solution that counted essentially on the initiative of farmers and of capitalist landholders. As Parham argues, the land reform was an adjustment of the structure of land-ownership. Its aim was not to destroy the old structure of land-ownership, but rather to adjust it to the needs of a capitalization and industrialization of agriculture (1971:117).

Economically, as Hooglund pointed out, the Shah "... wanted to develop Iran according to a capitalist model" (1982:45). For this purpose, as Khamsi says, he must prepare the way for the growth of capitalist farming (1969:23). Therefore, the abolition of feudalistic relations as an obstacle to expansion of the comprador bourgeoisie became necessary.

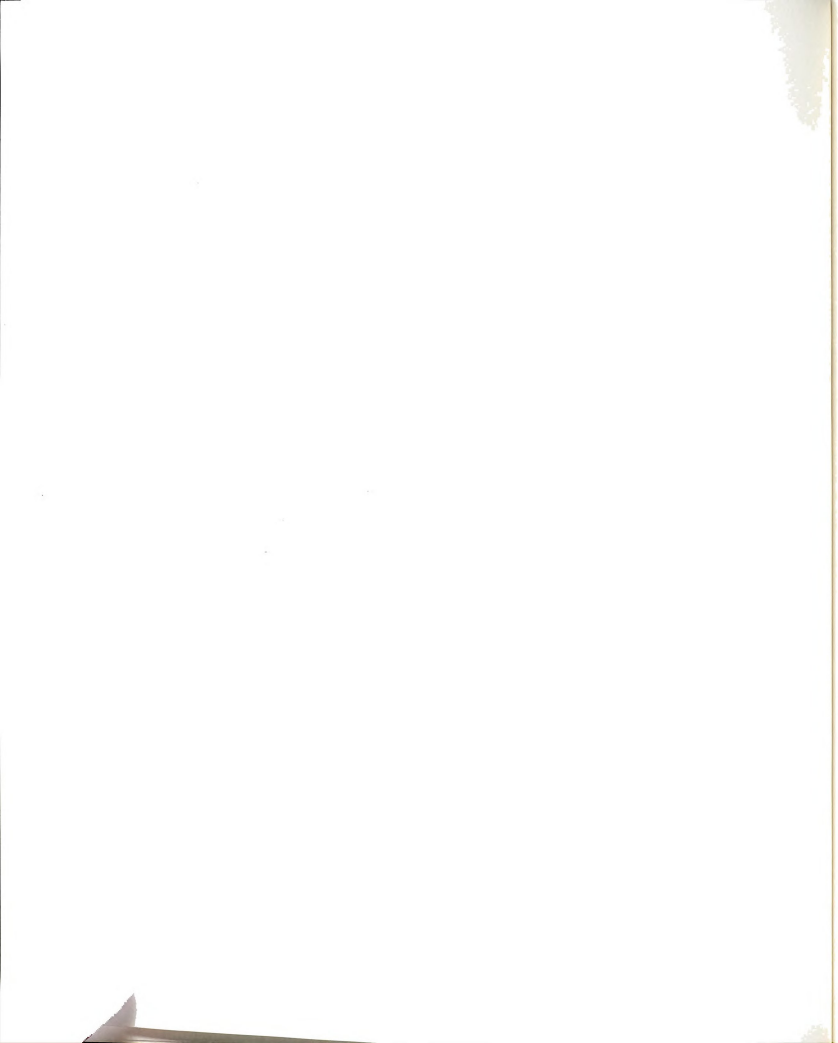


With the abolition of these relations the capitalist relations of production in agriculture could be expanded and the way would be paved for both comprador bourgeoisie and imperialist monopoly exploitation (Jazani, 1978:16). As one guerrilla organization has indicated, "with the feudal system of production in full swing, it was extremely difficult for imperialism to invest in agriculture" (G.O.P.F, 1976:10).

Katouzian has pointed out that by land reform the state had no interest in developing the agricultural sector in general. In contrast, it had very strong interests in creating a small 'modern' agriculture through the means of joint-stock corporations and large-businesses (1981:304). These activities were not designed on behalf of the peasantry, in contrast, they were part of land reform design in order to speed up the processes of capitalization of agriculture and turning the majority of the peasant population into wage laborers.

Research by radicals interpretes the cooperatives as a part of the economic objective because they are a means for expanding monetary relations and credit in the rural area (G.O.P.F, 1976).

The land reform program was conceived with political objectives in mind. Political considerations were as important as economic. As Kazemi has indicated, in terms of its political aspects, the land reform program has at least two aims: (1) to destroy the power base of the major land owning families and thus neutralize a potential source of



opposition to the regime; and (2) to gain the support and allegiance of the peasants and hence forestall a revolution in the countryside (1980:35). For Jazani, because feudal relations caused an internal contradiction in the political structure of government and weakened the regime, one of the political aims of land reform was removing feudal lords from the ruling class by the means of the abolition of feudal relations(1978:16).

The purpose of the land reform, then was to create a new social division in the countryside, in fact to create a capitalist class structure in place of the earlier pre-capitalist one. It is evident that the pre-reform landowning families did not transform themselves automatically into a capitalist class. The state had to intervene to redistribute land and to encourage the capitalist development of agriculture in order to speed up this new social division (Halliday,1979:103,116).

From the radical perspective, the changes which have taken place in Iran were a part of changes which have taken place in the world as a whole (Parham,1971:117). The changes involved have been fundamental in the sense that they have constituted a transformation in the structure of Iranian society. But this transformation was not a path to economic development as the Shah viewed it. It caused the country to be westernized rather than developed.

The land reform, as Parham argued, represented a victory of the new capitalism over the traditional rural social system and the opening up of the countryside to the machine and to

capital (1971:117). The first and second phases of the reform did encourage a fundamental capitalist transformation of the Iranian countryside (Halliday, 1979:115). The reforms promoted commodity relations and created some of the elements of a capitalist class structure. "Land has become a commodity" (Halliday, 1979:115). The second phase of the reform put an end to the non-monetary relations that had previously tied owner and laborer, turning share-cropping arrangements into tenancies.

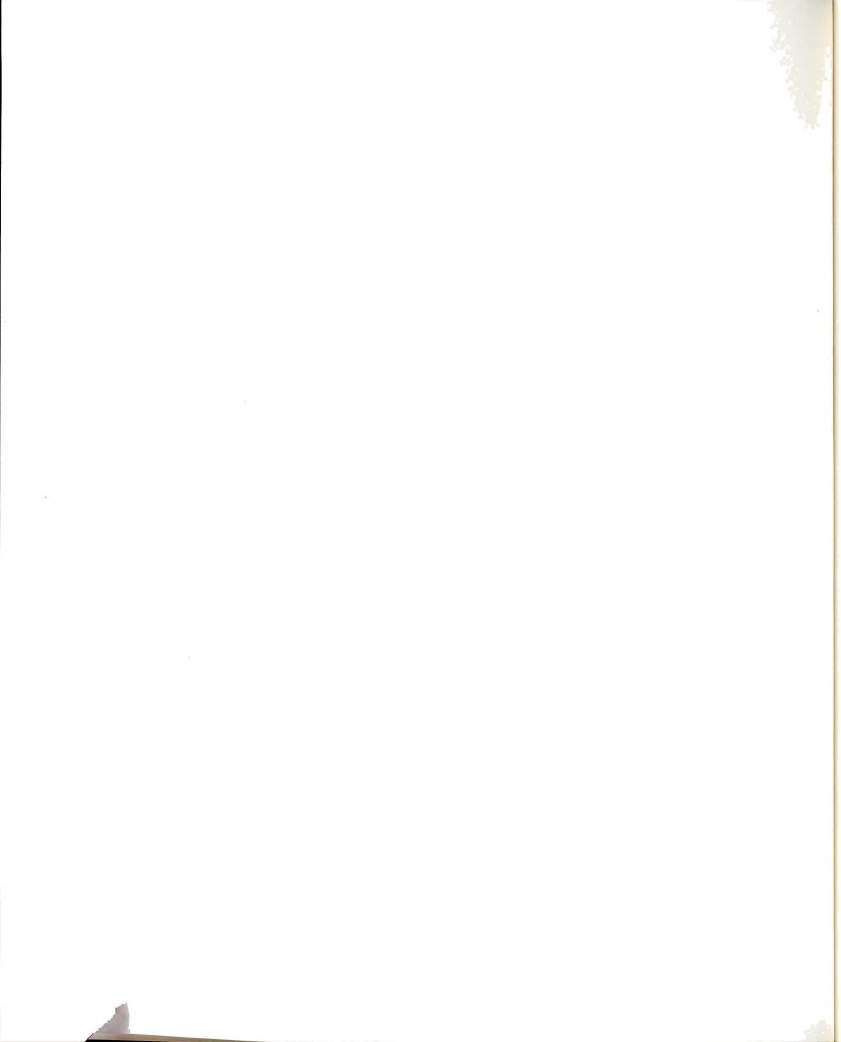
The reform was deliberately designed to distributed land unequally, based on the existing pre-capitalist structure of the village, to the richer farmers and to exclude at least half of the rural population from its scope (Halliday, 1979:117). Consequently, with the implementation of the land reform program, the intraclass relationships of the peasantry have undergone various modifications. One of the most dramatic has been "... the widening gap that has separated those peasants who have had the right to work a particular piece of land and those who have had no such right" (Ashraf, 1967:143). The land reform has been directed only to the former and the resulting situation has been the wealthier peasant become wealthier and the poorer peasants poorer.

It has been indicated that, "...a rural bourgeoisie and a rural proletariat are being deliberately and more rapidly created by it (the land reform), through using and transforming the old village system" (Halliday, 1979:117). A relatively satisfied rural bourgeoisie with a greater stake than ever before in existing relations has been created.

Radicals argue that it is almost certain that this class will continue to dominate village government and institutions and will continue to hire workers from a pool that exceeds the demand. Hooglund has given a clear picture of this domination relation:

Land reform did not alter the basic character of the pre-redistribution agricultural regime--that is, a system under which a minority of owners derived profit from farming by exploiting the labor of a majority of villagers. Of course, the composition of the former group was modified as a direct consequence of the government's redistributive policies. Specifically, a number of former landlords were removed from the system altogether. Their position was taken over by the minority of peasants acquiring 10 or more hectares of land and the rural bourgeoisie (Khwushnishin tradesmen); both of these latter subgroups should be considered part of the rural elite benefiting from exploitative relations with the majority of villagers comprised of subsistence peasant farmers and the landless proletariat (1982:98).

According to Katouzian, the land reform, by discriminating against 40-50 per cent of the rural population, has upset the distribution of income even in the same village. The khwushnishins and the rural proletariat, who were not necessarily or noticeably worse off than the nasaq-holders, suddenly found themselves legally dispossessed, socially unimportant, and economically poorer than the rest. There are ill-feelings among those nasaq-holders who ended up with tenancies, sold their customary rights to the landlords, obtained a share of the land according to the 'five-input' rule, or purchased privately from the landlords. The Iranian peasantry affected by the reform, although generally poor, has become much more stratified than it was (1974:232-234).





The unequal distribution of land necessarily leads to inequalities in income, and approximately 50 per cent of the population in the countryside who have not received land have not seen their incomes rise substantially (Halliday,1979:131). The new relationship was not, of course, one of equals, since the poverty of most peasants in contrast to the wealth of most absentee owners meant that the former were economically dependent, a fact which circumscribed their abilities to initiate autonomous activities (Hooglund, 1982:80).

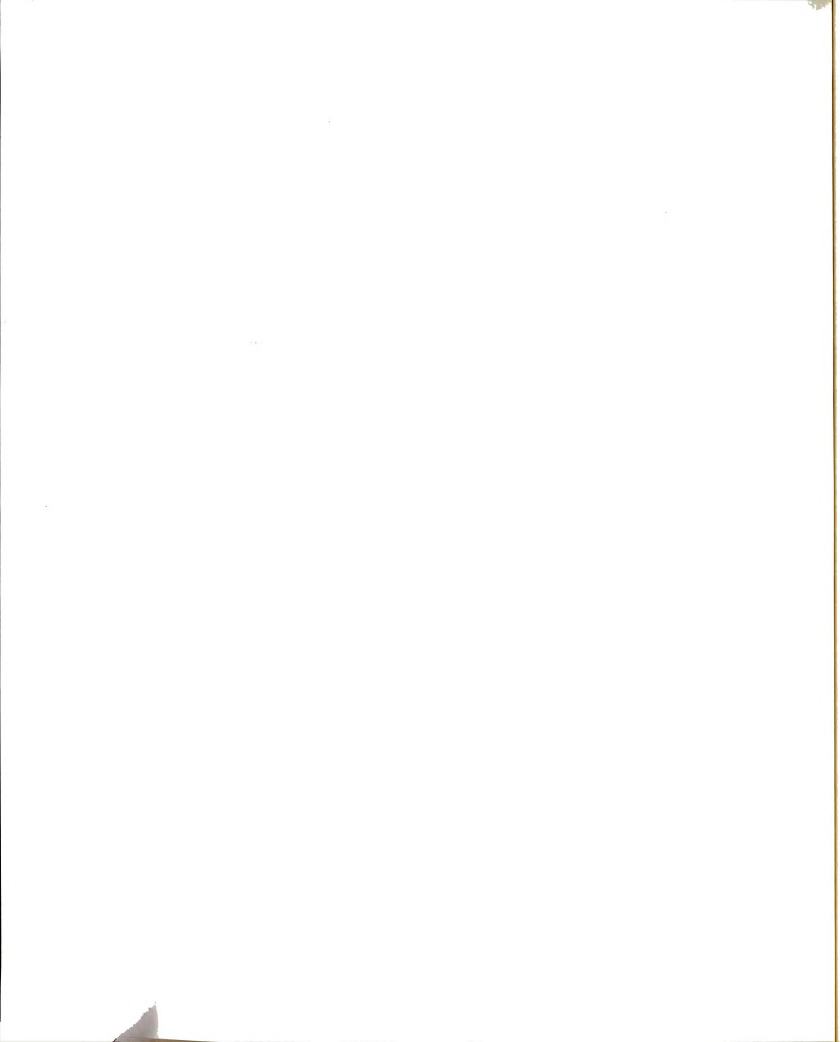
It is very important to understand that the land reform program did not eliminate absentee ownership of agricultural land. Absentee owners still retained half of all the crop land after the program had been completed (Hooglund, 1982:78,88). Some landowners have become part of the urban bourgeoisie while those with larger holdings have been integrated into the new, composite, rural bourgeoisie (Halliday,1979:133).

The basic land reform law did nothing to improve the living conditions of the agricultural laborers. The laboring class was given no protection--no minimum wage, no unemployment relief, no gleaning rights on the now-private fields, and no land (Kazemi,1980:41). The Iranian land reform was not designed to solve the problem of the greater part of the target population. As Mahdavy says, "... any land reform which even when fully implemented, fails to touch the basic problem of two-thirds of Iran's rural population (agricultural laborers) clearly misses the greater part of the target" (Mahdavy quoted in Keddie,1968:79).

It has been argued that in the period from 1963 to 1978--after the land reform--the growth of land productivity in Iranian agriculture was zero or negative (Katouzian,1981: 305). Kazemi notes that, "... the sectoral contribution of agricultural declined to 23 percent by 1968" (1980:32). By the mid-1970s it was evident that land reform had essentially failed to achieve its economic objective. The economic failure was particularly noteworthy, since it signaled the demise of Iranian agriculture (Kazemi,1980:35).

This agricultural decline, it is claimed (Katouzian,1981), has been due to the destruction of the old mode of production and the substitution of an inappropriate mode. Katouzian has indicated that the traditional mode of production has performed better than the 'modern' systems because both farm corporations and agri-businesses are (at different levels) purely uninstitutional and ahistorical inventions, transplanted into a given social framework from the air. Both these 'modern' systems destroyed the technical characteristics, political and economic relations of Iranian agriculture, and replaced them with completely alien and ill-adapted technological and institutional forms (Katouzian,1981:311).

Land reform has achieved one of its political objectives, while a second objective not only was not achieved but the conditions were actually made worse. The first political aim was achieved in the sense that the land owning families can no longer use their rural support in a potential confrontation with the regime. The second political objective of the land reform program faced important difficulties.



The major reason is the fact that only one group of the poor peasantry--the former sharecropper--received land as part of the redistribution program. The agricultural laborers and village proletariat, who had previously enjoyed no cultivating rights were left out of the plan (Kazemi,1980:35). Mehdaavy concluded that the majority of the peasants excluded from significant benefits in the reform will become for the first time a revolutionary class (quoted by Keddie,1972:397). This class of the peasantry is a threat to the regime.

### 1.3. Some Problems with Radical Interpretations of Iranian Land Reform.

There are some problems with the radical interpretations of Iranian land reform. Although this interpretation recognizes the cause of the Iranian land reform, it does not give us an inclusive picture of both external and internal pressures for change in the rural areas. The two major causes recognized in the research are the external pressures applied by the U.S. and Iran's internal strain. Furthermore, the researchers perceive the result of the land reform as a disastrous event for the peasants, but they do not analyze it based on the class differentiation of the peasantry.

One of the main reasons for this is the lack of a comprehensive structural analysis of Iranian rural society before and after the land reform showing the process of change in the structure of Iran's agrarian society with regard to the historical stage of the world capitalist-economy.

What we need is to develop a comprehensive structural and integrated understanding of internal and external dimension of change. I will attempt to develop a framework for such an understanding in the next chapter. On the basis of this framework I will attempt to determine the cause of the 1962 Iranian land reform and its effect on the rural class structure.

#### 1.4.Endnotes

1. Land reform processes have sometimes been attributed to the initiative of 'reform from above' or 'reform from below' (Cf. Lin, 1974"216). The former is the outcome of the governmental elite, and the latter is the out-come of the initiative of the peasant mass.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1. Introduction

The problem of analysis of class structure in peripheral societies has been complicated by the tendency to derive universal theoretical constructs from particular historical experiences, both in terms of "locus" in world system and of "timing" in the development of the world-capitalist system.

It becomes necessary at a certain stage in the development of capitalism for it has to expand outside the center countries. This expansion forces capitalism to co-exist with pre-capitalist structures in the peripheral countries. The co-existence of capitalist relations with precapitalist ones creates a particular structure in the peripheral countries which is dynamic and always in the process of change. As a result of this process, the social class structure of the periphery is in a state of flux. The rural class structure is not an exception.

In this chapter I will set up a theoretical background for analyzing the process of change in rural class structure of peripheral societies. The issue which concerns me the most at this point is the usefulness of putting the problem of

peripheral agrarian structure within the world capitalist-economy. Since in the peripheral countries the capitalist system has been imposed upon a pre-existing social structure, study of change in rural class structure must take into account the interaction between the pre-capitalist and capitalist structures. For this purpose, I will utilize the "articulation of the modes of production" approach. In short, my model of analyzing the change in rural class structure of the periphery societies greatly relies upon world capitalist-economy, and upon the "articulation of modes of production" approach.

## 2.2. World Capitalist-economy and Issue of Peripheral Countries

The world capitalist-economy view is the study of long-term, large-scale social change of the past, present, and forthcoming future (in this sense "historical" change). This approach focuses upon the structure of the world-economy and not the development experience of individual nation-states. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the totality or the social system as a whole. With regard to this approach, I believe that there is a working social system larger than any state whose operation is itself a focus of social analysis.

Accordingly, the integration of the economies of peripheral countries into the global capitalist system has been one of the most important factors which has conditioned the process of change in societies which have been part of



the capitalist system. Any attempt at understanding the process of change in peripheral countries requires us to look for the conditioning effects of the capitalist system on these societies.

The basic postulate from which this approach starts is that capitalism is a world system and that consequently a single process of capital accumulation is taking place on a world scale through a heterogeneous structure composed of a center and a periphery having unequal relations of dominance. This single process of accumulation can be understood in terms of the fundamental law of motion of capital. This law of motion derives from the dialectical unity of production and circulation, the two processes that together sustain the accumulation of capital. It explains (1) the inherent contradictions of capitalist society that originate in its class relations and unplanned nature, (2) the mechanisms through which these contradictions create growth and barriers to growth, and (3) the essence of the recurrent crises that characterize the history of capitalist development (de Janvry, 1981:23).

It was Amin who brought the most elaborated forms of interpretation of backwardness and associated interpretation of unequal development as a pattern of homogenous growth in the center and stagnation or highly uneven growth in the periphery. To do so, he developed the concept of peripheral capitalism to characterize the nature of accumulation in the periphery of the world system (Amin, 1976).

For Amin, the periphery has had two functions in the development of the world capitalist economy: on the one hand, it has offered an expanding market at the expense of precapitalist areas; on the other hand, it has increased the average rate of profit. And this dual role has been redefined over time as the center evolved from competitive to monopoly capital (Amin, 1976:188).

During the 'competitive capitalist' stage the tendency of the dynamics of the capitalist mode is counteracted, and its enlarged reproduction facilitated, by the importing of raw materials and the development of export markets. Non-capitalist countries constantly provide the source of the former, and increasingly begin to meet the needs of the latter requirement during this period (Taylor, 1979:201).

At the stage of monopoly capital, the world economy becomes not merely the sum of its various national parts, but an organic whole with an international division of labor and a world market, and an internal structure dominated by monopoly capitalism and governed by the laws of motion which inhere in the capitalist mode of production. The international division of labor at the base of monopoly capitalism has replaced the national unit with "satellites" on the periphery of and in subordination to the dictates of the centers. In producing for the world market, each nation, or region, specializes in the production of specific goods for exchange abroad (Romagnolo, 1975:11). In the

"satellite" areas this takes the form of agricultural and mineral raw materials, while in the "metropolis" it is the export of capital goods to the raw material sectors. This export of monopoly capitalism abroad is the export of the capitalist mode of production (Mandel, 1980,II: 465), the result of which is a world economy subject to the laws of motion characteristic of capitalism.

While the structures (center and periphery) of the world economic system have an organic solidarity which they derive from the existence of a unique world- scale process of accumulation, one structure --the center--is dominant over the other. Under monopoly capitalism, the internal structure of the peripheries appear to be clearly dominated by the world economic system of capitalism.

Every country, however backward, has been drawn into the network of capitalist relations and become subjected to its laws of operation. While every nation has become involved in the international division of labor at the base of the world capitalist market, each country had participated in its own peculiar way and to a different degree in the expression and the expansion of capitalism and has played different roles at different stages of its development (Novack, 1972: 94-95).

By nature, capitalist development is taken to be combined and uneven: (1) combined because capitalism forms a system on a world scale, with the result that all its component parts are organically and dialectically inter-related; and (2) uneven because development is not linear, homogenous, and continuous but, on the contrary, is marked by inequalities over time, space, and individuals.



Over time, accumulation occurs through a sequence of periods of expansion and stagnation. Growth creates barriers to growth, and the overcoming of these barriers both makes growth possible again and re-creates new barriers. Over space, development in particular regions and countries is associated with deformed development in other areas. Development and underdevelopment thus constitute a single dialectical unity and are the joint outcome of accumulation on a world scale. And over individuals, accumulation is accompanied by differentiation into classes and by the transformation of social classes. Competition in the economic and political spheres also constantly jeopardizes established individual positions within classes (de Janvry, 1981). In short uneven development is the direct consequence of the inherent nature of capitalism.

Periphery economies have undergone a restricted and uneven type of capitalist growth, very different to that of western capitalism. According to Taylor, agriculture and the extractive and manufacturing industries have witnessed the emergence of a foreign-dominated sector the growth of which, being primarily geared to the reproductive requirements of western capitalism, creates restricted and uneven development: a type of development characterized by extreme sectoral imbalances, and by a fundamental incapacity of the economy to gear its resources to the development of a domestic market and the economic needs of its indigenous population (1979).

The peripheral country can, therefore, be analyzed as

being structured (or determined in the last instance) by an articulation which is produced largely as an effect of capitalist penetration. The importance of this perspective lies in the fact that it enables one to apprehend and uncover the essence of the change in periphery countries. It comprehends that as a result of the historical expansion of Western capitalism, the reproduction of certain forms of capitalist social relationship has become a significant feature of peripheral societies. This is a departure point for analyzing the process of change in peripheral society's class structure, in general, and its rural class structure, in particular.

### 2.3. Articulation of Modes of Production

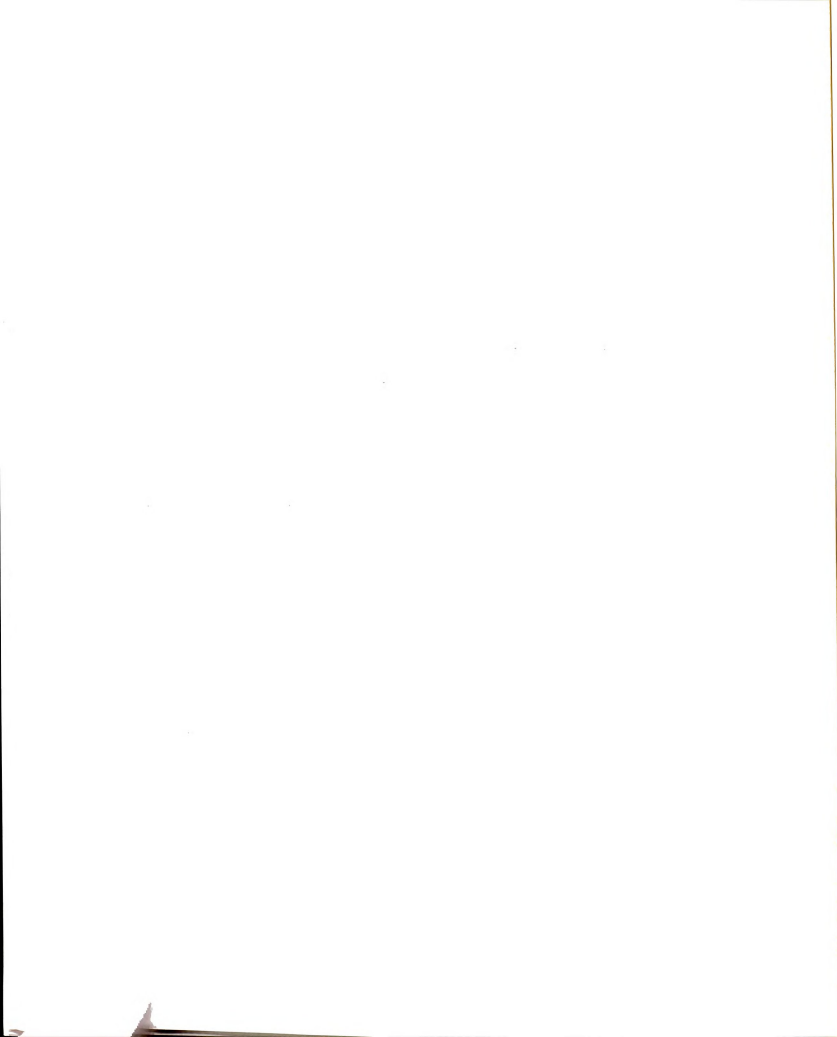
The main struggle played out in the peripheral countries is between an expanding capitalist mode of production, backed by classes and institutions in both the West and the Third World, and disintegrating 'pre-capitalist' modes of production, the infiltrated remnants of 'natural economy'. As a result of this interaction, any peripheral society is an articulation of capitalist and precapitalist modes of production. In order to properly understand the specificity of structures in peripheral countries, one should look at the way in which the capitalist mode of production articulates with the persisting non-capitalist modes.

The appearance of the concept of articulated modes of production is part of a general renaissance in Marxist

scholarship based on a critique of economistic, mechanical and dogmatic theoretical concepts and methods of study that characterized some Marxist scholarship of previous decades. This application emerges in the work of a generation of French "economic" anthropologists influenced and, in some cases trained by Althusser, Balibar, and Bettelheim (Meillasoux, 1972; Terray, 1972; Supre, 1973; Rey, 1973; Bradby, 1975; Foster-Carter, 1978; and Seddon, 1978).

Part of the debate surrounding the articulation of modes of production approach involves different conceptions of the basic categories of "mode of production" and "social formation". Although not agreeing on a common definition of "mode of production" or even "social formation", each of these anthropologists has used the concept to interpret structures and process in the societies they have studied. It is necessary to begin with an overview of the variations in definitions of basic concepts.

Contemporary Marxist thinkers all agree that, at minimum, the mode of production is composed of the forces and relations of production. Beyond this, however, there is little agreement. Marxist structuralists, for example, argue that mode of production is a totality of different levels-- economic, political, ideological--each of which has a degree of structural autonomy from the others (Althusser and Balibar, 1970). Saying that mode of production analysis must consider all three levels of analysis together, when the relationships between levels have no predetermined weights and when the mode itself may be





articulated, makes social analysis very complex.

Every mode of production--as long as it services-- is subjected to another basic dynamic, that of the reproduction of its basic relationships and structure. This includes reproduction of the forces of production and relations of production. Godelier, among others, incorporates reproduction into the definition of a mode of production, defining the latter as

a combination--which is capable of reproduction itself--of productive forces and specific relations of production which determine the structure and form of the process of production and the circulation of material goods within a historically determined society/ to which there correspond/ in a relationship of structural compatibility and causality, variable determined forms of political, ideological, ect., relations (1977:18).

The incorporation of reproduction into analysis of the mode of production is an indication of the transformation of mode of production from a mechanism of classification of societies to a theoretical construct or model through which societies can be understood.

The articulation of mode of production focuses attention on the possibility of non-correspondence in forms of reproduction for certain periods of time even after capitalism is dominant. That is, capitalism may draw on aspects of pre-capitalist modes for its reproduction until it is fully mature. It is dominant over other modes in that it organizes them and subjects them to its requirements but it does not immediately transform them into a capitalist form. The very concept of dominance of one mode over another, therefore is tied up with the condition of reproduction (Terray, 1972).

Mode of production is increasingly seen as a method of analyzing societies, "a precise and rigorous definition which permits us to unambiguously designate the simple elements with which we can reconstruct, in thought, the real-concrete object of our investigation" (Terray, 1972: 30-31). Following Laclau (1971), we designate as a mode of production the logical and mutually co-ordinated articulation of : 1) a determinate type of ownership of the means of production; 2) a determinate form of appropriation of the economic surplus; 3) a determinate degree of development of the division of labor; and 4) a determinate level of development of the productive forces.

The concept of the mode of production, as Amin indicates, "...is the most general and therefore the most abstract concept of social science"(1974:57). It implies no order of historical sequence with respect to the whole period of the history of civilizations extending from the first differentiated formations to capitalism. All the processes which, together, make up the mode of production are historically determined in a movement of the whole, and through a social formation.

There are multiple actual or implicit definitions of "social formation" in use among contemporary Marxist scholars. The view of social formation as the concrete or empirical manifestation of the mode of production--the equivalent of "society"-- continues to be the most common definition. In one view (Althusser and Balibar, 1970), there is a strict



separation between mode of production and social formation such that mode of production is a pure type which never appears as such in actual societies; in another (Richter, 1975), there is actually a continuum between abstract and concrete in which social formations approximate modes of production. Sometimes it is restricted to the totality of relations between forces and relations of production (i.e., the "economic base") (Hindess and Hurst, 1977), other times it is meant to be inclusive of the totality of relationships (economic, political, ideological) (Rey, 1973).

The distinction between mode of production and social formation was the cornerstone of Laclau's (1971) important and well-known critique of Gundar Frank's characterization of the Latin American reality. For him social formation is mutual relations between the different sectors of the economy, or between different productive units. The configuration of the peripheral social formation, then, has been characterized by a combination of capitalist and pre-capitalist relations of production under the hegemony and serving the interest of the capitalist relations which direct the movement of the whole.

With the development of the idea of social formations as sites of the articulation of two or more modes of production, we designate as a social formation the real locus of modes and forms of production existing in a specific articulation, and which is historically determinate. In other words, the modes of production concretized in a

social formation have to be understood in terms of the relations established between them, which have a history and therefore require an analysis that is historical.

The method for study of social formations depends on concrete investigation that establishes a "synthetic definition" of historical societies. The guideline for studying these societies involves the following steps: 1) identify the number and nature of the different modes of production combined in a specific way in a specific society and which constitute the economic basis of that particular epoch; 2) determine the exact form and content of the articulation, that is, the combination of different modes of production found in a hierarchical relationship (one in relation to another) when one of the modes of production dominates the others, obliges them in some way to adapt to the needs and logic of its own functioning system and integrates them more or less into the mechanism of its own reproduction (Godelier, 1977).

The concept of "articulation of modes of production" has influenced interpretations of the structure and dynamics of concrete societies as well as theoretical inquiries into models of "pure" modes of production. In this "synchronic" (co-existing, simultaneous) as opposed to "generic" (one giving birth to another in a priori linear fashion) view of social change, old and new modes of production are not seen as in inevitable contradiction with each other. A new dominant mode of production does not result in the necessary



dissolution and decline of an old one; rather, old mode of production may be preserved and even reinforced for long periods of time. Their relationship to the dominant mode is not one of mere co-existence, in which each develops independently of the other, but one of hierarchical ordering in which the dominant mode organizes and orders the relations between or among them. The different modes of production retain their different basic forms of exploitation (and thus conflict) but these forms are mediated by their relation to the dominant mode (Rey, 1973).

When capitalism is dominant the nature of the articulation is determined, first and foremost, by the need of the capitalist mode because

Capitalism has different needs of precapitalist economies at different stages of development, which arise from specific historical circumstances, e.g., raw materials, land, labor power, and at times of crisis, markets (Bradby, 1975:129).

Secondly, and still significantly, it is determined by the internal structure of the pre-capitalist mode. The rate and success with which capitalism penetrates and assumes dominance over pre-existing mode has to do with the internal structure of the pre-existing modes as well as the external factors (such as the stage of development the conquering mode--monopoly as opposed to competitive capitalism, for example) (Godelier, 1977).

Dupre argues that the capitalist mode of production impinges on non-capitalist modes at different stages of

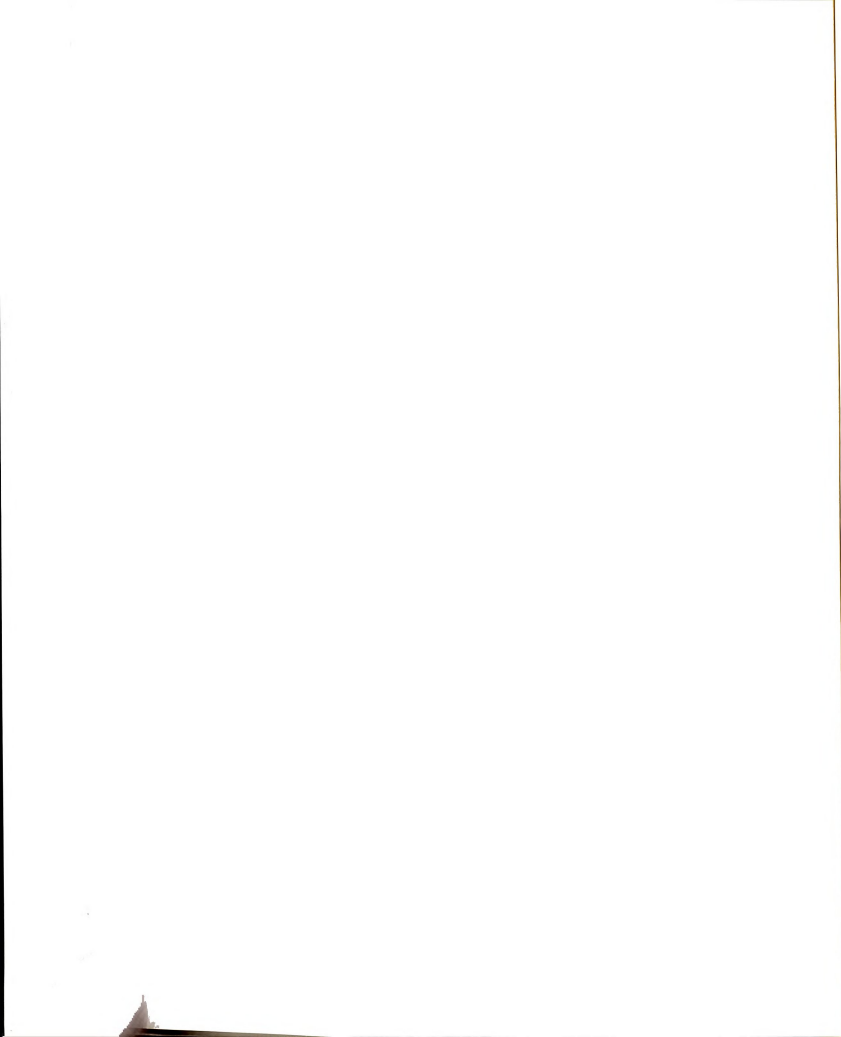
development of Third World societies in different ways and that the capitalist mode, in certain context, contributes indirectly to the persistence of non-capitalist forms (1973). In this regard Rey indicates that capitalism can never immediately and totally eliminate the preceding modes of production, nor above all the relations of exploitation which characterize these modes of production (quoted in Foster-Carter, 1978:221).

The articulation of modes of production approach, though still suffering in some formulations from its overly structural origins, has opened up important new possibilities for a macro- as well as micro-level understanding of social change. Its most important applications have been in explaining the path of capitalist development. More specifically, it has responded to the need to develop an integrated understanding of internal and external dimension of change in peripheral social formations.

#### 2.4. Peripheral Social Formation

When we begin to examine peripheral formations, we are faced with a transitional social formation in which, rather than there being one dominant mode of production, there is a combination of different modes, capitalist and non-capitalist, in which the former is dominant. This transitional period is one in which a combination of modes of production is determinant in the last instance, and it is this co-existence, combination or articulation of different





modes within each other that provides us with a basis for thinking the structure and history of these social formations (Taylor, 1979:139).

The periphery formation must be analyzed as being structured by an articulation which is produced largely as an effect of world-capitalist penetration. Capitalist world system generates in the dependent nations a form of "distorted" capitalist development in accordance with the specific function those national economies fulfill within the international division of labor that characterize the world system. "Capitalism represented at the peripheral level in its 'distorted' form is the dominant mode of production" (Singelmann, 1978:40).

The peripheral capitalist social formation operates in the following manner. In the first place, owing to the tendency of the capitalist mode of production to expand and reproduce capitalist relations of production on a world scale, pre-capitalist modes of production tend to become subordinated and/or dissolved within the dominant capitalist mode. Secondly, while pre-capitalist production forms in the periphery social formations contribute to the accumulation of capital in the center, they simultaneously create a tension with the capitalist mode of production. The ultimate tendency is, then, dissolution of pre-capitalist modes. As Bettelheim indicated, "...inside social formations in which the capitalist mode of production is 'predominant' this domination mainly tends to expand

reproduction of the capitalist mode of production, that is, to dissolution of the other modes of production..." (1972:297). Dissolution occurs because the capitalist mode of production starts penetrating the domain of pre-capitalist modes.

The dominance of the capitalist mode of production is not established all at once, but gradually. There are different phases in the evolution of the peripheries of the capitalist system at the stage of monopoly capital. The early post-war phase of disorganic development of the periphery was import-substituting industrialization. It has in fact generated some further efforts at change, but it does not force the pace because of its own character. Based as it is on satisfying the existing market for non-essential consumption, the strategy does not for the most part generate an imperative for capitalist development in agriculture (Cliffe, 1976). Import substitution does, with products corresponding to the most advanced stage of development in the center.

In the phase of import-substitution, because of the nature of industrialization and expansion of dependent capitalism, the capitalist mode of production preserves the pre-capitalist mode of production. For instance, the growing demands of the world market for things produced under the feudal mode forced dependent capitalists of the periphery to preserve feudalism and make alliances with feudal lords.

The above discussed pattern of articulation

disintegrated due to change in the core-periphery relations and that is what Dos Santos (1970) has called the "new dependence" based on the consolidation of the multinational corporations. The increasing subordination of the periphery's economies to multinational corporations made it necessary for multinational corporations to get rid of feudalism. Multinational corporations want to invest in agriculture, too. The existence of feudal relations of production is an obstacle to this process. The dependent bourgeoisie in power has to move to eliminate feudal landlords by carrying out land reform that lay the basis for the beginning of capitalist agriculture.

All land reform from above during the 1960s had the purpose of fomenting the development of capitalism in agriculture (de Janvry and Groun, 1978:90). Land reform, by distributing land to the peasants, in fact, interferes with the process of disintegration of the peasantry and gives new impetus to a peasant economy by creating an independent mode of production in agriculture. The current dynamics of dependent capitalism in peripheral countries requires creation of the independent peasant economy (Cf. Alavi, 1975:163). In the phase of multinational corporations in the periphery, the independent mode of production (IMP) with respect to the feudal mode is much more practical for contributing to capital accumulation in the capitalist mode of production.

Far from being displaced by capitalism, petty commodity

production,<sup>1</sup> including independent peasant agriculture, is essential to capitalist production. The independent peasant agricultural production can continue to exist because it is profitable to certain interests in the capitalist system as a whole.

Although capitalism takes advantage of IMP, we should keep in mind that the final goal of capitalism is the destruction at every point on the globe of antecedent modes of production and relations of production, in order to substitute for them its own relations of production. In fact, the existence of an independent producer peasantry could be viewed all the more as a transitional phenomenon.

To the extent that in the peripheral countries the capitalist system has been imposed upon pre-existing social structures, rather than arising out of them, and coexists for a while with modes of pre-capitalist production, the nature of articulation itself is transitional, complex, variegated, and in a state of flux. Consequently, tracing the change in the class structure of the peripheral societies is complex since the class structure is in a state of flux, too.

#### 2.5. Rural Classes in Peripheral Social Formation

A class analysis, as Dos Santos states (1970:181), exposes the "relations or modes of relations conditioning the possibilities of interaction among men, given a determinate mode of production." In other words, the

question of whether these or those classes exist turns out to be an analysis of the mode of production. Class division is based on the mode of production. "The mode of production of a given society," says Stavenhagen, "determines the specific characteristics of certain human groups and the type of relations that they will have with other groups of the same kind. These groups are classes, and these relations are class relations" (1975:28).

Classes are objectified at the level of concrete analysis of a specific mode of production. Classes are the personification of the central economic categories of a given system of production. They are the expression of the central contradictions of a given mode of production in terms of the structural relations between producers and controllers of production.

Since a peripheral formation is a combination of modes of production, every peripheral society actually involves relations between more than two classes. "Social classes," says Amin, "are defined in relation to a social formation and the relations between them are specific to this formation" (1974:57). In the social formation, there are clusters of complex relationships among the multiplicity of classes, fractions of classes, and non-class groups which exist in concrete societies. Class relations across modes may be complementary (in alliances) as well as contradictory for specified periods of time.

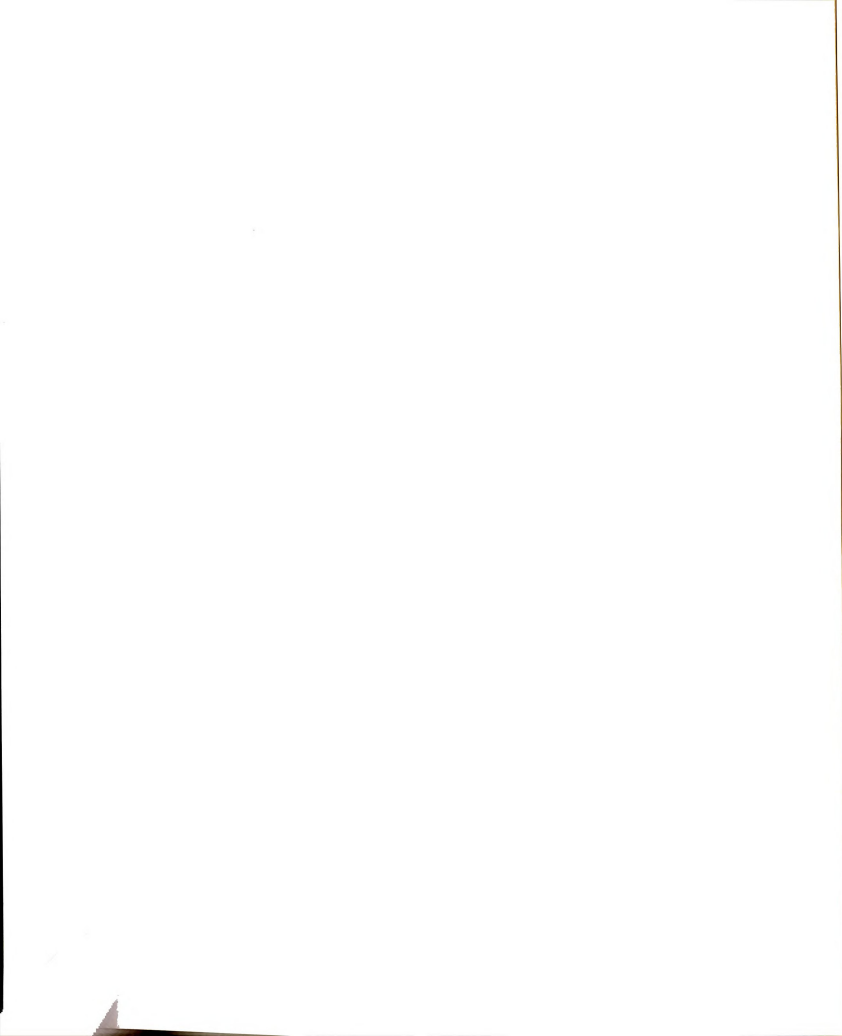
The task of isolating classes in peripheral countries in general and the rural society of those countries in

particular, or more exactly tracing their dynamic, is thus best seen as part of what is involved in the process of transformation of these societies. So to speak, the key to understanding the rural classes in peripheral countries is to examine the changes in the social formation of each country with regard to world capitalist-economy. With regard to this, one thing is certain, that the extension of capitalism has modified agrarian structures and the nature of rural populations all over the Third World.

Since I am concerned about the pattern of change in the class structure of the rural areas of peripheral countries, it is necessary to clarify terms such as "peasantry" and "peasant" as effective concepts within an above analytical framework which does usefully structure such an explanation.

Debate on the appropriate characterization of peasants like certain other debates in the social science promises to be unending. The debate centers on the nature and future of the peasantry: who are the peasants, how they behave economically and politically, and whether they will disappear or remain as a social category. Two sharply contrasted positions have been assumed in the debate over peasants, each of which has definite implications regarding the nature and future of peasants.

On the one hand, there are those who argue that there is no specific peasantry mode of production (e.g., the Marxist classics). They claim that in some modes, such as



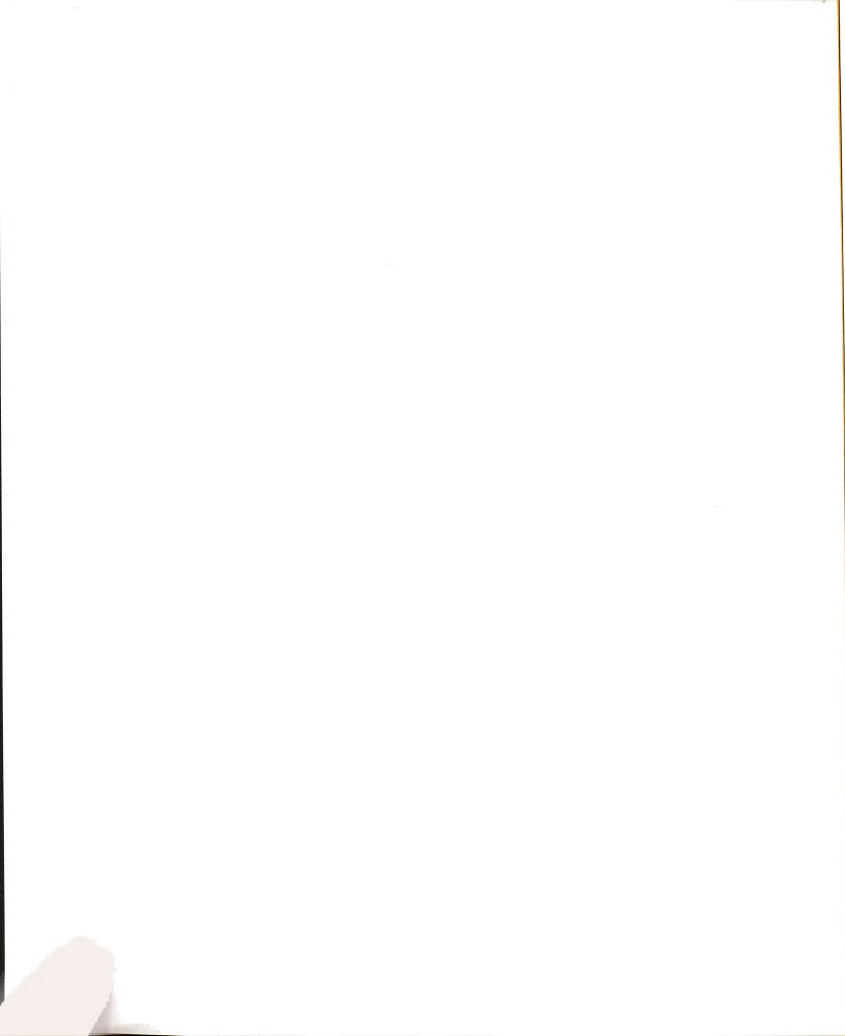


feudalism, the peasant class (serfs) is an essential class; thus, peasants assume the stability of the mode. As a class, they will disappear only if the whole mode of production disappears. In other modes, such as capitalism, they are only a transitory fraction of a class that is differentiating as it is being absorbed by the essential classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat.<sup>2</sup>

By contrast to the Marxist classics, there exist a broad spectrum of positions among those who consider the peasantry to constitute a specific type of economy. The spectrum ranges from those who conceive of the peasantry in terms of the organization of the household in relation to the production process (e.g., Chayanov, 1966) to those who conceptualize the peasantry as a mode of production (e.g., Servolin; Vergolpoulos).<sup>3</sup>

There really is no debate on the correct social location of peasants in precapitalist modes of production. But when capitalism dominates, should peasants be conceptualized as part of a simple commodity mode or as a transitory class or fraction of a class within the capitalist mode? To take a position in this debate, we need to analyze the peasantry in relation to both modes of production and their articulation within a peripheral social formation.

As I explained before, a class is defined by access to the means of production and its position in the relations of production (in short, mode of production). Mode of



production represents the general (in the sense of abstract) and the specific (in the sense of a particular historical setting) ways the material needs of society are provided for at a given stage of its development. No general definition of "the peasant" could be expected to cover the relationship between different segments of peasants in relation to the means of production and relations of production.

To view the countryside as populated by a homogeneous "peasantry" has misled observers. The heterogeneity of the peasants is obvious. "The fact is that peasantries nowhere form a homogeneous mass or agglomerate, but are always and everywhere typified themselves by internal differentiation along many lines" (Mintz, 1973:93). Peasantries are never homogeneous, and their internal differentiation plays a critical role in the ways they are (and became, and many remain) peasants.

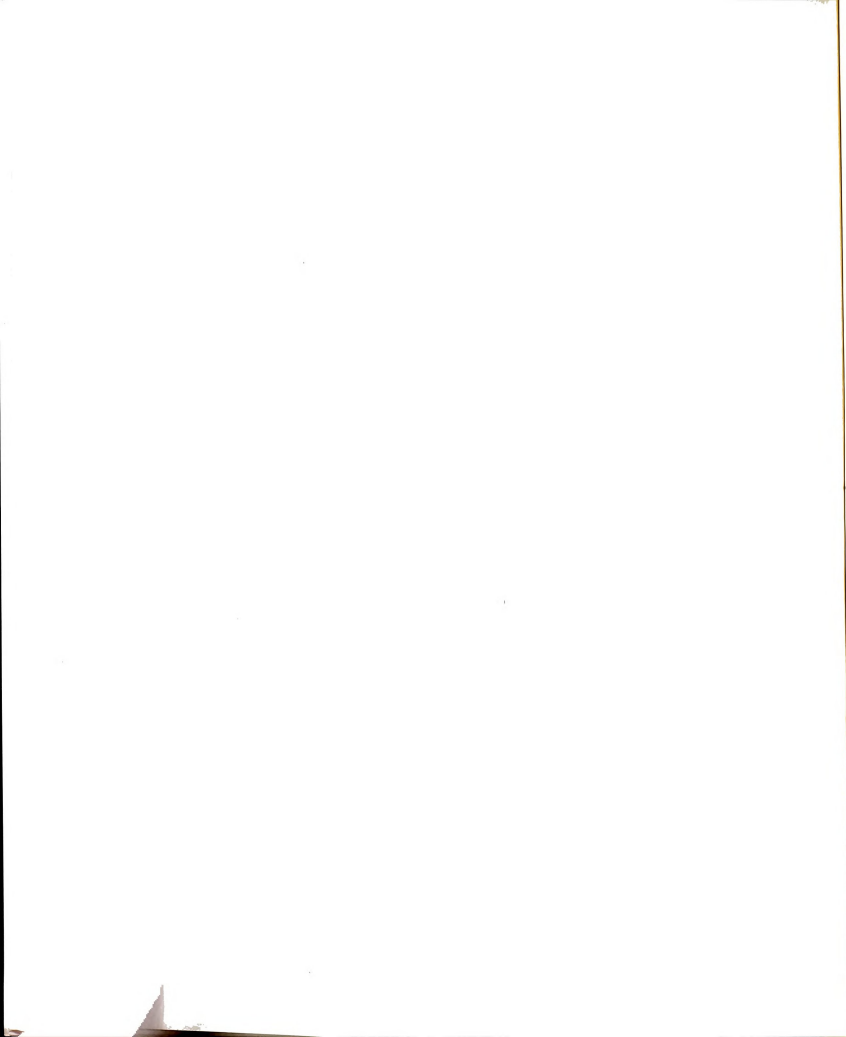
The peasantry is not a component of an exclusive mode of production. It operates under different modes of production. Consequently, the peasantry is not a class. Peasants represent social and economic specificity of characteristics which will reflect on every societal system they operate within. Peasants in relation to social formation are a combination of several classes. Therefore, no general definition of 'the peasant' could be expected to cover all segments of the peasant group within the boundary of a social formation.

The only general definition of peasants which could be formulated is that: In any social formation, peasants are cultivators in the rural areas who raise crops and livestock under different modes of production in order to obtain their livelihood. Ultimately, peasants are a combination of a variety of cultivator classes. Consequently, peasantry in relation to a social formation is a composition of different modes of production in rural agriculture. The particular definition of each class of peasantry is dependent on the particular mode of production under which they cultivate.

Based on the above theoretical argument, in "peripheral capitalist social formation", the peasantry operates through different modes of production under the domination of the capitalist mode of production. Accordingly, in this formation the peasantry consists of different classes of peasants depending on the articulation of different modes of production in different stages of domination of the capitalist mode.

Peasants necessarily differ from one society to another, but there can be a generic classification of the peasants based on different modes of production. Before we give a comprehensive classification of peasants, we need to review previous categories used by other scholars.

Engels in his preface to the second edition of The Peasants War In Germany mentioned four types of peasants:



The small peasants (bigger peasants belong to the bourgeoisie) are not homogeneous. They are either in serfdom bound to lords and masters,... or they are tenants.... There is another group of peasants, those who own a small piece of land... Wherever middle and large land ownership prevails, the wage-workers of the land form the most numerous class.... The agricultural proletariat, the wage-workers of the land, is the class from which the bulk of the armies of the princes is being recruited (1926:18-20) (emphasis mine).

As we can see, he has mentioned four classes of peasants in relation to means of production: (1) small peasant, in relation to the feudal mode; (2) bigger peasant, in relation to the capitalist mode; (3) independent producer, in relation to the independent mode; and (4) agricultural proletariat, in relation to the capitalist mode of production.

Lenin divides the peasant population into the following groups: (1) the agricultural proletariat ; (2) the semi-proletariate or poor peasantry; (3) the small peasantry; (4) the middle peasantry; and (5) the rich peasantry (Lenin, 1977; 71-86). These are in relation to access to land.

Mao recognized different classes of peasants in China. "There are three kinds of peasants, the rich, the middle, and the poor peasants. The three live in different circumstances and so have different views about the revolution" (Mao, 1967:23). Here, the category is mostly based on the amount of wealth each class of peasantry owned.

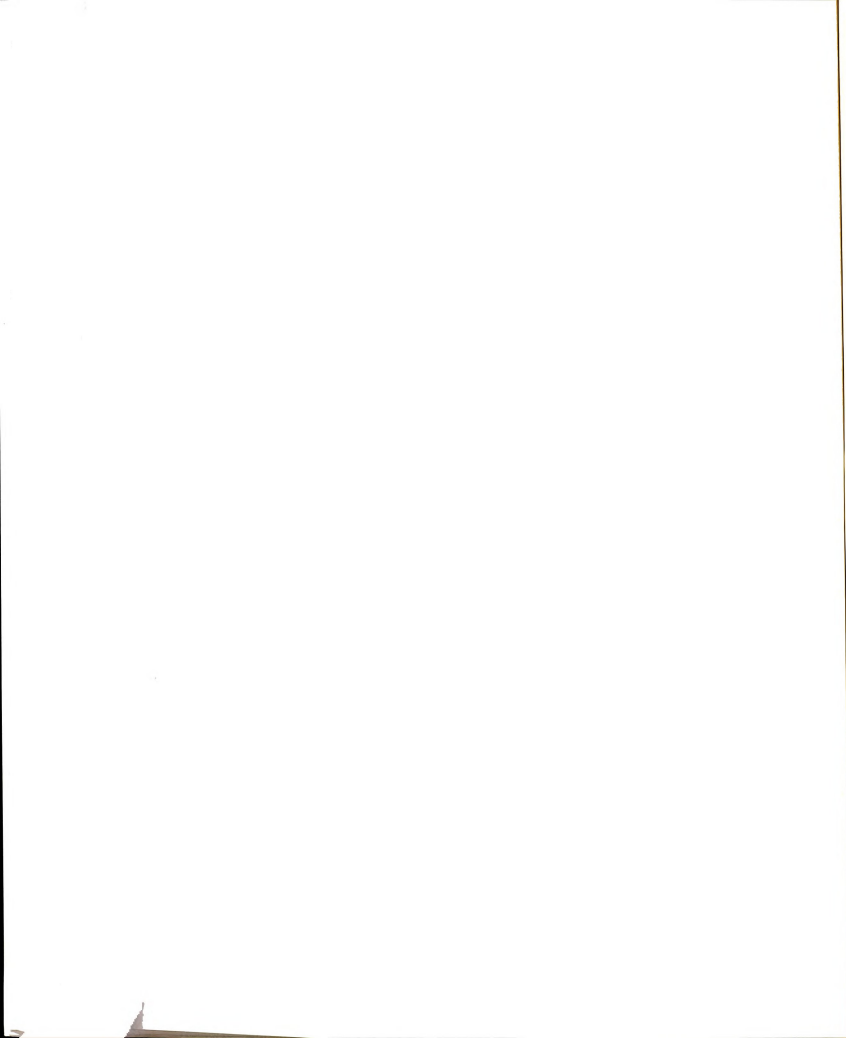
Hamza Alavi distinguishes between three sectors of peasantry based on the modes of production. The first sector

is composed of the landlords and the sharecroppers. The second sector consist of independent small landlords. The third sector is that of capitalist farmers which is based primarily on the exploitation of the wage labor of the farm laborers (Alavi, 1973:293). Thus there are "capitalist farmers; independent smallholders; sharecroppers; and farm laborers" (Ibid., 1973:294). The problem with this classification is that Alavi does not make clear for us whether the capitalist farmers hire the wage labor or they both hire and work themselves on the land as a cultivator.

Saghir Ahmad has used the five-class schema: "Landlord/capitalist farmers; the rich peasants; the middle peasants, the poor peasants; and the peasant proletariat" (Ahmad, 1973: 212-17). The problem with Ahmad's classification is that he puts both landlord and capitalist in one category of peasantry.

Generally speaking, there is a problem with the classifications after Engels. As we know, class is defined in Marxist terms with reference to relations and forces of production. Class position should be determined by one's relation to the means of production and not by the amount of wealth owned. Adjectives like poor, middle and rich do not show a real-class position of the peasantry. A poor peasant can belong either to the independent producers or sharecroppers.

A synthesis of Engels and Alavi's classifications could be a relatively comprehensive classification of

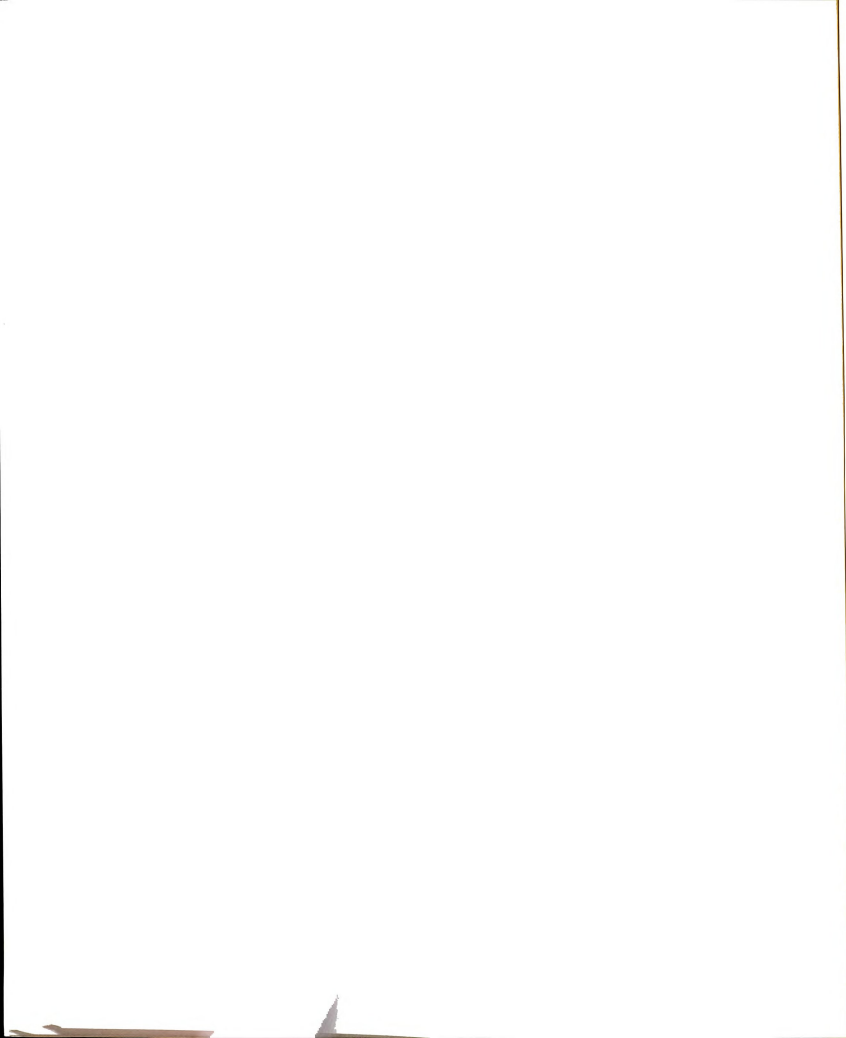




peasantry in the peripheral capitalist social formation with some modification. We should note here that the following classification does not mean any peripheral capitalist social formation necessarily must contain these classes of peasantry. As we mentioned before, it is really dependent on the composition of the modes of production within the social formation in different stages of development.

A peripheral capitalist social formation which composes the following modes of production; feudal mode; independent mode; and capitalist mode of production, contains four classes of peasantry: 1) sharecroppers, in relation to the feudal mode; 2) independent producers, in relation to the independent mode; 3) agricultural proletariats; and 4) capitalist peasants, in relation to the capitalist mode of production. The increasing expansion of capitalism in the peripheral capitalist social formation has determinative effects on the decline of one class and the emergence of another. With regard to the stages of new-colonization in peripheral countries, the new categories of peasants that can be studied today emerged mainly after the land reforms of the 1960s.

Sharecroppers belong to that class of the peasantry who do not own the land but have access to it (they own some means of production). The products will divide by different proportions between sharecroppers and landlord. They are exploited by the landlord. The landlord has to



extort the unpaid surplus labor by "non-economic" measures. The specific form in which this surplus is appropriated is the heavenly decreed rights and obligations. The share-cropper is obligated to meet certain economic demands of an overlord--as the lord has ordained. These may be in the forms of services to be performed or dues to be paid in kind or in money.

In its "purest" forms, the independent mode of production is a classless mode of production. Internally, peasant direct producers are neither exploiters nor exploited, since there are no classes to exploit or be exploited. Externally, however, they constituted a class dominated by capitalism and exploited by the bourgeoisie. Also, externally they have a dual character that qualitatively differentiates them from the proletariat: they are both exploiters and exploited. To the extent that they maintain access to ownership of the means of production (land, tools, etc.), they maintain certain interests in common with other landowners. On the other hand, the peasant household has to sell its products on the market below their value. Peasants are at a consistent disadvantage relative in setting prices to the agrarian bourgeoisie, even though the latter benefits from peasant pressures to keep agricultural prices high. When the produce of the surplus labor of the peasant household is transferred to the market, it is exploited through unequal exchange,

primarily by the bourgeoisie as a whole but also the whole society via mechanisms of distribution throughout different sectors of production, including agriculture itself.

The agricultural proletariat is a class because of its economic position and character--landless; propertyless (in the sense of productive property); wage-earning; etc. I identify them as a part of the peasantry because they cultivate the land in the countryside and earn their livelihood by working for landholders (i.e., capitalist farmers). The members of this class have neither a share of the product nor a fixed income. They are laborers, and they sell their labor power. Objectively, this class is the most exploited, oppressed, and alienated of the peasantry. The agricultural proletariat, as Engels mentioned, "is the class nearest to the industrial workers of the city. It shares their conditions of living, and it is still deeper steeped in misery than the city workers" (1926:20). Where they become as a wage laborer, the social reality in this society is a reality wherein they are related to their fellowmen only via a mediation of the commodity.

Finally, there is the capitalist peasant who owns the land and means of production; he hires wage-laborers and he himself may work on the land as a cultivator. Capitalist peasant accumulates capital and reinvests it usually in agriculture. As Eric Wolf has documented, the capitalist peasant is often an employer of labor, a representative of the state, and consequently, a supporter of the established

order: "His power domain within the village is derivative; it depends on the maintenance of his domains outside the village" (Wolf, 1969:291). This class of peasantry thinks about the accumulation of wealth. The concentration of the means of production and thereby the economic surplus, in the hands of capitalists leads to such an accumulation. The type of productive relationship in which the capitalist peasant is involved causes in certain instances a definite hostility between the capitalist farmer and other peasantry classes.

Class structures in the countryside reflect the operation of the rural economic system. The component of this system is both agrarian and non-agrarian structures. The non-cultivator classes in rural areas are as important as cultivators in the operation of the rural economy. The task of the researcher is to analyze them, like the cultivators, in relation to modes of production. They should be defined by their relation to the means of production. The changes in the "modes of production" affect their structural positions as they affect those of cultivators.

To sum up, the study of the rural social structure of the peripheral capitalist social formation must be based on historical changes in the modes of production as its component. These changes are because of the expansion of capitalism in peripheral countries in general and the agrarian sector in particular. In this process, some social



relations of production will disappear while some new one emerges. Consequently, some classes decline and others appear. This process, because of the nature of capitalism, is continuous. Therefore, in different stages of peripheral capitalist formation, different classes compose the class structure of rural areas. These classes could be found in both agricultural and non-agricultural sector of rural society. The same forces of change govern both sectors.

## 2.6. Endnotes .

1. When we use the term "independent mode of production", or IMP, we are referring to this total production. When we use the term "petty commodity production," we are emphasizing the part of production which is for exchange (Cf. Kelly, 1979).
2. For more detail on the Marxist classics see de Janvry, 1981: 96-100.
3. Both Servolin and Vergolpoulos believe that peasants are now representatives of the simple commodity mode of production (Cf. de Janvry, 1981" 100-101).



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH STRATEGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

Human history falls into phases distinguishable by different forms of social organization and which are replaced successively through dialectical process. In our study, in general, we are dealing with the question of "development in history". It is a dialectical and historical move from one phase to another phase. In order to explain such a movement, our analysis has to be based on dialectical and historical methods. Our method will attempt to explain data drawn from documentary sources. These include both primary as well as secondary. Although I have tried to use different sources, as comprehensively as possible, there are some limitations which has affected my research strategy.

#### 3.2. The Dialectical Method

Dialectical method is a way of looking at the realities of human history. It is the means by which to grasp the basic reality of social groups as totalities. As Bosserman says, "the dialectical method concerns social reality. This means that such a reality is conceived or studied in its totality, in its various dimensions, expressions and manifestations" (1968:227).

Dialectical method is based on a set of basic categories,

namely, the categories of totality, intrinsic relations, process, and relatedness (Israel, 1979). These four categories are complimentary to each other. They are themselves inter-related, and make up the dialectical framework of research.

To view the world as a "totality" does not imply that we can have total knowledge of the world. It only implies that the limited knowledge we may have should be placed within the context of a totality. Our task is conceived as two-fold: inquiry and presentation. presentation must be concrete, in the sense of placing the result of the inquiry into the context of totality and in outlining the complex interrelations in terms of ongoing process. The categories of "totality" and of "concreteness" are inter-related.

Dialectical method, as we said, is based on the category of "intrinsic" relations. This method postulates that, in reality, all objects and phenomena are intrinsically interconnected and interdependent, that all of them are inherently contradictory and that due to the struggle of opposites they undergo constant changes and pass to a higher qualitative state.

The third category of the dialectical method is "process". The notion of "process" is of central importance to our analysis. As Abrams says, "the idea of process is crucial to the way sociological work is done" (1982:3). Process refers to change, transformation, and transcendence. It is change in two senses. First, in the sense of "movement

in a time-space dimension". Second, in the sense of "transformation of the given" (Israel, 1979:115-6). Movement, considered as evolution, is transformation of the given into higher or more complex structures. Speaking of "structures" implies that "process" and "structure" are complementary concepts. The dialectical method maintains that structure is a property of process.

There is a strong tendency in the dialectical point of view to abstract sharp stages or forces out of the continuity and gradations in the social process and then to explain the process on the basis of these stages and forces in dialectical conflict. In this view, change in social process is a continuous non-ending process.

The last category of the dialectical method, "relatedness", is the attempt "to analyze social phenomena not in terms of things, but in terms of relations and their relations to other relations" (Israel, 1979:58). An analysis of societal processes in terms of relatedness gives a rich and many-sided picture of relations that are related to each other. When we speak about the social world, we speak about relations of relations.

Society is the sum or, which would be a more adequate expression, the complex interrelations of relations in which men stand to each other. Marx says:

The society does not consist of individuals, but is an expression of the sum of connections, relations in which the individuals stand to each other (1953:176).

In order to understand the development of a phenomenon in a society we should study its internal relations and in its relation with other phenomena. This is the way that dialectical method holds. For this purpose, this method avoids one-sided study. It looks at problems all-sidedly. As Lenin indicates,

...in order really to know an object we must embrace, study, all its sides, all connections and 'mediations'. We shall never achieve this completely, but the demand for all-sidedness is a safeguard against mistakes and rigidity (1943:66).

Sydney Hook (1962:61) summarizes the essential character of the dialectical method when he points out that the least significant aspect of the dialectical method is its division into triadic phases. It is not so much the number of phases a situation has which makes it dialectical but a specific relation of opposition between those phases which generate a succession of other phases. The necessary condition, then, of a dialectical situation is at least two phases, distinct but not separate. The sufficient condition of a dialectical situation is given when those two phases present a relation of opposition and interaction such that the result (1) exhibits something qualitatively new, (2) preserves some of the structural elements of the interacting phases, and (3) eliminates others.

The presence of contradictions and the relationship between these contradictions in relations to contemporary action and over time, constitute the dialectical process.

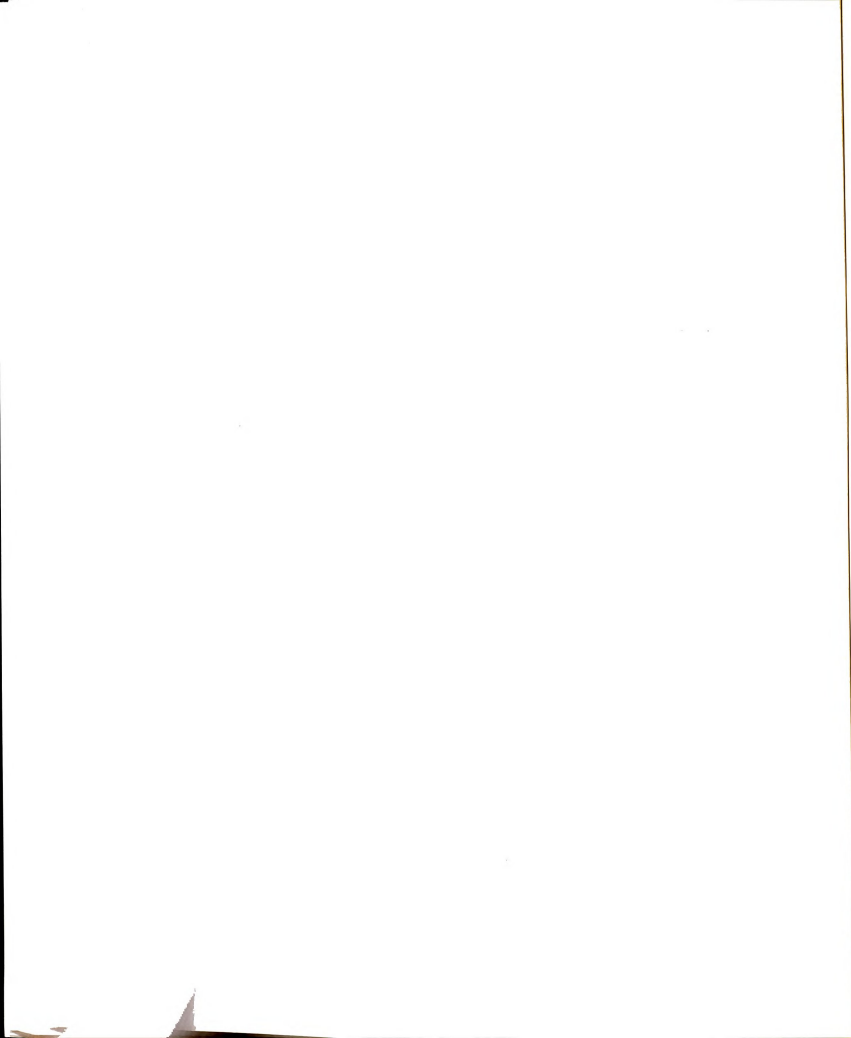
which entails the necessity for an historical approach to all social issues.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.3. Historical Method

No discipline in the social sciences can escape historical study in general, and sociology is no 'exception'. It is historical method in sociology which furnishes historical investigation with means for understanding the subject matter of history, i.e., the historical occurrences. Sociology presents its own subject matter as the subject of history. We are bound to ask: If not in history, then where does sociology find the data establishing its subject matter, and what is the ontological nature of this subject matter if it is not determined by the place it occupies in the realm of history? Rotenstreich believes that "sociology proposes to turn its object, established by methods, into the ontological subject of the historical process" (1958:190).

Sociology must not neglect the historical dimension. The data for establishing the typologies of groups and global societies come from the study of history. Sociology must depend upon history to explain and clarify plus provide essential data.

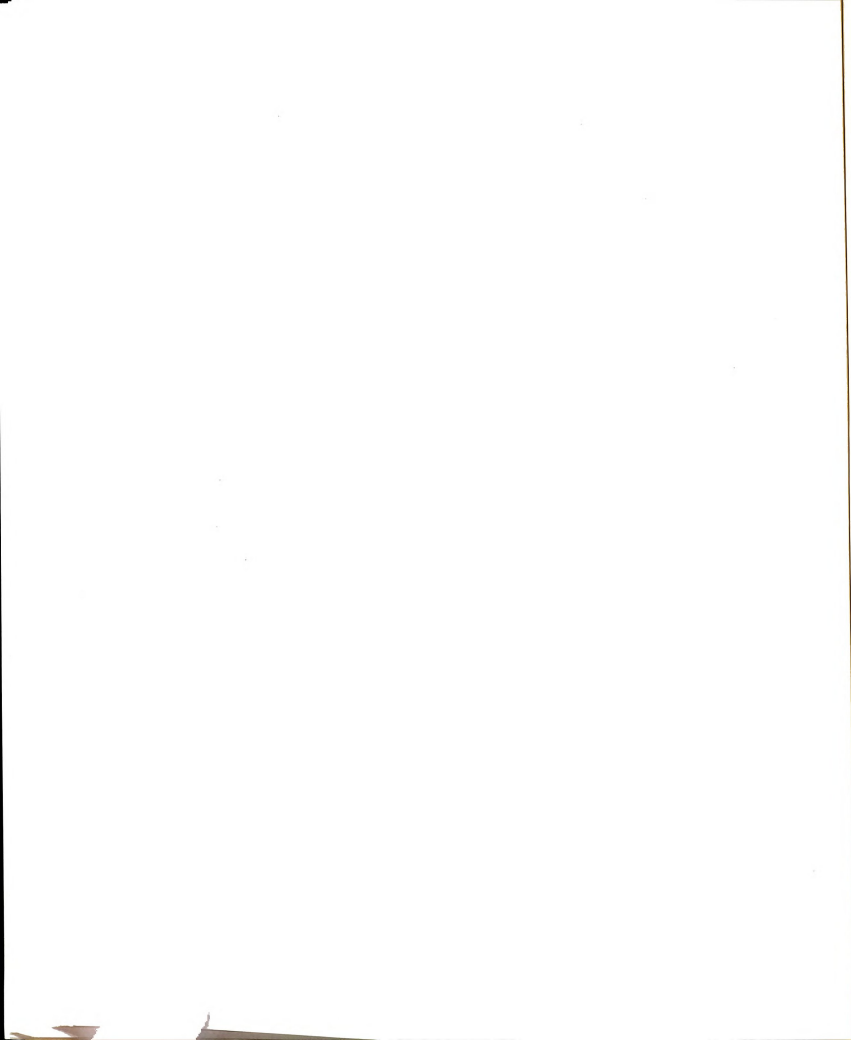
By studying a society, we actually study the history of that society. History is a manifestation of society. It consists of past, present and future (in short historical process). The objective of sociology is to promote the understanding of the historical process. This can be accomplished, according to this assumption, by showing that



the subject matter of sociology proper, that is to say society, is a cause or at least a factor in the historical process. Sociology thus brings to prominence an entity which is in itself a historical factor, i.e., which shapes the historical process. "Sociology provides an instrument of understanding and a basis for any historical research proper, since sociology considers the world of historical objectivations as being of society" (Rotenstreich, 1958:189).

The historical approach in sociology is an approach which finds its expression in an investigation of the successive stages of historical development. This method of investigation aims at an understanding of the connection between various stages of historical development. These stages are not explored for the sake of their detailed and individual features. They are investigated in terms of their general trends and structures.

To understand various stages of historical development and their connection to each other we need to study historical reality. "Historical reality", says Gurvitch, "is studied both by the science of history and sociology" (1975:79). He explains historical reality as a privileged sector of social reality, i.e., the constantly changing total social phenomena, as well as the structures, works and circumstances through which they are expressed (1975:79). Historical reality has to be conceived as a concrete totality. This means that it is (1) organized and structured as a whole; (2) the structure is built up hierarchially and



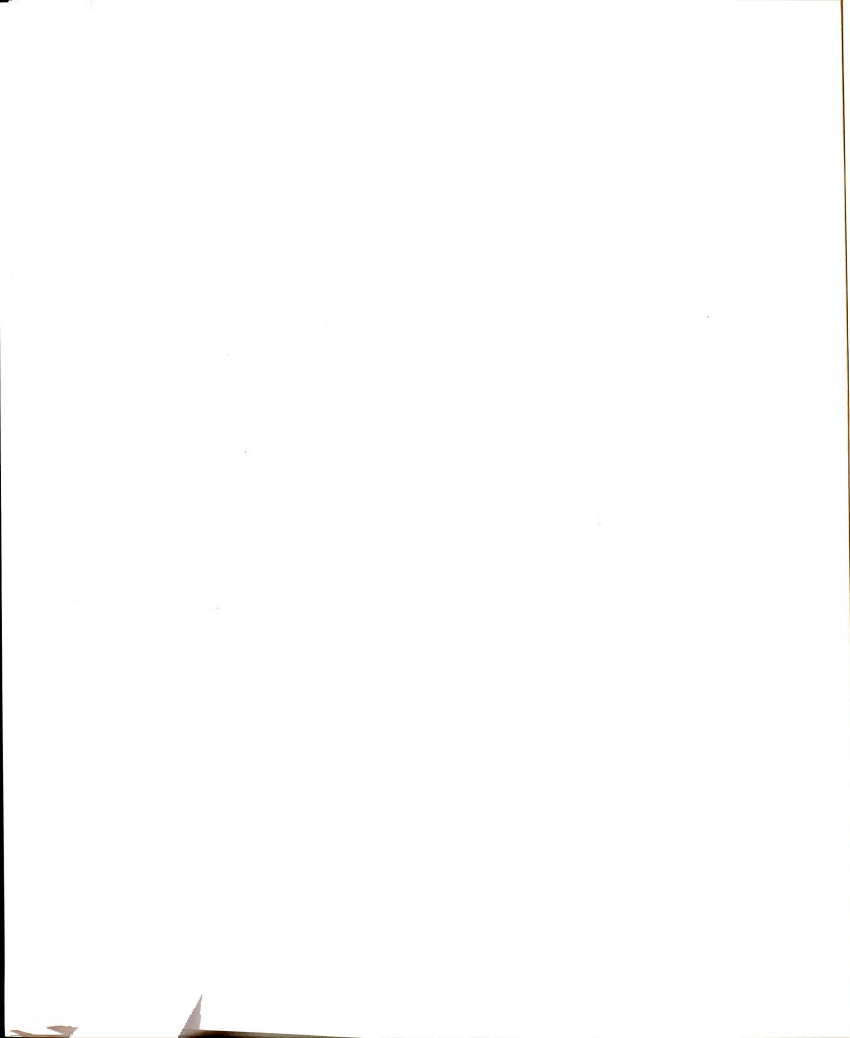


comprises sub-totalities; (3) that it is not unchangeable, but undergoing a continuous process of transformation; (4) that it is produced, and that it is producing within itself; and (5) that its organization does not imply a harmonious cooperation or co-ordering of sub-totality or elements within this totality, but rather, the existence of contradictions, viewed as "the driving forces" of change and transformation (Israel, 1979:72).

If sociology wants to study historical realities, it must use historical method.<sup>2</sup> Historical method singularizes global structures and circumstances to an extreme and, even more, the total social phenomena which are subjacent and overflow into them. According to Gurvitch, "Historical method emphasizes the continuity of passage between structures, the continuity of their excesses, even the continuity of their reaptures, and the continuity of unrepeatable chains" (1975:80-1) (emphases original).

An historical investigation in the field of sociology is a concrete and comprehensive analysis. It serves to explain both data and fact at once. One may, for analytic purposes, regard explaining the facts and explaining the data as two different "levels" of explanation.

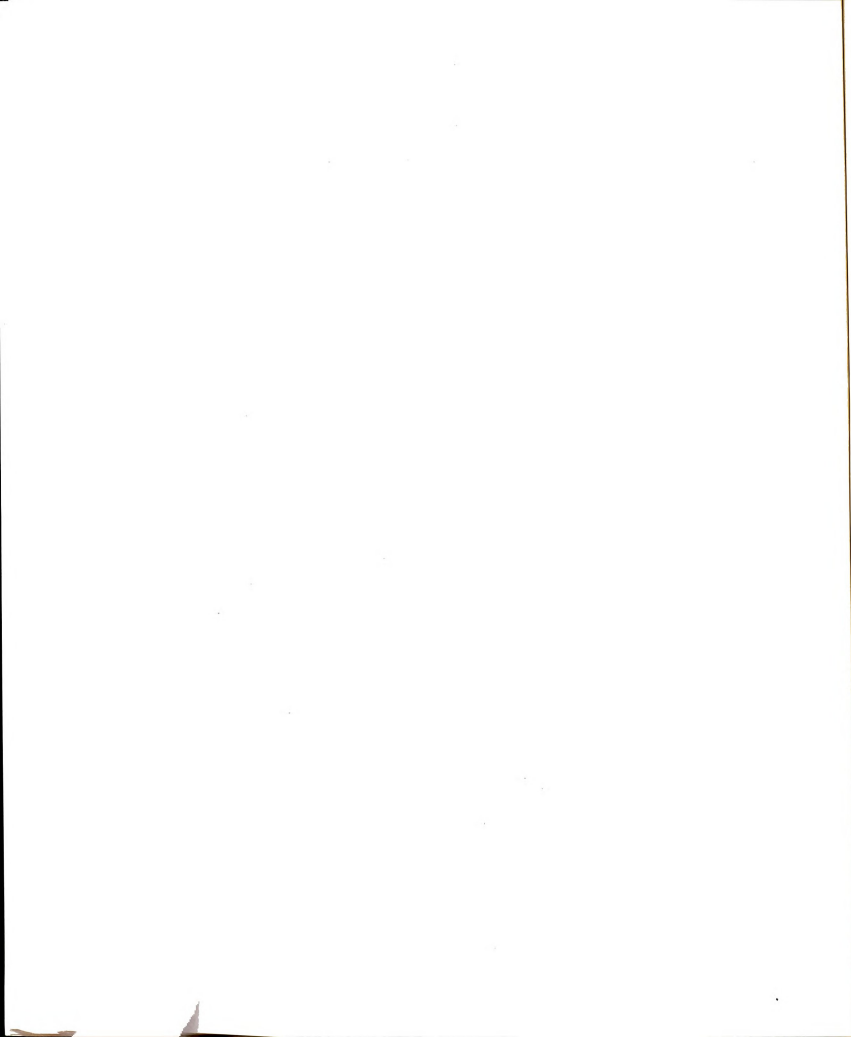
The study I have proposed assumes an historical perspective because the process of change in class structure based on mode of production occurs not at one point in time but through a set of historical events. Historical method is the revealing of the historical process. If the historical process is to be understood in its totality, we must



consider the conditions within which discourse upon the historical process took place, the conditions within which it can take place today, and the differences between these conditions.

The continuity of the historical process is an important feature of history. The past gave birth to the present which will create the future. We do not conceive of a certain past event taking place in a vacuum. On the contrary, we regard it as occurring within the context of a network of other events related to it. By historical method, we want to find our way through the thicket of contemporary events, to make sense not of history as a whole but of what was happening at the time and what had happened in the comparatively recent past. A historical explanation explains facts prevailing at one time by reference to facts prevailing at an earlier time. The whole of the present is the consequence of the whole of the past. "Certainly knowledge of the past matters to societies, whose customs, inherited attitudes, laws and institutions are normally explicable only in terms of their earlier history" (Thomson, 1969:12). To emphasize the importance of the past, and the interaction of events and conditions that coincided in time, leads to the true historical attitude.

What historical method explains is not simply an event--something that happens--but a change. The purpose of this method is to facilitate the understanding of the real process of historical development that has actually occurred

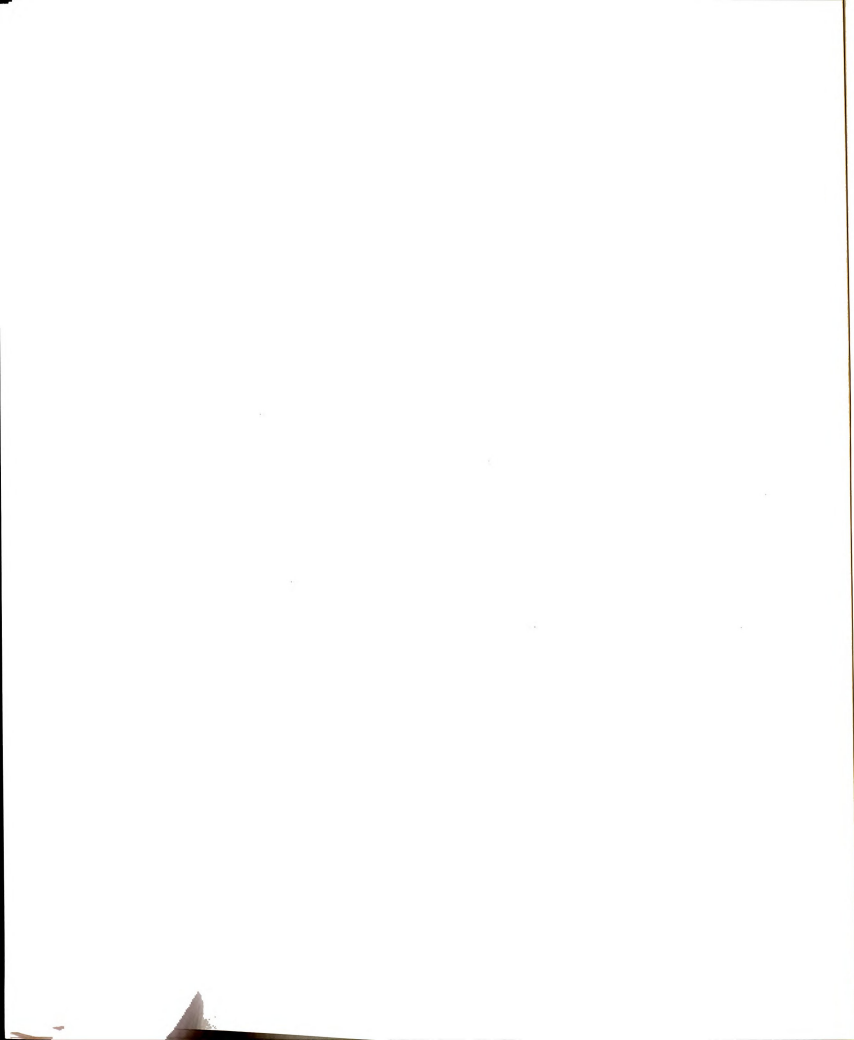


in the past, is occurring at present, and can reasonable be hypothesised, from existing tendencies, as likely to occur in the future. Whenever we speak of the transition in society we are in effect using a conception the validity of which can only be derived from historical study. Time is thus a major dimension of our work.

The underlying assumption of the historical method is that different historical events can be regarded as going together to constitute a single process, a whole of which they are all parts and in which they belong together in a specially intimate way. Our aim is to see and explain the events as a part of such a process, to locate it in its context by mentioning other events with which it is bound up.

My work will be established on the basis of the dialectical-historical method. I believe that the nucleus of the dialectical-historical method is the identification of internal mechanisms and the external dependence of the Iranian economy to world capitalism. By using the dialectical-historical method, I will attempt to bring in the interaction of the existing Iranian dependent capitalists with the pre-capitalist modes of production. In a study of this nature, our method requires: (a) study of the existence of the pre-capitalist mode(s) within the capitalist social formation, (b) the process of destruction of pre-capitalist modes, and (c) the emergence of a transitional mode of production.

The utilization of dialectical-historical method lets me grasp concepts which can be useful tools for the analysis of decline and the emergence of a specific class structure

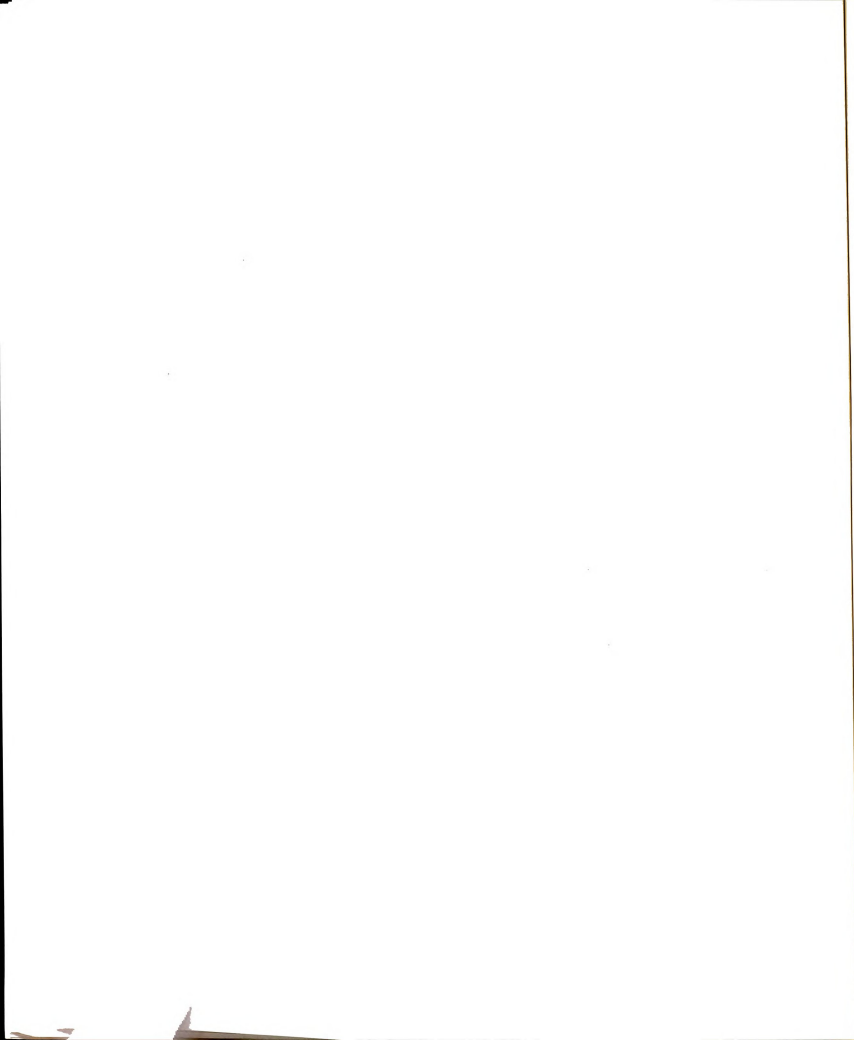


in terms of the expansion of the world capitalist system and the internal articulation of the different modes of production.<sup>3</sup> In short, the application of dialectical method entails the construction of the socio-historical reality of Iranian rural society.

An attempt will be made to use dialectical-historical method based on an assumption that the Iranian peasantry has always been susceptible to change and development. One cannot understand the process of change in the peasantry without reference to its past and to other aspects of their life and environment. Development of the peasantry in recent decades is not a single, isolated phenomenon; it has a historical genesis and, dialectically, an economic conditioning situation, which brought about its societal development.

The scale and nature of the change in the Iranian peasantry can be determined only within the framework of social formation, as the only basis form bringing out the specific feature in the development of Iranian society. This social formation has to be studied within the framework of world history because as Thomson says "to study only the internal development of any one country come to appear inadequate" (1969:92).

Once again, in order to trace the historical development of the Iranian peasantry, it is necessary to examine the dialectical process, which entails the necessity for an historical approach to all social phenomena.



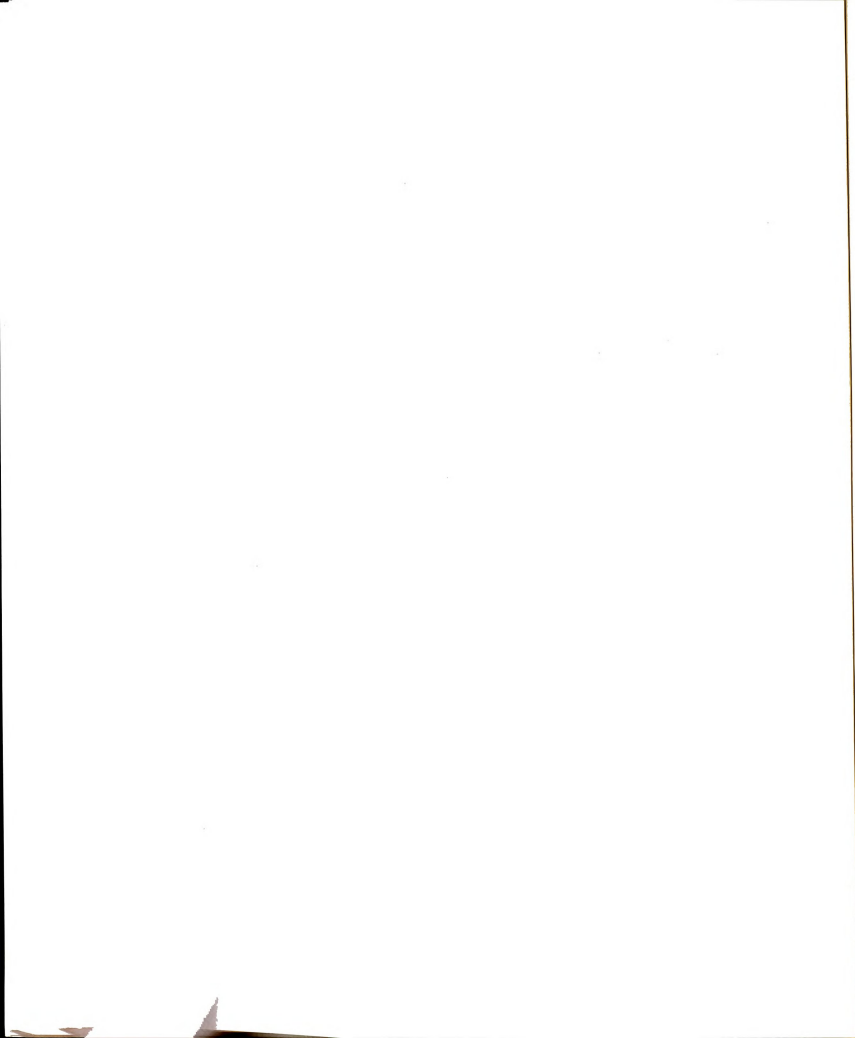


### 3.4. Documentary Technique

The historical-dialectical method attempts to explain data drawn from documentary sources. The documentary technique is an indirect method of observing the social phenomena. This technique involves organizing the necessary and sufficient documents and determine the reliability of them in order to prepare for interpretation.

A documentary method of the past, like other social methods of the present, raises the problem of the reliability of the evidence or data. Evidence is not always reliable. It must be compared with the evidence of other authorities and witnesses. It must be tested with reference to what knowledge we already possess of the period as a whole, and with reference to our experience of what can be expected to occur under certain types of circumstances. And it must be judged in the light of what we believe to have been the character and likely sentiments and purposes of the writer of the document we are considering.

This technique was used to collect data about the changes that occurred in the peasantry as a result of the 1962 land reform. What is entailed in this process is an analysis of both primary and secondary sources. It is not my research intention to produce new data (primary) but to collect original material that existed at the time the historical event was taking place (primary source) and materials that were created after the event (secondary sources). These include the works of sociologists, historians, ethnographers, anthropologists, economists, geographers,



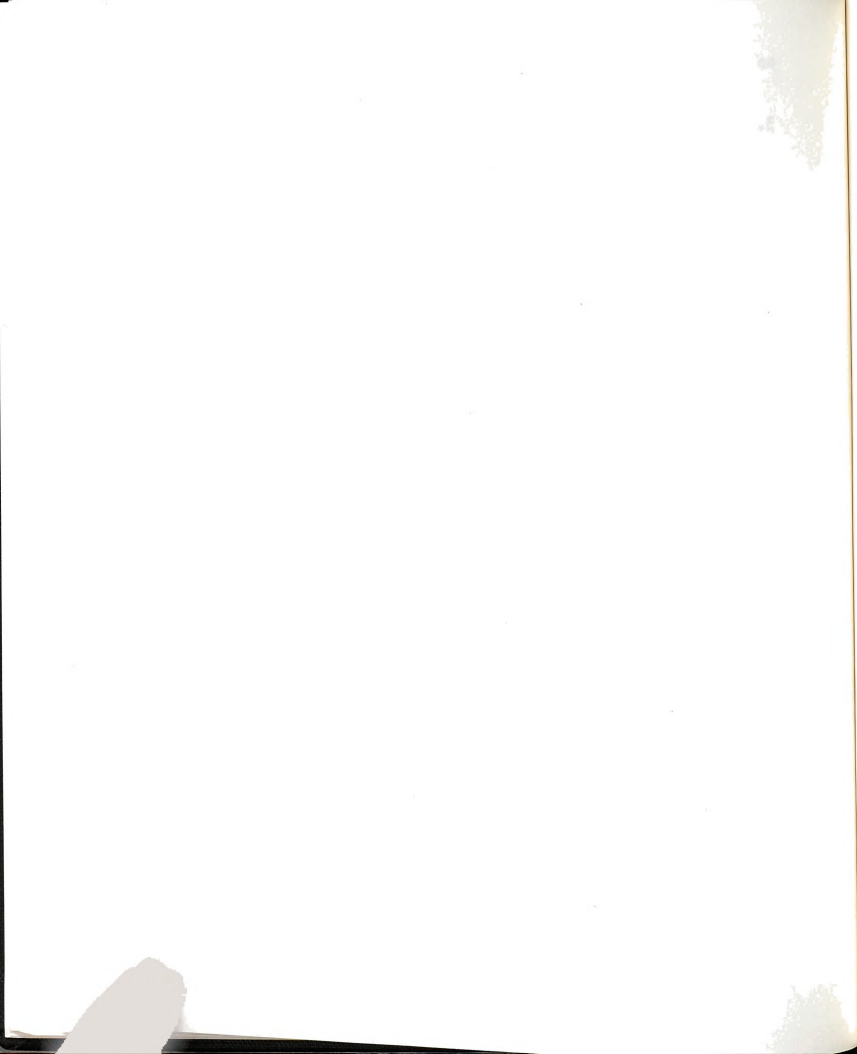
as well as specialized studies of land tenure.

### 3.5. The Applicability of Theory to Iranian Rural Reality

Based on my general theoretical framework, the aim here is to use that theoretical framework to interpret Iranian rural class structure and its change over time. An analysis of the effects of the 1962 land reform on Iranian rural class structure must take into account the interplay of major internal as well as external structural forces. In this regard, in order to understand the internal structural forces, we should consider not only the dynamic of the dependent capitalism in Iran, but also the structural characteristics of the pre-capitalist systems of production in the country. In relation to external forces, one must look at the roles that foreign capitalists have played in Iranian economy after World War II. Finally, we should take into account the interplay of these structural forces.

I will attempt to put Iran's rural class structure into a global interaction and to bring the structural relations of the past fifty years into a model of social relationship. This is an important step toward applying the theory of the articulation of modes of production to the analysis of social change in Iranian rural society.

In analyzing the rural socio-economic structure prior to the land reform, attention must be given to the forms of its articulation under the domination of the capitalist mode of production. The fundamental relations of production and the level of the development of the



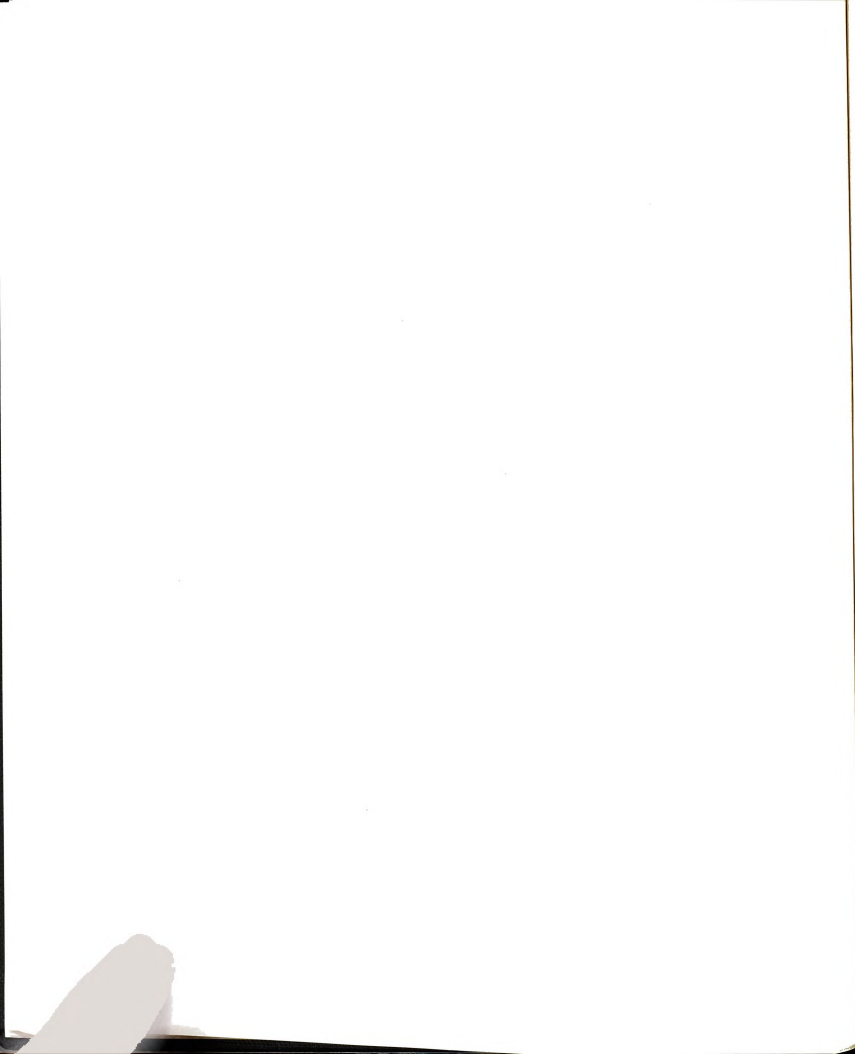
productive forces underlying the Iranian rural society have to be clearly defined in order to comprehensively understand that structure.

In relation to the period after 1950, known as the New Dependence, the interaction between contradictory forces which pushed the land reform must be considered. On the one hand, the contradiction between the interests of the old ruling elite, and new one should be investigated. On the other hand, the change in the policies of the core toward the periphery must be explored. It is in relation to these two aspects--internal and external forces--that we will find the causes of the 1962 land reform.

As a consequence of the 1962 land reform, any sign of the change must be looked upon as change in the relations of production. In using the theory of the articulation of modes of production, we should look at the emergence of the new social relations of production in rural areas of Iran. The changes in the productive forces must be taken into account. We must find out how much impact supplementary measures related to land reform had on the process of change.

In short, the main concern of this research is primarily with the structural changes that took place as a consequence of the 1962 land reform in the rural areas of Iran.

Ultimately, my assumption is that the 1962 Iranian land reform annihilated some classes of the peasantry; expanded the other; and finally created a new one. As a consequence



of this rearrangement the whole class structure of rural Iran was changed, and it re-emerged with a new appearance. This work will examine the above-mentioned assumption to see whether the land reform had such effects on the rural class structure or not.

### 3.6. Areas of Preliminary Research Questions

The following are three central areas within which preliminary research questions have been formulated. These questions are meant to guide the investigation.

- 1) Iranian rural society prior to the 1962 land reform: study of the socio-economic structure of the rural areas based on the modes of production.

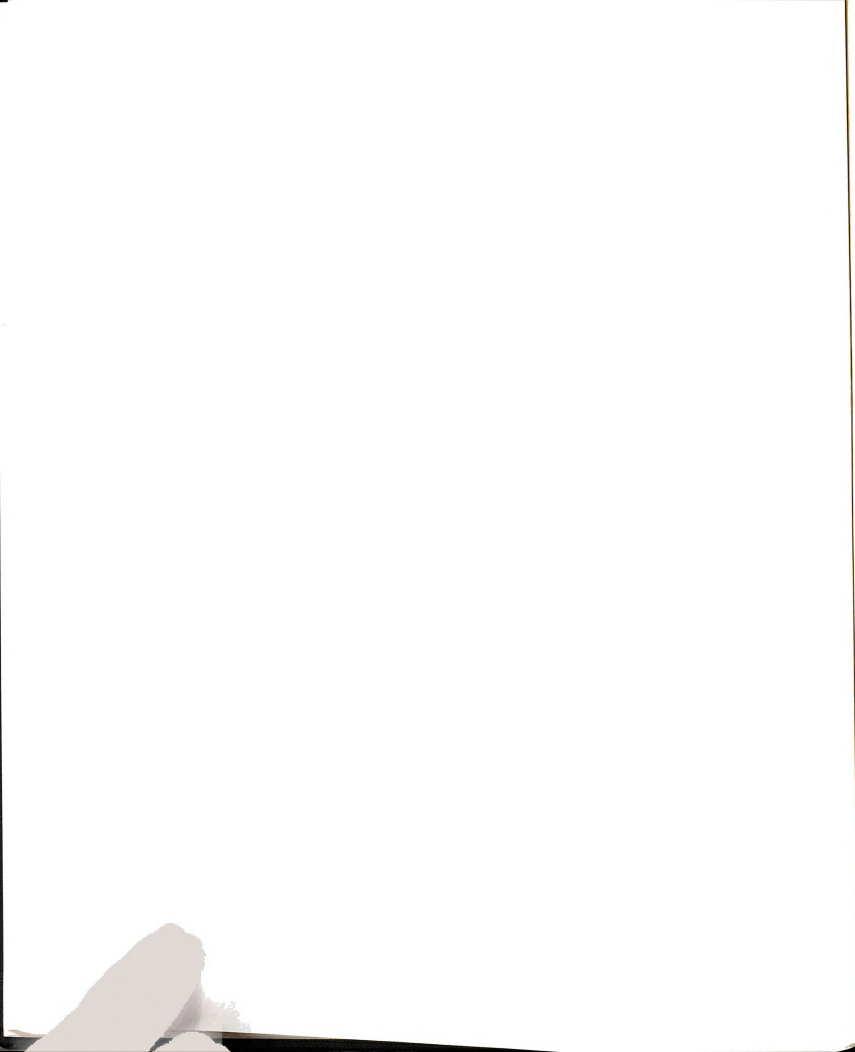
Questions arising within this frame are:

- a) What were the different relations of production in the rural areas?
- b) What was the pattern of land holding?
- c) What was the class structure in the villages?
- d) Which class of the peasantry was the predominant class?

- 2) The necessity of the 1962 land reform implementation: study of the relationship between the land reform and the forces behind that.

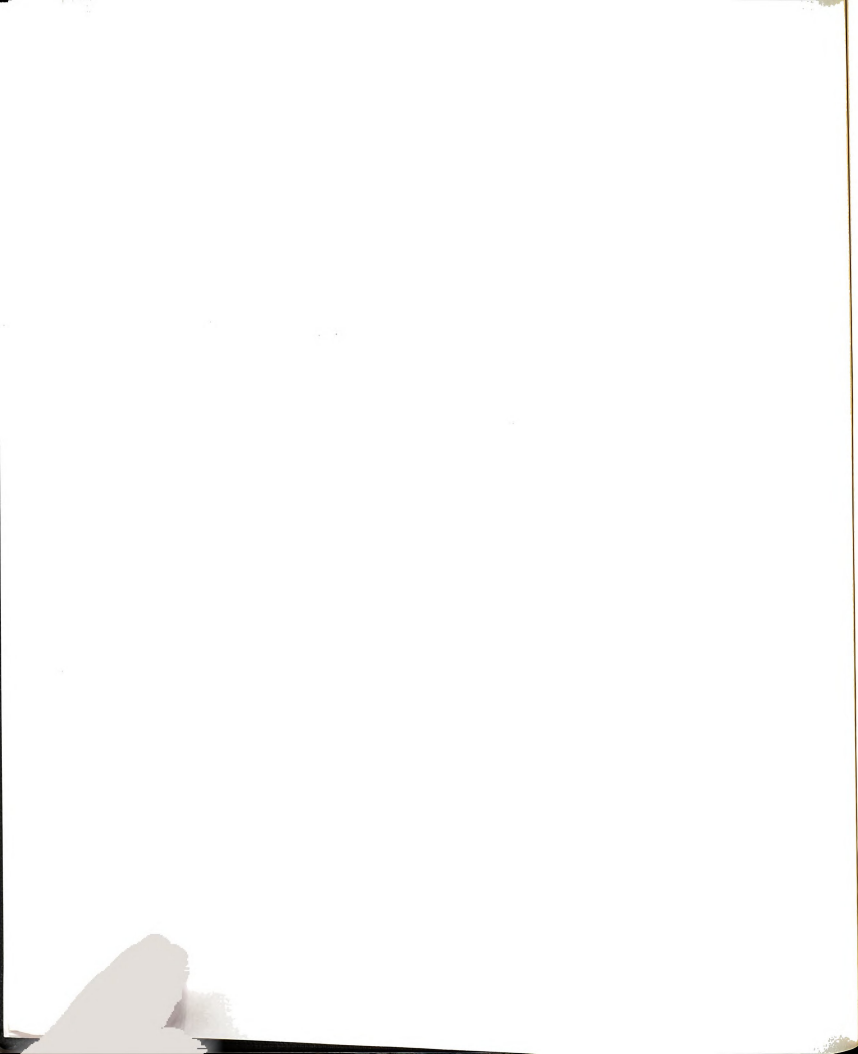
Questions arising from this line of inquiry are:

- a) What was the relationship between the need for expanding the capitalist relation of production in agriculture and the land reform?
- b) What was the relationship between implementing the land reform and emerging contradiction between the feudal lord and the dependent bourgeoisie of Iran?
- c) What were the underlying dynamics of the forces pushing for the land reform?
- d) To what extent was the land reform initiated from outside?
- e) What was the nature and the content of the laws of the land reform?





- f)How was the land reform implemented?
- 3) Rural class structure after the 1962: study of the new arrangement of the class structure based on the elimination and / or emergence of the systems of production.
- Questions regarding this are:
- a)What systems of production were eliminated as a result of the land reform?
  - b)What was the amount and quality of the land which have been distributed among the peasants?
  - c)What classes disappeared?
  - d)To what extent did new classes emerge in the villages?
  - e)To what extent did the size of the existing classes change?
  - f)Did the land reform accelerate rural-urban migration?



### 3.7.Endnotes

1. We believe that the dialectical process is an unending one,for every contradiction is a product of earlier ones and cannot be understood without reference to those preceding it.
2. Historical concepts provide material for the sociology. Sociology turns its own concept into instruments for the understanding of history.
3. As Shivji has indicated, the most important concept of Marxism--like class, class struggle, mode of production, productive forces, relations of production,etc.--are all tied up with his dialectical method (1976:27).

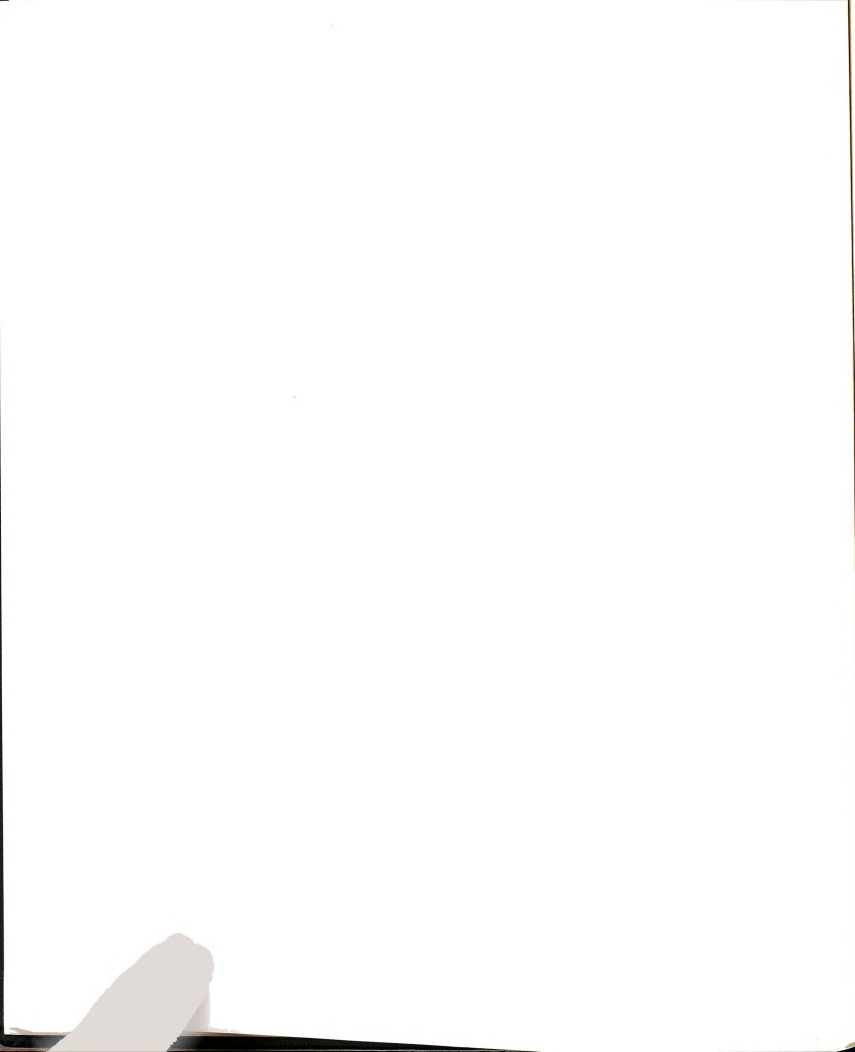


PART II  
GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION: On the Necessity of Geographical And Historical Background

Since our method of analysis is historical, it is necessary to understand the historical background of the society under investigation. This background must be about the most relative domains to the subject. In as much as our subject of study is the process of change in the rural class structure based on the theory of modes of production, it seems the most relative aspect under investigation must be the trend and pattern of landownership and tenure in the countryside. The second most important factor in a country like Iran is the evolution of irrigation ownership and right to use water for cultivation. These two parameters had determinative effects on the class relationships in Iran's agrarian society.

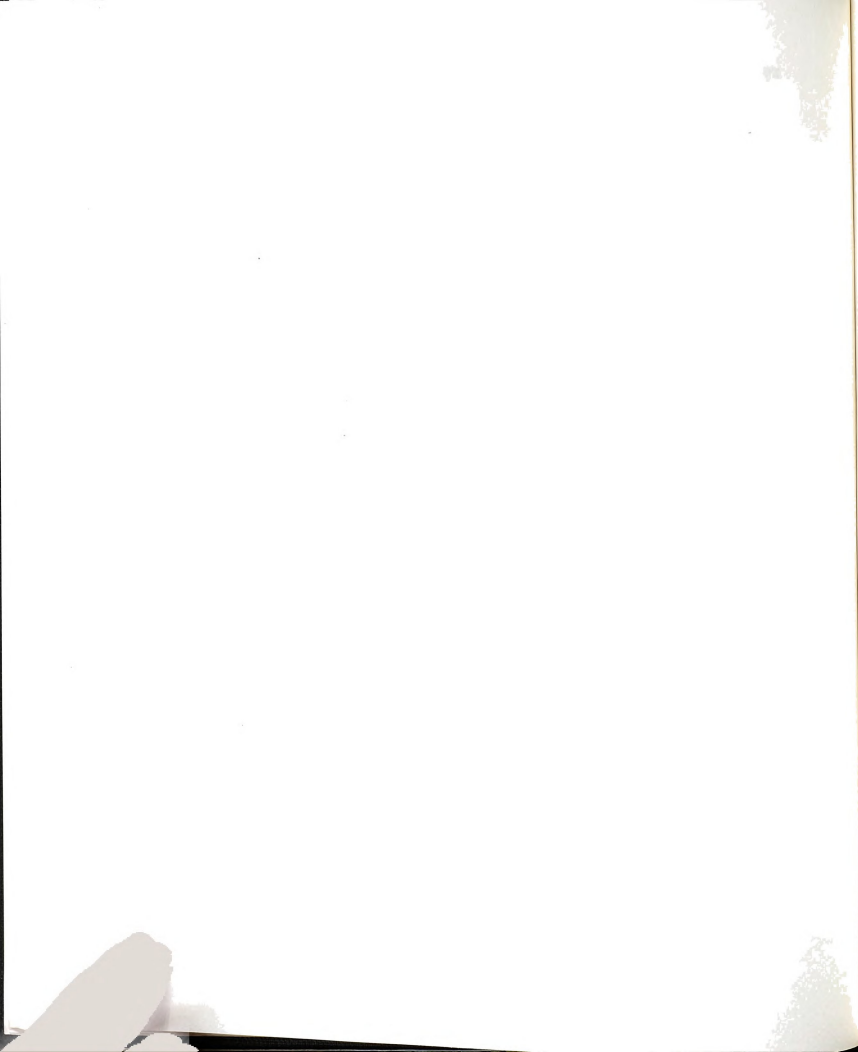
The rural societies are known for being closed societies with a closed economy. This idea is true about the majority of rural areas in the world prior to the 20th century. Today, it is hard to find any village which has no economic relations to the wider society. Thus, central to the analysis of change in the rural class relations is agricultural production in the period of transition to capitalism. The study of such a process is another most



relative background to our analysis.

The setting for specific kinds of class relations is the result not only of historical and structural conditions of the wider society and economy but also of geographical factors like soil, climate and vegetation. Social production is connected with geography. The former's level and development trends relate to the fertility of the land, natural resources (including water), climatic conditions, and so on.

Whatever the success of scientific and technological progress, the effect of the natural environment on society will always be a positive quantity because, no matter how advanced, society will always exist in a specific geographical environment, in a definite set of natural conditions which influence, and will continue to influence, the life of society.





## CHAPTER FOUR

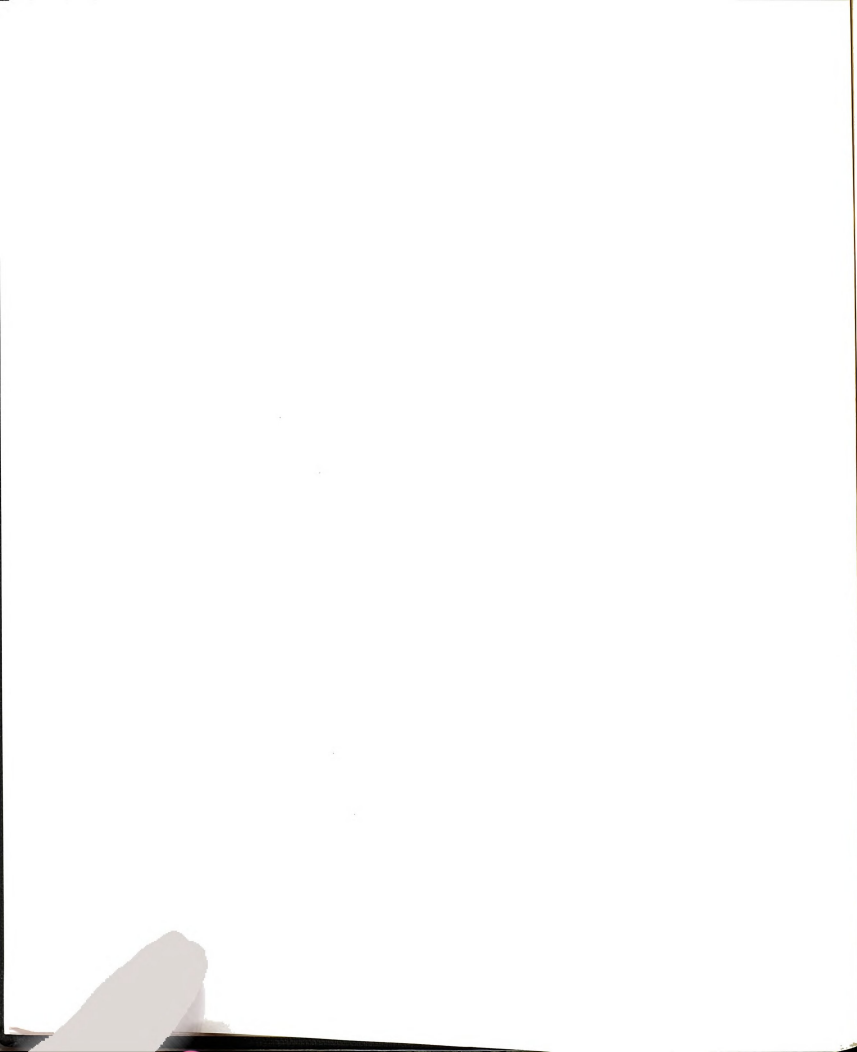
### GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

#### 4.1. Introduction

One of the general factors that characterizes Iranian history in general, and rural life in particular, is the extraordinary influence of the physical environment. In order to better understand the socio-politico-economic structure of the Iranian rural areas, initially it would be useful to describe Iran's prominent natural peculiarity.

Geographical factors have shaped the agriculture of Iran. Cultivation methods and types of crops grown are affected largely by climate and terrain. Control of scarce resources such as water or rights in water often have been as important as land ownership, since in many areas land which is not adequately watered is worthless. Also, geographical proximity was essential not only for the assessment of the value of the land but also for its continued and profitable exploitation.

The present Iranian state covers an area of some 628,000 square miles (1,648,000 sq. km) and extends between latitude 25° and 40° N., and longitude 44° and 63° E. Iran has a border that has been estimated at 2,750 miles in total length, of which over half is sea coast, with 400 miles lying along the southern Caspian shore, and the remainder (1,100 miles)



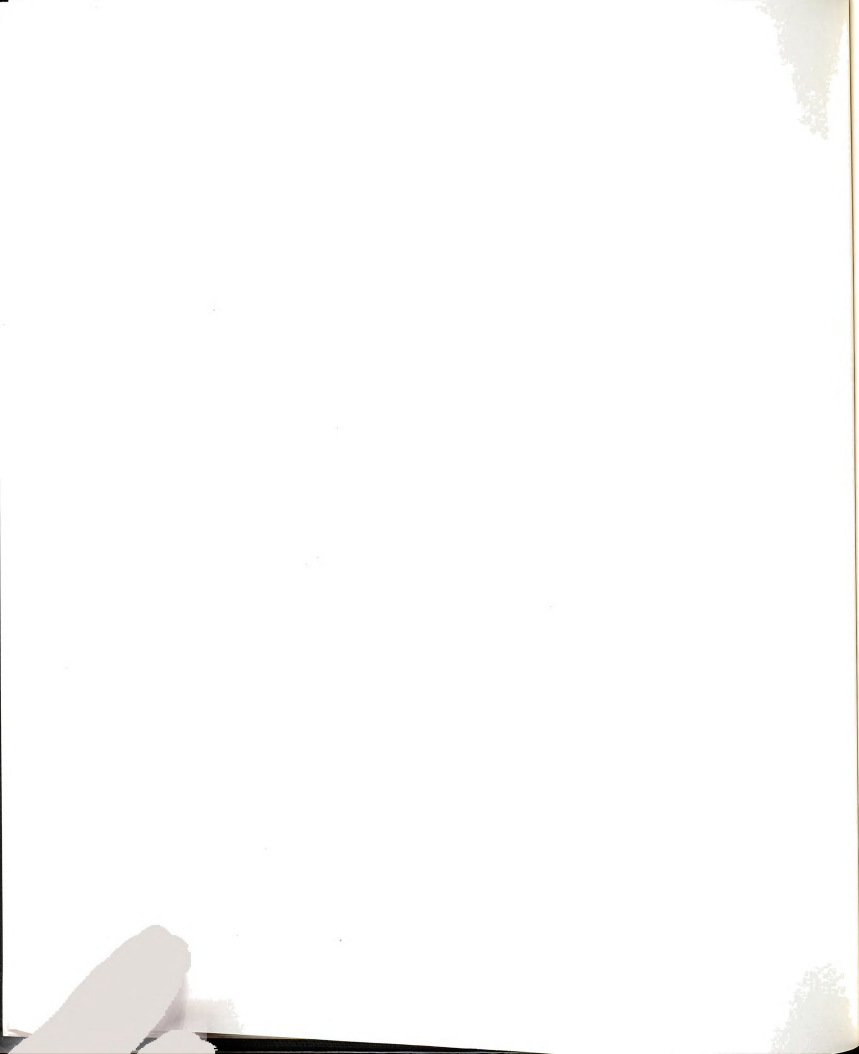
comprising the northern parts of the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman (Fisher, 1968). The western frontier is Turkey with 290 miles and Iraq with 550 miles. In the north, the Soviet Union frontier (901 miles) is divided by the Caspian Sea into a western and an eastern section. The eastern frontier is Afghanistan with 509 miles and Pakistan with 500 miles.

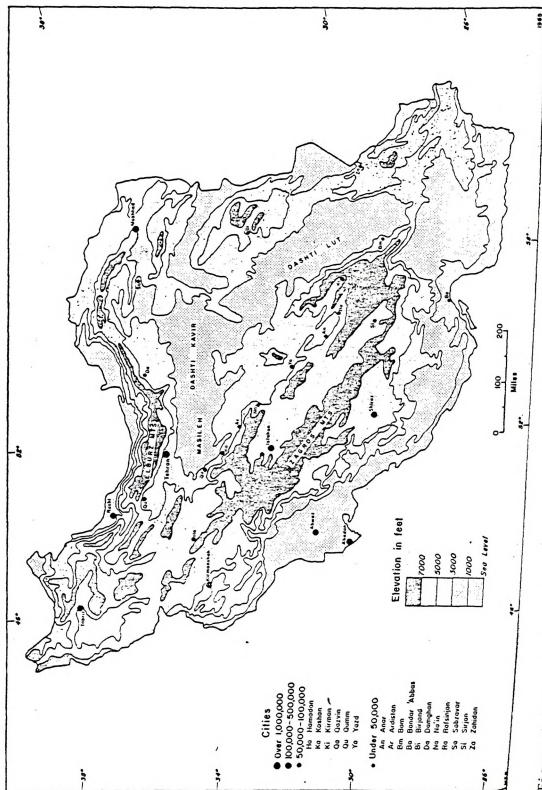
#### 4.2. Physical Features

Physically, Iran consists of a complex of mountain chains enclosing a series of interior basins that lie at altitudes of 1,000 to 4,000 ft. These mountain ranges rise steeply from sea-level on the north and on the south and equally abrupt from the very flat and extremely low-lying plain of Mesopotamian, to the west. Eastward, and also in the extreme north-west, the highlands extend beyond Iran in the form of largely continuous and uninterrupted features: in the first area they are prolonged as the massifs of Afghanistan and Pakistan and in Azerbaijan and eastern Asia Minor.

In terms of physical geography, (Fig. 4.1.), we can arrive at four major divisions of the country: the Zagros system, including small outer plains (chiefly the Khuzistan region); the Alburz and associated Caspian plain; the eastern and south-eastern upland rim; and the interior (Fisher, 1968:6-7).

As a single major physical region, the Zagros could be





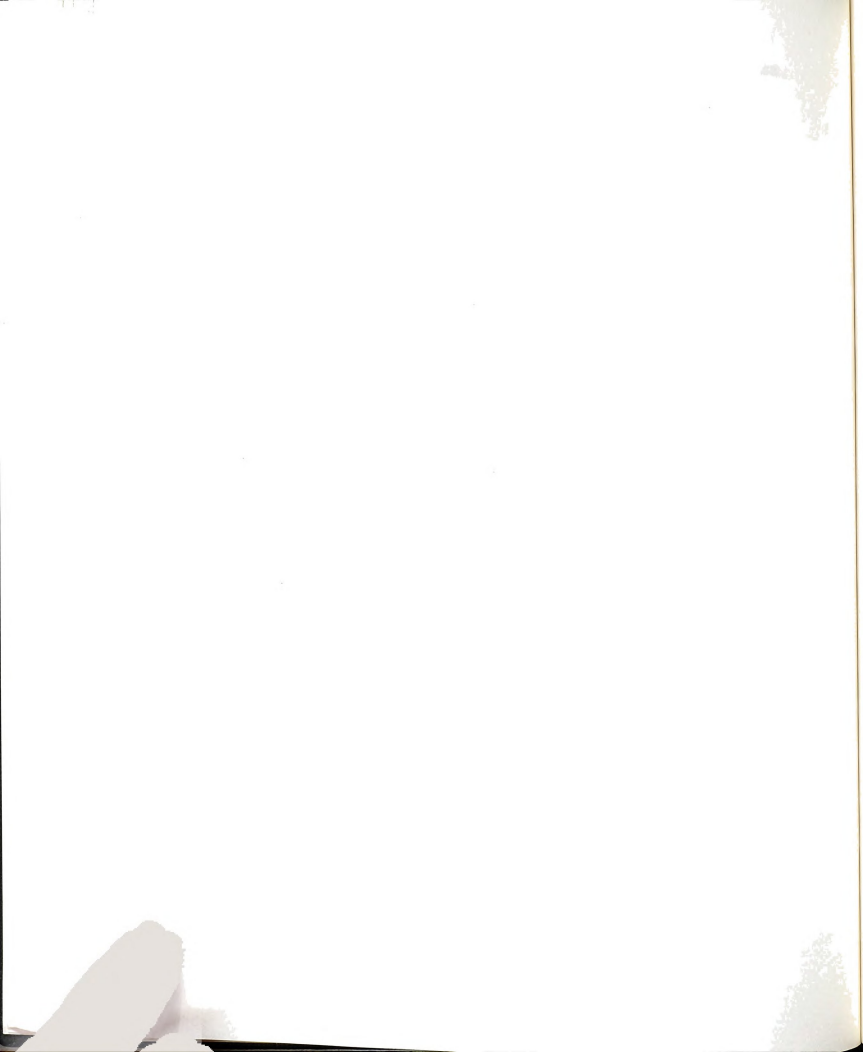


said to dominate the entire western portion of Iran from north-west to south-east, for it comprises some of the most imposing fold structure and clusters of high peaks to be found not only in Iran but within the whole of Middle East.

Viewed on a small-scale topographical map, the Alburz appears hardly more than a minor spur diverging eastwards from the main mountain massifs of north-west Iran, and completing in a somewhat diminished way the rim of upland that frames the central regions of Iran. Though narrow, with a maximum width of only eighty miles and average of under sixty miles, it is unusually high, including as it does Iran's greatest peak, Mt. Damavand (19,000ft), which lies approximately in the center of the entire chain. "It may be noted that Damavand is higher than any summit to the west of it in Asia or in Europe" (Fisher, 1968:38).

The east and south-east of Iran consist of a number of upland massifs separated by topographical expanses of differing width and lower but varied altitudes. These uplands are distinctly irregular in disposition, trend, and physiography; whilst the intervening areas are plains only in a limited sense, for though most have a flat or rolling surface, some are open and others more basin-like.

The highland rim surrounding and demarcating Iran enclosed a central area of irregular shape and composed of a number of inland basins. Some of these are very large, others small, but all have one common feature: "a lack of





any outward drainage to the sea" (Fisher, 1968:90). Moreover, although they are generally areas of subdued relief, with extensive flats and terraces the dominate feature, topography is far from uniform.

As we saw above, the country possesses natural boundaries of mountain. Two great deserts, the Dasht-i Lut and the Dast-i Kavir, occupy a large part of the central plateau, and together account for "one sixth of the total area of Iran" (Janjua:1966:4). Both contain stony plains and ranges of barren hills, sand dunes, salt lakes and stretches of saline soil. The rest of the central plateau consists of semi desert or steppe. "About two-thirds of the total land is either mountainous or saline and desert regions" (Rayput, 1945:9).

#### 4.3. Climate

Iran has a continental climate, with wide annual variations in temperature. In the south, summer temperatures of 50° C. (120° F.) are common, and 54° C. (130° F.) has been recorded; in the northwestern and northeastern regions winter temperatures may fall as low as -35° C. (-30° F.) (Janjua, 1966:5). The temperature drops rapidly after sundown all year, and in winter the nights are bitterly cold; in the same way, the hot-weather season changes suddenly to the cold-weather season. Wind, blowing unchecked over the flatter areas, brings furnace heat in summer and biting cold in winter.

In general, winter is the rainy season of Iran. It is



the season during which Iran gets most of its annual precipitation; and yet half the land surface of the country lies within the 100 mm (4 in.) isohyet, and more than two thirds of the remainder between the 100- and the 200 mm lines (4-8 in.) (Ganji, 1968:237).

The wettest part of Iran during the winter months is the Caspian region. This zone actually receives less than 25 per cent of its annual precipitation during this season. Within the Caspian region itself, precipitation decreases from west to east. After the Caspian area and the northern flanks of the Alburz come the Zagros highland, with a total winter precipitation of over 200 mm (8 in.). The rest of the country is relatively dry even in the midst of its rainy season, and the driest part is the central desert of Iran and Dast-i Lut, to the east of Kirman<sup>1</sup> (see figure 4.2.).

During spring, rainfall along the Caspian shores of Iran falls to 10 percent of its annual total. In spite of this drastic fall in the percentage, however, the Caspian littoral still remains the wettest part of Iran in the spring months. Outside the Caspian area, Azarbayjan enjoys a relatively wet period. Over the rest of the country dryness prevails.

Summer is a dry season all over Iran except in the Caspian area. During long summer, clear skies are generally the rule over many places in the interior of the country, where there is no chance of a shower. To the north of the



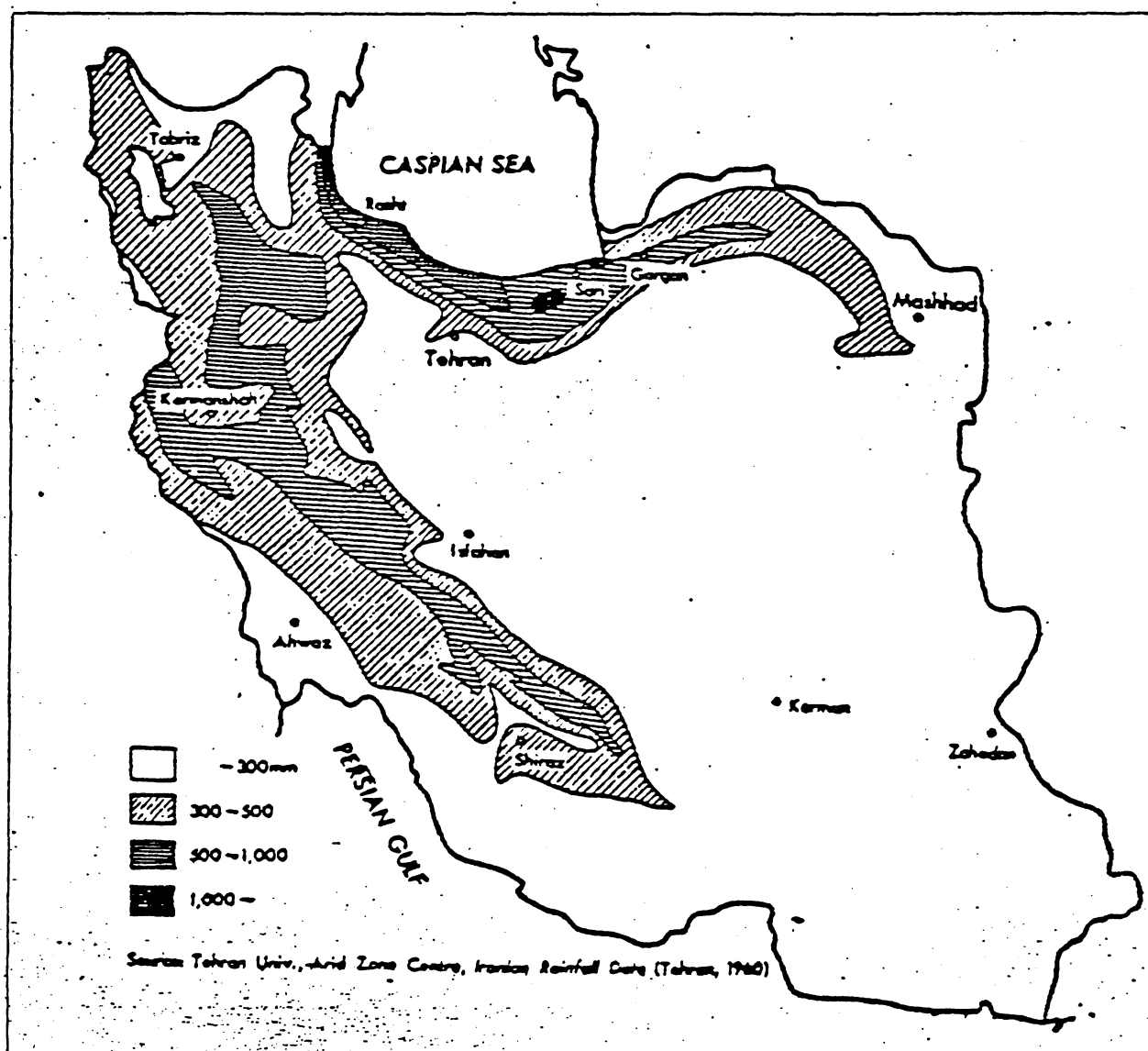
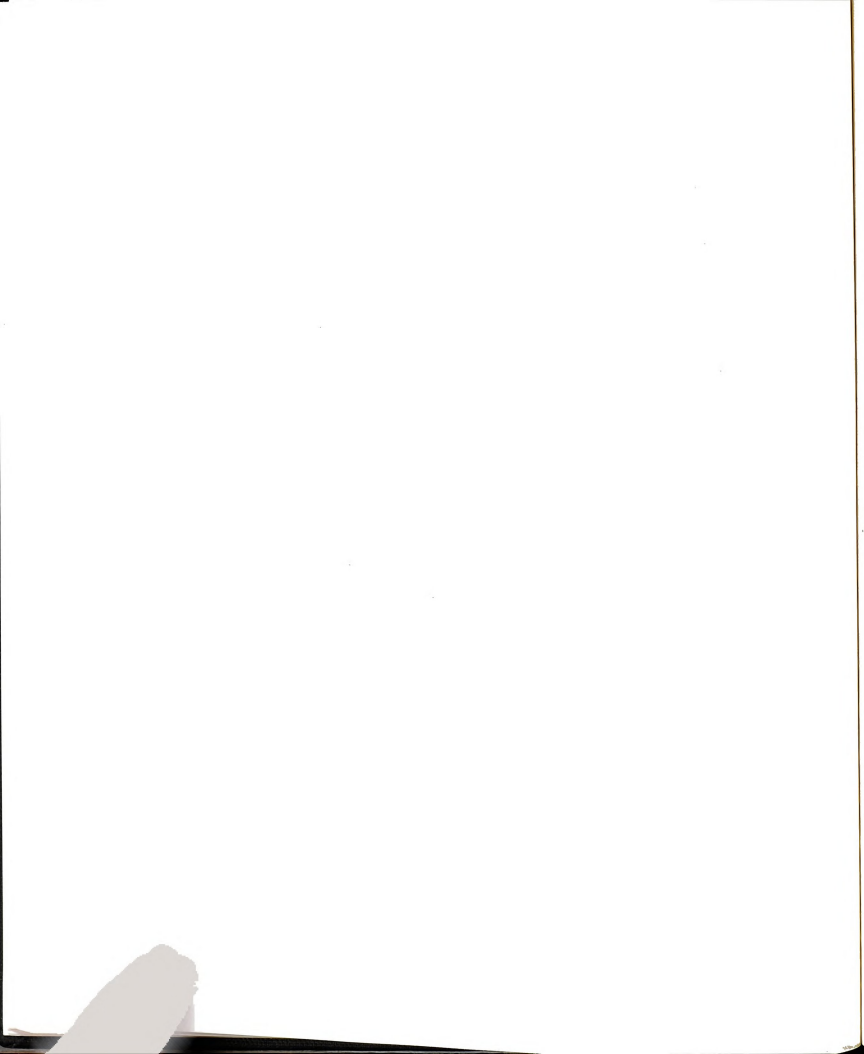


Figure 4.2: Distribution of Rainfall in Iran.



Alburz, however, different conditions prevail. In contrast to the desolate scenery and absolute dryness of the south, one finds on the northern slopes frequent rainfall.

The Zagros and the Azarbayjan highlands, as well as the Persian Gulf coast, benefit more from fall precipitation. Another region that receives a considerable amount of precipitation during the autumn months is the Caspian littoral. "In fact, it is at this season that the Caspian area receives its maximum seasonal rainfall" (Ganji, 1968:243).

The interior area of Iran experiences only low amounts of rainfall, which are on average between one and six inches annually, with an incidence sharply confined to the six winter months. Unfortunately for man the best part of the water collected by the mountain walls drains rapidly away to the Persian Gulf and Caspian sea.

The dryness of the climate is thus a major factor in Iranian rural life.<sup>2</sup> Over large areas water is the main problem of life, particularly during the summer months. Only along the northern border lands, in the Zagros valleys, and in parts of the north-western provinces is there a plentiful supply of fresh running water. Elsewhere many of the streams are short, intermittent, or salty, their waters often absorbed into the alluvium or rubbish that covers so much of the valley bottoms, and life is dependent on springs, wells, or other artificial devices for storing a precarious rainfall.





#### 4.4. The Soils

A special characteristic of Iran is the absence of a proper soil, capable of readily sustaining plant life, from large areas of the land surface. It is clear, then, that soils are one of the most valuable natural resources of Iran. As I mentioned before, Iran is covered to a large extent by the mountains which surround the saline, sandy, and rocky deserts of the central plateau, thus making the plateau a closed basin. Once again, over 50 per cent of the total land surface is mountainous and highly broken in topography. The major part of the country is arid or semi-arid.

From the point of soil-study, Iran can be divided into the following soils areas (Dewan: 1968-8):

- 1) Soil of the plains and valley: These soils are formed on transported material, brought by the usual agencies of water and wind. They occur in low-lying parts of the valleys that are seasonally flooded by rivers, and in great part of the Dast-i Kavir. These soils combine the characteristics of salty soils with those of the marshy soils.
- 2) Soil of the plateau: Desert soils are formed as a result of severe moisture deficiency. The brown steppe soils are probably the most widespread soils in Iran.
- 3) Soils of the Caspian piedmont: The northern foothills of the Alburz mountains, as well as the slight to moderately sloping foothill areas bordering the southern coast of the



Caspian sea, are composed of brown forest, red-yellow podzolic, and in some cases grey-brown podzolic soils.

4) Soils of dissected slopes and mountains: The soils are in general stony, shallow over bedrock, and without definite profile development. Soil distributions occurring on mountains and in mountain valleys occupy a large part of Iran and include a complex range of soil types. These areas are generally unsuited for crop growth. However, many of the mountain soils contain small areas of alluvial and colluvial soils, or residual soils, that are suited for cropland or improved pastures.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.5. The Vegetation

Vegetation varies according to climate. Combined with climatic dryness the absence of a proper soil gives very special characteristics to the vegetation and to the general appearance of the Iranian landscape. The Iranian vegetation types have been arranged into three main groups or zonal locations: 1) humid forests; 2) semi-humid and semi-arid forests; and 3) steppes and deserts with loose tree stands and brushwood. To these must be added three azonal types: 4) sand brushwoods; 5) riparian forest; and 6) salt-marsh brushwoods and coastal forests (Cf. Bobek, 1968).

Along the southern shore of the Caspian sea, the forests contain elm, beech, ash, oak, lime, hornbeam and box. Sparse forests of dwarf cypress and juniper occur in some areas (Janjua, 1966:5).



A semi-humid oak forest covers the outer slopes of the southern and south-western margins of the Iranian plateau. It is a somewhat dry, cold-resistant, and deciduous forest with broad-leaved, summer green oaks as its dominant members.

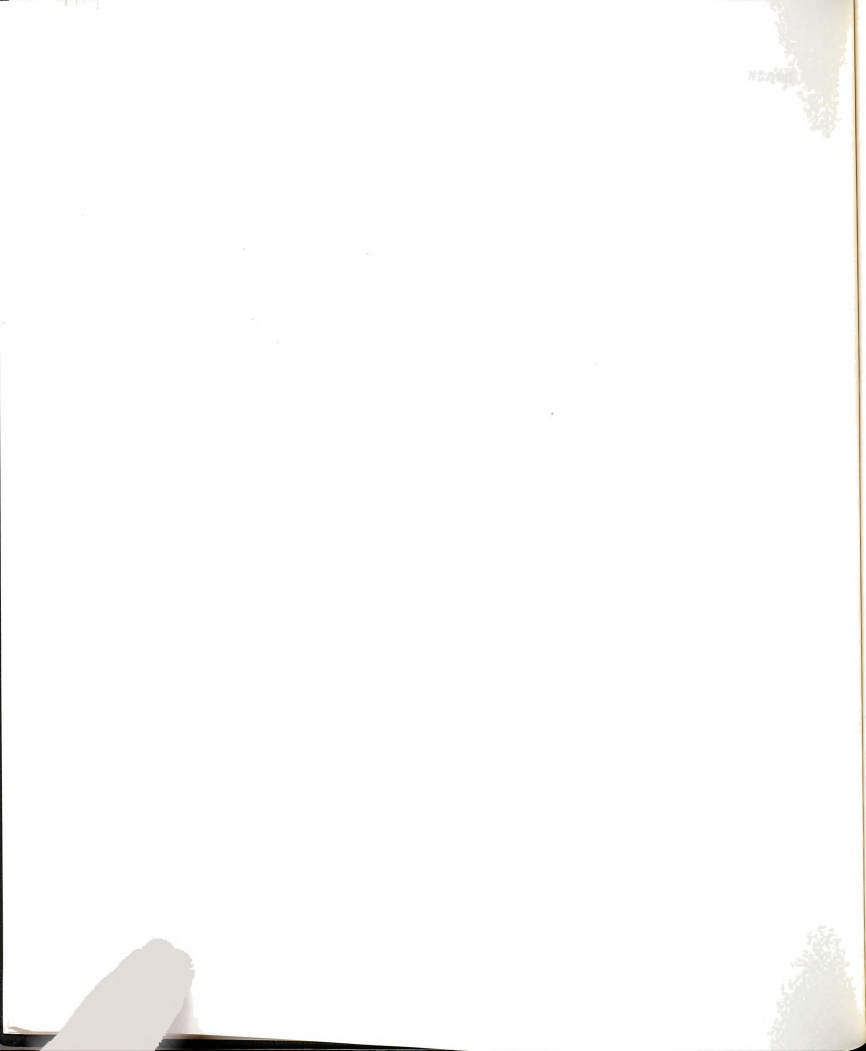
On the intermediate plateau between the Caspian forest on the one hand and Zagrosian forest on the other, apparently nothing but various associations of open steppe are to be found nowadays, which gradually taper out towards the deserts of the central Iranian depressions. Two "dry" forests in this area have been identified (Bobek, 1968:287). One of these is the juniper-forest, which covers the southern slopes of the Alburz chain and both sides of the main ranges of Khurasan. It is made up in this stands, accompanied by a few or many shrubs. The second type of dry forest is the pistacio-almons-maple forest. Natural stands are in no way thinner than those of the juniper forest.

In relation to the azonal vegetation types, it is extraordinary to see how the moisture-holding capacity of sand, occurring in sheets and massive dune complexes on the southern or south-eastern edges of most of the interior depressions, enables extended thickets of bushes and low trees to exist under sheer desert conditions. Also, mangrove forests are known from the Persian Gulf coast, chiefly in the Strait of Hurmuz.

To sum up the geographical section, out of 165 million



hectares (408 million acres), 19 million hectars (47 million acres) are forest and woodland. 127 million hectares (314 million acres) are comprised of wastelands, desert, and mountains (of which as mush as 33 million hectares (82 million acres) are unused but potentially productive). The remainder of 19 million hectares (47 million acres) are under cultivation, including fallow and orchards. Of the 19 million hectares under cultivation, only 6.6 million hectares are under crops in any one year, and only 3 million hectares are under irrigation. Of these, 700,000 hectares (1,730,000 acres) are vineyards and orchards, and 2.3 million hectares are under irrigated crops (Dewan, 1968). The above statistics indicate that the arid climate and mountainous terrain make agriculture difficult. It was under the above-mentioned hard geographical conditions that the land reform incorrectly changed the pattern of land ownership and organization of production and as a result made already difficult agriculture more difficult.





#### 4.6. Endnotes

1. Generally speaking, the eastern half of Iran is much more rainy than the western half. The east has shortage of water for irrigation.
2. A significant criterion of this is the limit of pluvial agriculture. The regions where rainfall is sufficient for agriculture are the Alburz and the chanins of the Khorasan, the greater part of Azarbayjan, and the whole western part of the chanins of the Zagros. Everywhere else irrigation is necessary.
3. For a detail information on soil see Dewan, 1968.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### 5.1. Introduction

Since in our study we are dealing with the question of change in the rural class structure, we should have a proper sense of the historical move from one phase to another phase. In order to facilitate the understanding of such a change, we need to know not only the process of change at present time, but what has actually occurred in the past.

In this chapter an attempt will be made to show that the Iranian peasantry has always been susceptible to change. Through 2500 years of its history, it has accepted many changes in relations of production, while at the same time it did not develop many changes in forces of production. The effect of the last century on Iranian countryside was regrettable. While it has introduced some new things to the life of the villagers (e.g., cash-crops), at the same time it removed the self-sufficiency of the villages.

In order to understand the real process of change in the rural class structure of Iran, we must look at the historical background of the most relative factors to our study. In the following account the historical background of different forms of landownership and tenure, irrigation,



and agricultural production will be discussed because they have conditioned the whole class structure of Iran's countryside.

## 5.2. Landownership and Tenure

In all countries landownership and tenure is a complex subject, but in Iran it is more so than in most. The size of the country, the great variety of natural conditions, the coexistence of nomadic and sedentary communities, and repeated invasions by foreign people--Arab, Turkic, Mongol--each of which brought with it different concept of property, have combined to produce a diverse and highly complicated system of land property and tenure. To this should be added the developments of the last hundred and fifty years: the increasing involvement of Iran in the world market led to the growth of capitalist relations in agriculture.

In pre-Islamic period, the king was theoretically the owner of all the land in the country and the population was regarded as his slave (bandaka) (Frye, 1968:107). There was no difference between the king's and the state's lands. The king bestowed land to his officials and followers. They were de facto controllers of the land and not de jure owners of the estates to which they were assigned. They held the land in apanage, not in baronage as in feudal societies. Some of these lands were granted to the temple. Even these lands were regarded as royal lands granted to the temple.

The land-holders and government officials collected



taxes and tributes and, while keeping a part of them for themselves, usually dispatched these tributes and taxes to the rulers in the capital. The king could confiscate the property of anyone who did not pay his taxes and tributes. In other words, there was no right of alienation and thus it was not an individual ownership.

During the last pre-Islamic dynasty, the Sassanid 227-636 A.D., the majority of the people were regarded as the common people. The largest sector of the common people was composed of the peasant who worked on the assigned lands. They were not allowed to own or hold the lands. On the other hand, the heads of the village (dehqans) belonged to the ruling aristocracy whose tasks were collecting taxes from the peasants as the representatives of the central government. In fact, these dehqans possessed the village lands.

When the Islam army invaded Iran in 636 A.D. and defeated the Iranian army, the lands belonging to the king, the nobility and the military men were nominated and considered as the Caliph's share of the war (qanima). Part of these lands were left in the hands of their cultivators on the condition that they would pay kharaj (land-tax). The rest of these lands were distributed among Caliph's senior soldiers (Vaglieri, 1970:64). The lands controlled by the temples were considered as the property of the Moslem community and regarded as the domains of the state. Finally, the land possessed by the dehqans were untouched





and remained on their hands; and Moslems assumed they will pay kharaj to the government (Frye, 1973:63).

Indeed, private-property land holding elements existed in small scale in Iranian society, but they did not represent the dominant form of property holding. As Ashraf indicated this mode of landownership has been precarious, at least during the early centuries of Islamic rule (1971:50).

As I mentioned above, cultivated lands were subject to kharaj. Kharaj was assessed in three ways: the amount due being calculated on the basis of the extent of the area, i.e., by measurement (masahat); or on the basis of the actual produce (muqasa-meh) i.e., a definite share of the crop was taken; or the assessment was fixed at a lump sum not specifically based on either measurement or the actual produce (muqata-eh), i.e., the holder or holders of the land compounded for a certain sum, which did not vary with the extent of the area sown or the crop (Lambton, 1953:33).

The Abbasids state (750-1258 A.D.) was highly centralized and maintained legal ownership and bureaucratic control over most of the land. It was in this period that different trends in landholding appeared. As Lambton has explained, the rulers brought most of the cultivated lands under their own control, thus they increased the crown lands (1953:24).

Another form of landholding which emerged in this period was iqta or tuyul. Iqta was an institution which emerged as a result of socio-economic changes during the Abbasid state. The changes required the state to find a



solution for financing its expansion and particularly bureaucratic operations. The iqta was an answer to such a need. In short, iqta means the assignment of the land to the tribal leader and government agents. In fact iqta emerged as a result of a tension between the Asiatic and feudal modes of production. As Sodagar (1978:102) has indicated, the iqta changed to the Eastern type of feudal ownership in its evolutionary trend.

There were two types of iqta; iqta at-tamlik and iqta al-istighlal. The former represented an assignment of land and the latter an assignment of its revenue. In the case of iqta at-tamlik, the object was clearly to promote cultivation and thereby to increase the revenue of the state. In the case of iqta al-istighlal, the cultivation of the land was the concern of the conquered peasants who were liable to tribute (Lambton, 1953: 29). Historically iqta has been developed in the form of control and economic exploitation of the village communities rather than the ownership of these communities. The iqta system allows for extraction of more surplus because the cooperating peasants will share their means of production and thus will need less surplus in this form.

It has been indicated that there were many attempts by the tuyuldars (Iqta-holders) to convert the land granted to them into alienable and hereditary land (Sodagar, 1978:105). Private land ownership was going to become more common. But as I explained before, the precariousness of private landownership was the major characteristic of the Iranian



agrarian system during this period.

Finally, an important category of land emerged in this period namely vaqf lands. These lands were the religious endowment lands which were exempted from paying taxes to the state. They were donated to the Islamic institutions by members of the landed class and state. The revenue from these lands beared upon the Islamic clergy, supported religious schools and mosques. In vaqf land, the peasants acquired the usufruct (manfa'a) on payment of rent for the land, which was immobilized for the benefit of the entire Muslim community. Although in theory such land was immobilized in perpetuity, in practice it was subject to confiscation, as were other types of land (Iambton, 1953:27).

From the decline of the Abbasid on wards one of the most important types of land-holding came to be the iqta. However, "there is some indication that...many of these iqtas became hereditary and the landholders started to treat the peasants as their own serfs and subjects" (Mahdi, 1983:287).

With the Mongol invasion of Iran in the thirteenth century the land ownership changed.<sup>1</sup> In this period, as the Mongol leader began to acquire land under proprietary title, by hereditary grant, occupation, and land began to fall into the following categories: divani or state, inju, vaqf, and milki. The revenues from divani were for state expenses. The inju lands belonged to the rulers and their relatives or the tribes leaders. In fact this category was crown land.



The vaqf lands were on the same previous position. Finally the milki category of lands were private property held by the individual aristocrats (Bausani, 1971:114). The Mongol period marks an increase in large land-holding.

The rise of the Safavid in the sixteenth century A.D. marks the beginning of a new period in the history of Iran. In the field of land tenure the theory of the ruler as the sole landowner became more definite. The unchanging grant of land was almost abolished. Any grant was temporary and was given in lieu of salaries. These lands tended to become, by usurpation, de facto private property (Lambton, 1953:105). As Minorsky indicated, "the owners kept them in their possession (tasarruf) for 99 years, during which time they disposed of them as they pleased; at the end of this term the owners had to renew their rights...by paying a year's revenue to the king" (1943:195). He believes that this was not an idea of absolute property ownership (Ibid., p. 196).

The most notable change in the pattern of the land-ownership in Safavids times was the great increase in vaqf lands because of the theocratic nature of the state. Some of the Safavid kings consecrated their private estates into vaqf.<sup>2</sup> Many of the individual landowners also transformed their private estate into vaqf and vested their administration in themselves.

In fact, in this period the institution of private landownership has existed side by side with other forms of landholdings, such as state lands, crown lands, religious,





endowments and the institution of land assignment. Concerning the legal foundations of private property, Islamic law recognized the sanctity of private property and the Shiite rules provided a highly complicated and well-developed body of religious regulations regarding the rights and obligation of ownership and property relations (Ashraf, 1971: 151).

During the Safavid era, landowners were strengthened in relation to the peasantry in exchange for enforcing the heavy tax burden on the peasantry (Helfgott, 1970:10). For instance, in crown land, if the Shah provided oxen and agricultural implements and remitted the servitudes the peasant's share fell to one-quarter, and if the Shah provided the labor also the share of the peasant did not exceed one-eighth (Lambton, 1953:127). This latter agreement was thus properly speaking not a sharecropping agreement at all, the one-eighth representing wages paid to the peasant for his labor. It was also in this period that the "five-factor" convention was innovated (Demin, 1971:222). According to this convention, the five part division of the harvest between the landlord and the peasant was based on one part for the land, irrigation, draught animals, seed, and workmen.

The collapse of the Safavids in the first quarter of the eighteenth century marked the beginning of an era in which feudalism obtained ascendancy over the Asiatic mode of production and became a dominant mode in Iran. The



already existing hereditary land ownership institutions were rapidly expanded and established a basis for the privatization of land independent of the government control. The bureaucrats and tribal leaders started assuming ownership of the lands previously assigned to them and considered the lands as their private property. In this period strong feudal relationships were established between the lords and peasants and as a result the autonomy of the village communities was reduced and peasant communities became dependent on the lords (Lambton, 1970:80).

This situation continued until the emergence of the Qajar dynasty at 1796 A.D. The major tendency of the Qajar rulers at the beginning "was for large areas of the country to be alienated in the form of tuyul and for the indirectly administered area to grow in compensation with the directly administered area" (Lambton, 1953:139). Since the tendency of tuyul holders was to usurp the assigned land, a large portion of the arable lands "was converted into de facto private property" (Ibid., p. 139). As a result, many of the office-holders and tribal khans who were merely tuyul holders became the owners of the assigned lands.

On the other hand, the policies of the Qajar rulers coupled with colonial penetration paved the way for the growth and predominance of private landownership (Ashraf, 1971: 151). Both the agrarian policies of the Qajar rulers and the impact of Western penetration in the 19th century, however, resulted in the establishment and rapid growth of private landownership in Iran.



As we have seen so far, rapid changes in the landowning hierarchy were not unusual. Financial and political crises had periodically forced the ruling groups to interfere with and reorganize the distribution of landownership and the system of land tenure with a view to increasing the state revenues through agricultural and land taxation. It has been indicated that the bankruptcy of the treasury, in the late 19th century, and the need for liquid capital to organize armed forces, compelled the Qajar rulers to confiscate and incorporate a portion of tuyuls for sale (Asharf, 1971:152). At the same time a great part of the khaliseh (state land) was being transferred to large landowners (Issawi, 1971:208) and, presumably, merchants with liquid funds managed to purchase some of these properties at bargain prices (Lambton, 1953:152). As a result, large landownership (Umdeh maleki or arbabi), as a dominant form of ownership, became a characteristic of the Iranian social formation after the eighteenth century.

It is indicated that in nineteenth century there has been some peasant proprietorship (Dehqani) in different parts of Iran but was nowhere widely spread (Lambton, 1953: 275). It occurred along and mixed with other types of tenure. The large landholders increasingly assumed control over the peasant holders, who gradually became a landless class. As Lambton explained, there was always the tendency for the peasant proprietor to lose land to merchants, speculators, and others after a bad year or series of bad years (Ibid., p.277).



The nineteenth century in Iran was a century of tremendous changes in land-ownership and tenure and consequently affected the relationship between landlord and peasant. Before the mid-nineteenth century, the peasants were apparently better off than they were subsequently (Keddie, 1972:366). The sale of crown land in the late nineteenth century resulted in more intensive exploitation of the peasants than had been traditional. In this period, Western impact worsened peasant conditions. Keddie has explained this very well:

Although the influence of the West was felt only indirectly by the peasants, through the actions of the wealthier classes, and although some of the features of their worsened position might have occurred even without a Western impact, the total picture of peasant conditions in this period cannot be separated from Western influence. (1960: 7).

As a result of this double effect--internal and external--traditional land rights of the peasants were abrogated, the majority of villages fell under landlord ownership, debt grew, and most peasants eventually became landless sharecroppers. The late nineteenth century saw the creation of that destitute peasantry which was associated with Iran in the half of twentieth century.

The main change that occurred in sharecropping in nineteenth century has been in the division of crops. This was affected by such important factors as the kind of land (irrigated or rain-fed), the crop grown, and so on. As a result the basic elements of production took on a somewhat





different meaning, and their specific gravity increased or diminished (Demin, 1971:222).

I should mention here that the form of land tenure based on labor rent never played an important part in the history of agricultural economy of Iran in general, and nineteenth century Iran in particular. Labor rent was usually a supplement to rent in kind or money rent, and did not directly affect the sphere of production of the main crops. Labor rent, although existing in such forms as the clearing of irrigation canals, the carrying of the harvest to the landowner's store, or work on public projects, was of minor importance, and never attained the general level of serf labor as found in Western Europe. These minor labor rents were directly related to the specific conditions of life of the Iranian village.

The first half of the twentieth century saw some changes in landownership and tenure. The Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1908 abolished the iqta system. However, the iqta system only affected the relations between landlords and not those among the peasant and lords--except for the degree of exploitation.

While the peasants, except when driven by undue extortion to migrate, continued to cultivate the soil to which they were often virtually attached, the position of the landowners, as distinct from that of the peasants, was more directly affected by the relative power of those to whom the grants of revenue and land were made. In some cases they were possibly expropriated or driven by poverty to sell their property... (Lambton, 1953:55).



In fact, the Constitutional Revolution helped the process of privatization of landownership in Iran. The abolishing of tuyul by the first Majles in 1907 established the tuyul holders as the private owners.

After the abolition of tuyul system by the Constitutional Revolution, Iranian society, once again, saw a major confiscation and redistribution of landed property on behalf of the large landownership. In the period of Reza Shah (1925-1941), the Shah's family, the state, the top bureaucrats and army generals, merchants and contractors, were among those who benefitted from the redistribution of landed property. The Shah confiscated the prosperous villages of the large landowners and tribal khans for his family and the state. As a result, "the new partimonial household emerged as the largest landowner in the country, possessing 2,167 rich villages" (Ashraf, 1971:177). Even in modern times, insecurity of tenure has continued to be an important influence, with relatively large land areas being forcibly moved from private hands into Crown Domain.

The Civil Code of 1928 codified and regulated the rules concerning the private property and thus strengthened the position of the landlords. As Keddie (1960:11) has indicated, "the Code recognized de facto possession as proof of ownership rights, and helped confirm acts of usurpation." The relations between landlords and tenant received but little attention in the Civil Code. Tenants were legally liable for keeping the harvest at a certain level and for carrying out the terms of a sharecropping



agreement, despite any obstacles. According to Lambton's study:

It will...be clear that very little attention is paid by the Civil Code...to the regulation of the relation of landlord and tenant. In general the scale are weighted in favor of the former, and little or no protection is afforded to the latter (1953:209).

Furthermore, the establishment of the registration office in 1932, regulated and established modern private land-ownership in Iran. In short, the codification of the civil law, and the legislation of Riza Shah, have somewhat modified the legal forms, but have done nothing to change the essential fact that Iranian agriculture was dominated by the great landed proprietor.

After the Constitutional Revolution the ownership of the land was basically divided into five categories:

(a) arbabi (private), (b) khaleseh (state-owned), (c) moquofeh (owned by religious establishment), (d) saltanati or khass (crown lands), and (e) Dehqani (peasant proprietorship).

Until about 1932 the khaleseh was rented to tribal leaders and local notables. In that year, however, a decision was made to distribute the khaleseh of Sistan province to peasants, on the ground that those who held the land had taken no steps to increase its productivity, and often refrained from paying the rent due to the government. Accordingly, the land was divided into shares of approximately 8 acres. Areas nominally consisting of 1 to 120 shares were transferred to peasants, tribal leaders, and others. This transfer did not, however, involve a change in ownership (Rudolph, 1971).



In short, the agricultural sector of the economy remained virtually unchanged--pre-capitalist in structure--under the rule of the Reza Shah. The feudal relations that had hardened during the late nineteenth century persisted. The vast majority of the peasant population of Iran was composed of sharecroppers or tenants, landless laborers, and a small minority of peasant proprietors.

To conclude this section, during the post Islamic era, the villages of Iran were always owned by different absentee proprietors as tuyuldar, large landowner (feudals), religious foundations, the state, and the royal family. This external class was imposed upon the village communities.

### 5.3. Irrigation

Water, as pointed out before, is one of the main limiting factors in Iranian agriculture. Like other parts of the Middle East, most of Iran suffers from a severe shortage of water. This shortage has necessitated the development of an elaborate system of irrigation. In general, there have been four types of water supply from wells, from qanats, from springs, and direct-flow channels derived from rivers. Some villages in Iran use more than one means of water supply.

Iranian irrigation always has been piecemeal and local because of the lack of large rivers in central Iran. Since the flow of water down many Iranian rivers tends to be





highly erratic and very seasonal, there has been little in Iran to compare with the vast hydraulic works of Egypt, Mesopotamia, or India. It is only in Khuzistan, watered by the Karun and Karkheh, that there was in ancient and Abbasid times a system of canals dependent upon large dams, which perished gradually in the disturbed times that followed the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries A.D. However, as Goblot points out, several minor works were undertaken at relatively early dates. Those he mentions include three Achaemenian gravity dams; three Sasanian dams with moveable gates--which he claims to be the oldest of their kind; and an arched masonry dam at Kebar, near Qam also apparently the oldest in the world, since it seems to have been built in the world, since it seems to have been built in the early Mongol period (Goblot, 1971:213).

Through the history of Iran, the distribution of river water was itself a source of conflict. In the case of a conflict over the usage of water, people were referred to Islamic law. By the shari'a or Islamic law water cannot be bought and sold; it is only the channel through which the water flows and the right to use it that can be sold. According to Islamic law rivers are divided to three categories. First are great rivers which are owned in common by all Muslims. Secondly, there are lesser rivers, subdivided again into (1) those the water of which is sufficient to be led off without dams to irrigate the land situated along the river banks, and from which canals to



irrigate other lands can only be led off if such action does not prejudice the position of the lands situated along the banks, (2) those in which barrages have to be made, in which case lands situated higher up the river have a prior right to those situated lower down. The amount of water which can be taken off depends upon circumstances, local needs, and custom. Thirdly, there are canals dug to bring water to dead lands. These belong to those who dug them. The water of a canal is divided (1) by rotation by days or hours, (2) by a dam or sluice dividing the water into the requisite number of shares, and (3) by an opening or outlet hold through which the water flows from the main channel into each plot of land (Iambton, 1953:210-11).

Springs had a minor role in history of irrigation in Iran. The amount of water they have supplied never seemed sufficient for agricultural irrigation. They have been used mostly for subsistence purposes. However, they have been subject of dispute too. According to Islamic law, springs are divided into (a) natural springs, in which case he who first uses the spring to reclaim land has a right of priority; (b) springs which have been bored by individuals, and which belong with their harim (borders) to them; and (c) springs bored in private property, which belong to the owners thereof (Ibid., P.227).

In the history of Iranian irrigation, wells make up another source of irrigation. They are found in widely disparate areas of the country. The construction of wells

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has varied slightly in different areas of Iran. The general principle, however, was, broadly speaking, the same, and in all cases primitive, laborious, and inefficient. The crude mechanisms which were used to raise water from wells usually consisted of skin buckets drawn up by a rope passing over a wooden roller, and emptied into a duct which fills an irrigation channel. The motive power was provided usually by oxen, singly or in team, one animal for each bucket; if the drive-way was protected by a penthouse they could work all day long.

To operate a well was very expensive for the amount of water it provided. However, under certain conditions it was possible for a peasant to own it. Since digging a well was not possible for everybody, from expenses point of view, therefore, there were different accesses to wells. Here, according to Islamic law, wells are divided into those made (a) for public use; (b) for private use, such as wells in pastures to which flocks and their owners have a right of priority as long as they are in the area; and (c) for private use as personal property (Iambton, 1953:227).

It was neither river nor well water which played the main part in irrigation of Iran; it was the extraction of underground water through the development of large irrigation network consisting of underground canals (qanat) which was the main source of irrigation. As Issawi indicated, Iran's most original contribution to hydraulics was the qanat, or kariz (1971:213).

Qanats, often known as Kariz are a special feature of Iran. They are widespread devices for obtaining water in Iran and adjoining areas. These tunnels tap ground water beneath the upper part of alluvial fans and close to the base of the mountains where run-offs recharge the gravel. The gradient of the qanat is just enough for water to flow, and since it is less than the slope of the ground, the tunnel with its flowing stream emerges on the surface downslope. The point where the qanat emerges at the surface is called the "mazhar-e qanat". From this point it continues as an open channel.

The construction of a qanat involves sinking a mother well upslope and then digging a small tunnel, perhaps one yard in diameter. To bring the excavated earth to the surface or to clean out accumulated sediment, successive shafts are dug every 100 yards. The mother well may be several hundred feet deep. Once dug, and occasionally cleaned, they supply water day and night for years (Cressey, 1963:572). The construction of a qanat needs specialists. The mugannis are qanat specialist, who usually belong to families in which knowledge of the craft is transmitted. Working parties normally comprise four men, two working below ground and two at the surface with a windlass. P. English writes:

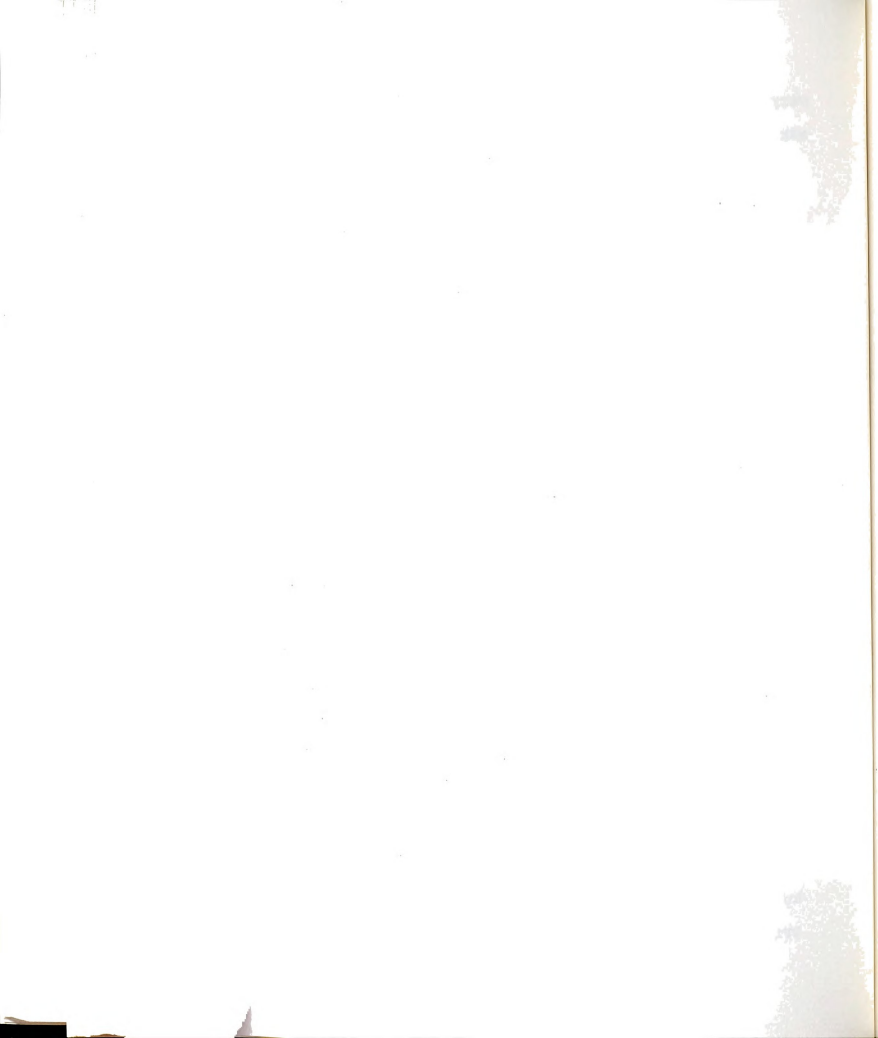
These men (mugannis) form a special artisan class. Digging qanats is a tiring and hazardous profession, and floods and cave-ins in the tunnels are frequent. As a result mugannis command high wages and are highly regarded in the community (1966: 136-37).



The cost of construction and maintenance of qanats were very heavy. They required great labor and large capital in making a new qanat and upkeeping the used one. Because of this heavy cost, the development of qanats and irrigation system was one of the most important economic tasks of the pre-Islamic governments in Iran. The construction and maintenance by the local or central government involved different method of labor utilization. In most of the projects the government utilized public labor (Lambton, 1953). In some cases the government required the peasants in each region to devote a fixed amount of their labor annually or seasonally to this matter. In other cases the captive labor was used in cleaning qanats. For instance, during the Sassanid period, a dam and some qanats were built mostly with the help of Roman prisoners of war (Adl, 1964:1561-4). Another method used by the pre-Islamic dynasties to expand qanats was to exempt from land tax those who cultivate through the construction of qanats (Wulff, 1966:245).

After the invasion of Islam, the qanats and major irrigation systems remained largely owned by the Shah and administered by the state (Petrushevsky, 1965, II:18). However, with the ascendancy of feudalism in Iran the right of ownership of the qanats became a complex matter since in many parts of the country landowners started to claim the ownership of the qanats in their lands. As a result, there appeared many cases in which qanats and surface canals on private lands were owned by the owners of those lands.

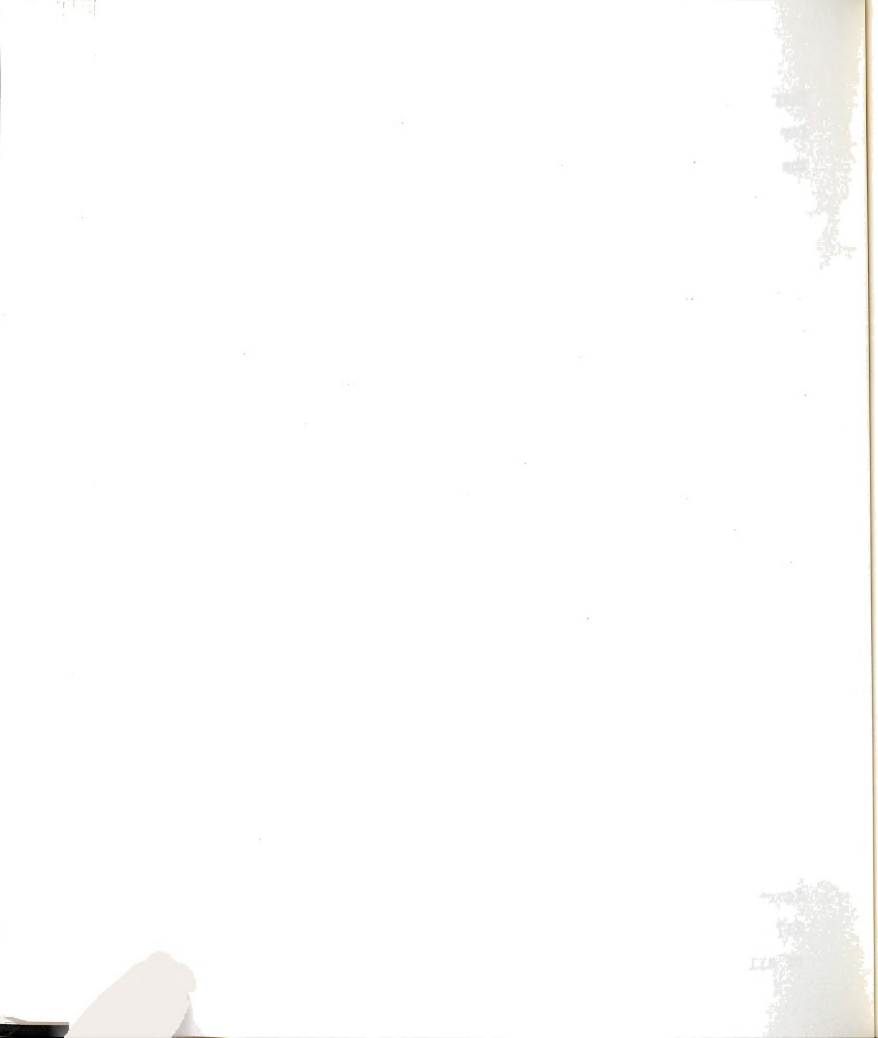




The landowners gradually started to own the qanats. They, and especially the bigger landlord had an organization for the maintenance of the canals and the distribution of the water. They had watchmen at the intakes, regular canal inspectors (zabet) and water distributors (abmal), all paid by him. If more than one landowner was sharing a single intake canal, the costs were born by all the owners in proportion to the acreage of their land and the water was divided accordingly at a point under the control of zabet (Nederlandsche, 1960). In short, for the most part the responsibility of work was undertaken mainly by the large landowners.

The landlords had no deeds or other written evidence as to his right to take water or as to the quantity thereof. His rights, based on century-old common law have never been established officially but nevertheless they existed beyond any doubt. Water-right were a form of private property and were exceedingly complicated. Usually the lease of water was based on varied combinations of spring, summer, and winter rights, and each plot of irrigated ground had a water-right attached to it. The ownership of single sources of water might be divided between different persons, thus complicating the problems of division, control, and reorganization.

It has been estimated that in the first half of the twentieth century there have been 40,000 qanats in Iran. A fourth of them were out of use or abandoned<sup>3</sup> (Goblott, 1971: 217,219). Qanats used to provide water for about 75 percent of all irrigated lands in Iran over one-third of all villages



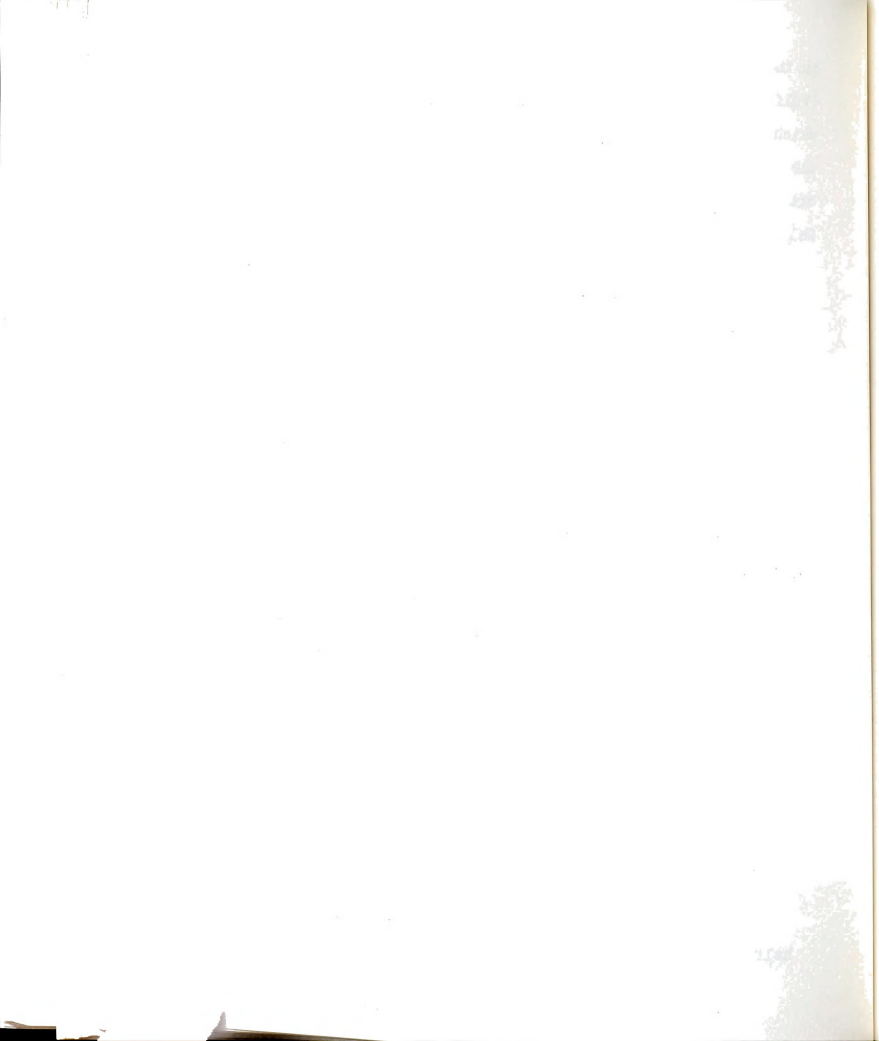
in the country depended upon qanats for their water supply (Wulff, 1968:94). Goblot has estimated that if those qanats which are being used were properly taken care of and those that are unproductive were restored the total flow could be tripled. Such a flow would be almost equal to that of the Nile in Cairo (1971:219).

To sum up this section, the irrigation system, like landownership, has a long and complicated history in the agriculture of Iran. Water was usually supplied in rotation to different owners or buyers. Its appropriation was based upon its accessibility. Common utilization of water in Iran, as well as inconsistencies between its supply and demand was the source of many conflicts among the villagers. The irrigation systems was one of the main controls used by the states and landlords to exploit the Iranian peasantry at different times.

#### 5.4. Agricultural Production

Changes in forms of agricultural production always have effects on the structure of rural society. Thus, to understand the changes that took place in the class structure of rural Iran it is necessary to have a picture of changes in the content of agricultural production. In this section, I am primarily concerned with the nature and extent of the expansion of commercial relations in Iran's rural areas.

The vast majority of historians and travelers have argued that until the rapid growth of commerce in the second half of the nineteenth century most villages in Iran



remained virtually self-contained, practically self-sufficient, economically autonomous, and predominantly self-governing. Many of them were on the whole isolated and economically self-contained, producing and consuming much of their own handi-craft as well as agricultural goods.

As Lambton argued:

From early Islamic time the villages in general appear to have enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy and to have been organized as self-contained and virtually self-governing communities....The Muslim village communities also throughout the pre-Mongol period enjoyed autonomy to a considerable degree (1970:79).

Some of the villages, however, enjoyed a higher degree of self-sufficiency than the others.

This self-sufficiency is defined in terms of the production of subsistence and of consumption. In a non-market economy, in its pure form, economic organization, the social division of labor and the exchange of products and services are based upon custom and/or command by a central authority. Historically, such systems exhibited several salient common peculiarities: for example, production was for use, irrespective of whether or not each producer was the ultimate consumer of the product, and economic surplus was extracted directly either in the form of goods or various types of labor services. In the absence of cheap transportation and communication, regional specialization was limited, and in general a close correspondence existed between each region's production and its consumption. This was the basic structural characteristic of rural pre-capitalist Iran.



The pre-capitalist rural population of Iran was predominantly devoted to subsistence agriculture. Although through history a considerable variety of crops were grown in Iran, Iranian agriculture before the mid-nineteenth century was properly based on four subsistence crops: wheat, barley, rice, and dates. This subsistence agriculture practiced in Iran produced a surplus which was used to support non-agricultural sectors of the population such as the ruling nobility, the warriors, the artisans, and so on.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the extraction of surplus from the rural areas was in kind. Ground rent was therefore the essential form of surplus-product. It was produced by agricultural producers who, in practice, disposed of their own means of production and possessed at least a customary right to the land, in exchange for which they surrendered part of their production (rent in kind) to the property-owning classes. This division of the peasant's product into necessary product and surplus-product (ground rent) took place outside the market, in the sphere of the production of use-values. As Abrahamian has indicated, the landlord or government official transferred the surplus physically to urban areas where it entered commercial exchange. Consequently the villagers themselves were not directly engaged in the money economy or in commodity exchange with the outside world; within the village the division of labor and exchange supposedly was not based upon





monetary transactions (Abrahamian, 1974:14).

In short, these isolated and self-sufficient village communities did not break out of their isolation until the second half of the nineteenth century when Iran underwent a transformation in her agricultural production, i.e., commercialization. At this time, the international market demanded more Iranian agricultural products. This meant a change of agricultural production from subsistence crops to export crops which in fact means a transition from subsistence production to cash-crop production (Nowshirvani, 1975: 45).

In fact the impetus for the commercialization of agriculture came from without rather than from internal development.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, Iranian agriculture involved different commercial crops such as opium, cotton, tobacco, rice, and silk. The opium poppy has been cultivated in Iran from the end of the eleventh or twelfth centuries, but both production and consumption were small until the middle of the nineteenth century (Issawi, 1971:238). The Chinese market for Iranian opium caused the increase in production. In that century, forty percent of the products were for internal consumption, and the rest of that six hundred tons yearly were exported to other countries, mainly China (Sodagar, 1978:224). The cultivation of opium had two immediate benefits for Iranian agriculture. First, it was cultivated during fall and harvested during spring, consequently, the cultivators were able to use the land for summer crops. Secondly, with regard to the shortage of water

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in Iran, in the seasons of opium cultivation there was plenty of water.

Next to opium, cotton was the principal commercial crop in Iran. Since its introduction, probably in Achaemenid times, cotton has been growing in many parts of Iran. Until the nineteenth century, its consumption was mostly internal. During the nineteenth century it became attractive in the world market. The most important importers of Iranian cotton were India and Russia. During the American Civil War and its aftermath, that export of American cotton to Europe was reduced, and cotton exports from Iran increased significantly. Latter the export declined (Issawi, 1971:245).

Both the smoking and planting of tobacco came to Iran from Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Ibid., p. 247). By the beginning of the nineteenth century tobacco was grown in many parts of Iran and had become one of the leading export items. Tea for the first time was introduced to Iran in 1895. It was (and still is) cultivated in the north province of Gilan. Production has always been insufficient for internal consumption. Therefore, for the first time Iran started to import some agricultural products like tea and sugar. Finally, rice used to be one of the subsistence crops in Iranian agriculture. Until 1880 most of the rice production was for internal consumption. After this time the export of this crop to Russia was tremendously increased (Sodagar, 1978:227).

The production of the above-mentioned cash-crops



increased somehow in relation to a decrease in silk production in addition to international demand. Silk is one of the ancient Iranian products, but in 1864 silkworms were attacked by a disease, and production decreased alarmingly. However, starting in the 1890s, silkworm eggs were imported from Bursa in Turkey by foreigners--Greeks, Armenians, and others--or by Iranian who in turn often borrowed from such foreigners (Abdullaev quoted in Issawi, 1971:209). This meant that the farmer had to purchase such eggs on credit.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the rural sector was increasingly drawn, through a system of commercial relations, into the wider regional and national markets, and, ultimately, into the international economy. In fact, most of the Iranian feudal lords forced their peasants to produce agricultural products for the market. In addition to this, the penetration of the market economy in rural sectors brought about the two fold process in handicraft. Either European manufactured goods displaced local handicraft production or, in areas that demanded a high level of labor intensity, capitalist firms took advantage of the unequal value of labor-power between East and West and encouraged the development of these crafts. For example, by the end to the nineteenth century, British and German firms gained control over large sectors of the carpet weaving craft and forced its restructuring to meet externally imposed market demands. In craft production as in agriculture,

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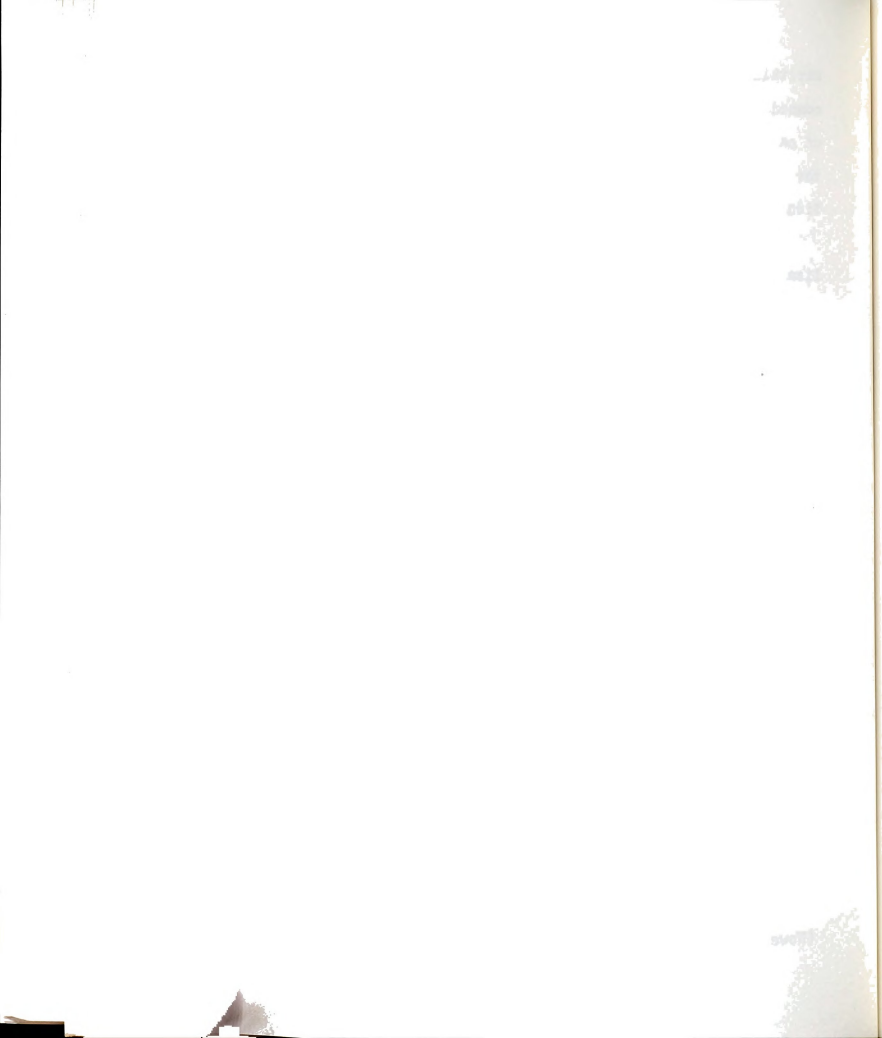
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capitalism integrated some of them into the international commodity exchange system (Helfgott, 1976). The penetration of capitalism into Iran brought about the destruction of the self-sufficient village economy, based on the combination of crafts with agriculture.

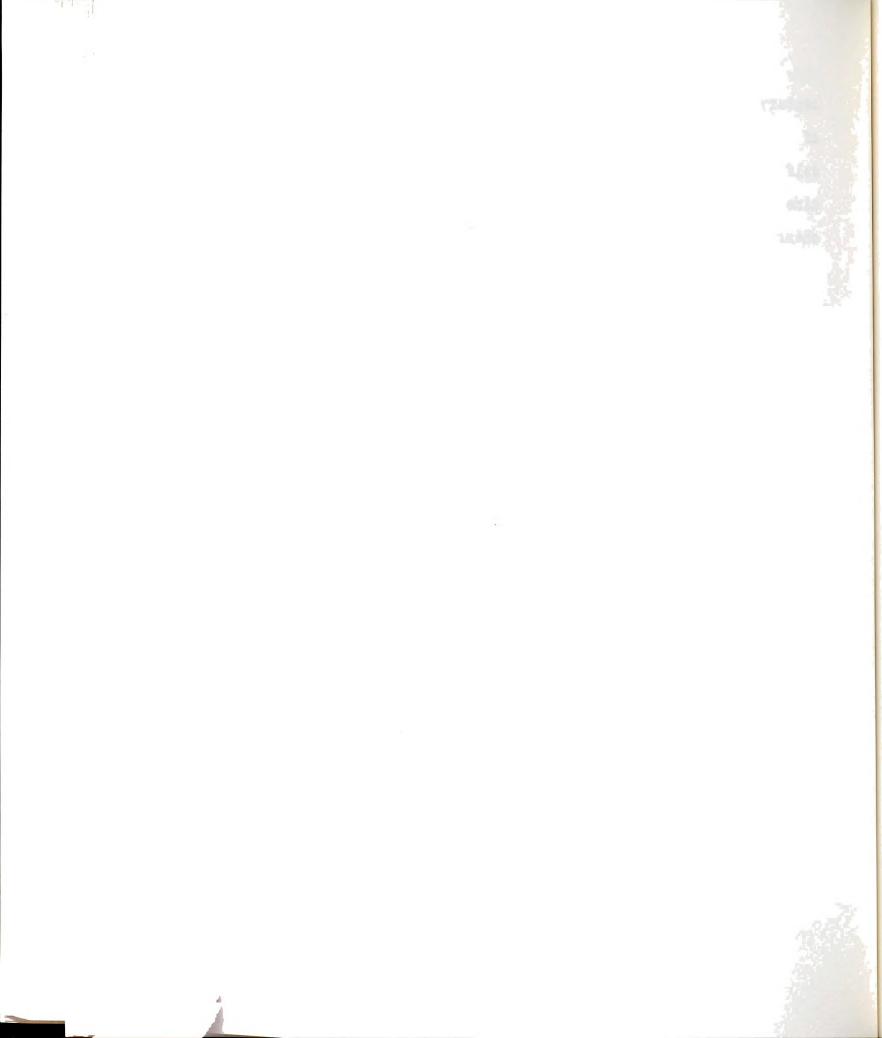
The Western impact favored the increased commercialization of agriculture and the growth of investment in land by the merchant class and a more thorough exploitation of land and peasants than had been traditional in Iran. "Foreign demand for certain crops turned part of Iran into areas of specialized raw material production, dependent on the foreign market" (Keddie, 1960:6). As a result, the peasantry was subjugated to market pressures that hardly existed before the nineteenth century. Subjugation to market forces was reflected not only in long-term rise or decline of various crops but also in shorter term shifts between crops.

In many villages, there were shops which catered to the needs of the people and permanent traders acted as buying agents for city merchants. In the more thickly populated Caspian region, regular weekly markets were held where peasants could sell their produce and purchase consumer goods, while in other regions, itinerant merchants (Pilevars) took such products as tea, sugar and cloth to villages. Some of these sales were for cash, but part of the trading appears to have been barter where no money changed hands (Nowshirvani, 1975).





To sum up, Iranian peasantry before the nineteenth century was involved in subsistence farming. A combination of agriculture and handicraft in the countryside established self-sufficient communities. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Iranian villages went through certain changes. On the one hand, introduction of cash-crops for export turned subsistence agriculture into commercialized agriculture. On the other hand, the expansion of market exchange into rural areas changed the character of rural handicrafts. As a result, the cropping pattern of the nation became regionally specialized; and handicrafts related to articles of mass consumption disappeared, while those related to luxury goods, notably carpets, were actually in greater demand than before. Consequently, in the twentieth century, the former self-sufficient Iranian villages became mostly dependent on towns and cities.



## 5.5. Endnotes

1. For a comprehensive discussion of landholding during Mongol era see Petrushevsky's Keshavarzi va Monasebat-e Arzi dar Iran-e Ahd-e Mongol (Agriculture and Agrarian Relationships During the Mongol Period in Iran), Translated from Russian to Farsi by Karim Keshavarz, 2 vol., Tehran: Nil Publication, 1965.
2. According to Lambton, in 1607 Shah Abbas I consecrated all private estates and personal property into vaqf (1953:112).
3. It has been indicated that during the First World War, Iran was used as a battlefield by the Turks, Germans, British, and Russians. Peasants were taken from the fields and forced to work on military roads and other war projects. As a consequence, irrigation works, which required careful upkeep, were destroyed in many areas (Keddie, 1972:370).
4. For an excellent discussion on commercialization of agriculture see Nowshirvani's article, "The Beginnings Commercial Agriculture in Iran," Center Discussion Paper No. 225, Economic Growth Center of Yale University, Connecticut, New Haven.



PART III  
RURAL SOCIETY PRIOR TO THE 1962 LAND REFORM

INTRODUCTION: Modes of Production and Rural Classes

In order to analyze the rural class structure within the frame of 'modes of production', one needs to survey four inter-related levels: 1) pattern of landownership; 2) forms of production and division of products; 3) the predominant division of labor; and 4) level of the productive forces.

The pattern of landownership in the agrarian society of Iran played an essential role in the process of agricultural production. Its role in agriculture, and the economic and legal complications surrounding it, largely determined the social organization of Iranian agricultural production. Understanding this pattern of landownership is essential to the understanding of the rural class structure, its relationship to the forms of production and division of products.

In the process of production, the Iranian peasant and the landlord entered into definite relations with each other. It was these relations and their interconnection which represented the major condition for the functioning and development of production. This of course depended on who owned what means of production, and how products were divided. As a consequence, it is essential to recognize

the different systems of production; as well as the division of the crops in a pre-land reform era. This will give us a clearer picture of the classes in rural Iran.

The processes of production and division of the products cannot be understood unless the technical organization of labor, the location of the villagers in the course of production and the division of functions between them are specified.

In the pre-land reform period, the rural labor forces were organized within different traditional organizations of labor. These organizations of production were a reflection of the nature of class relations at the village level, and of a community's productive forces.

The productive forces of the Iranian villagers expressed their relations to nature. It was the level of their development which showed the degree to which nature was subjugated to the interest of society, i.e., the extent to which villager dominated over its elements.

The productive force of the villagers depended on: (1) the villagers who participated in the production; (2) the available material resources; (3) the means of labor that they used; (4) the experience in using these means, and (5) the villager's skill. It is important to show how much influence productive forces had in a state of change and development.

It is based on the above mentioned four-level of analysis that the nature of the class relations in rural

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Iran will be determined. At the end of this part, I try to abstract the relationships between the rural classes. This will prepare us for a better understanding of the implementation of the land reform. In order to understand the nature of the land reform, one should recognize the nature of the different classes in the rural areas. This is necessary in order to grasp the qualitative as well as quantitative features of the classes.

## CHAPTER SIX

### PATTERN OF LANDOWNERSHIP

#### 6.1. Introduction

The subject of landownership is a very complicated and difficult one. Since this aspect of rural life plays a very vital role in both the formation and evolution of rural social classes, I will try to deal with it as comprehensively as possible. The ownership of land defines the legalized form of relation between man and other means of production. Although these legal forms are the result of these relations, the forms have a great effect on the development and changes the relations between man and the other production factors. These legal forms can play a conservative role and hinder the development of productive forces or play a progressive role and facilitate their expansion and development.

The most important feature of landownership in Iran before the land reform was the large-scale proprietorship of whole villages. The common unit of landownership was "the village" (deh)--an imprecise concept since villages vary considerably in area and population, figures which vary from " ...ten families in the small clusters of houses in the mountain valleys...to over 400 families in large villages on the plain" (Beckett, 1957:100). Traditionally the village could be divided into six arbitrary

parts, or shares (each part is called a dang) as it was physically indivisible, and ownership was called shish dang (ownership of six parts).<sup>1</sup> The predominant pattern of large-scale ownership was a mixture of public and private feudal land.

In fact the general pattern of landownership in Iran prior to the land reform was a combination of large-scale feudal landownership with small-scale absentee and peasant proprietorship. The majority of 39,295 villages spread throughout Iran were characterized by village ownership which involved four kinds of properties: 1) Khaleseh (state-owned) lands; (2) Saltanati (crown-owned) lands; (3) Vaqf (religious endowment) lands; and (4) Arbabi (private ownership). Alongside these feudal holdings there was peasant and absentee small ownership of a plot of village and called khurdeh maliki.<sup>2</sup> The overall position of landownership in the country before implementation of the 1962 land reform is illustrated in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: The actual structure and pattern of landownership in the period before the 1962 land reform.

No.	Type of ownership	number of villages	per cent
1	<u>Khaleseh</u>	1,444	4
2	<u>Saltanati</u>	812	2
3	<u>Vaqf</u>	713	2
4	<u>Arbabi</u>	13,569	34
5	<u>Khurdeh maliki</u>	16,522	42
6	Mixed-ownership	6,005	15
7	unknown-ownership	230	1
	Total	39,295	100

Source: 1959 Population Census, table 2, vol. 1 to 119 Ministry of Interior.

Two points should be mentioned in relation to Table 6.1. First, by Mixed-ownership here it means those village which were partly owned by state, crown, vaqf and so on. Secondly, there were some villages for which their ownership status was not clarified by the census.

The rest of this chapter is a detailed description of the five categories of landownership in Iran: Khaleseh, Saltanati, Vaqf, Arbabi, and Khurdeh maliki. Since the distribution of these villages over the country was uneven, it is important to show how they were scattered in the country by the provinces. Table 6.2 indicates the exact location of different ownerships.

Before we start to go into detail, it is important to

Table 6.2: Distribution of villages ownership in Provinces before the 1962 land reform.

Provinces	Rural population	Total Number of villages	Khaleseh villages	Saltanati villages	Vaqf villages	Arbabi villages	Khurdeh maliki	Mixed ownership	Unknown ownership
Mazand	1,090,869	2,980	35	1	66	1,045	1,409	423	12
Gilan	1,319,025	2,717	-	20	58	1,297	757	463	12
Mazandaran	1,131,999	3,378	84	443	37	1,130	1,257	416	11
E. Azerbaijan	1,587,620	4,369	19	81	22	2,495	1,045	704	3
W. Azerbaijan	570,150	2,334	262	-	19	1,282	604	128	39
Kermanshah	862,912	3,011	125	168	33	1,473	529	613	-
Khuzestan	1,086,306	3,840	718	-	87	1,372	1,264	399	-
Fars	868,874	2,645	106	-	78	870	1,139	416	54
Kerman	398,415	3,139	-	-	34	384	2,146	575	-
Chorasan	1,635,150	5,448	9	61	262	938	2,828	1,350	-
Isfahan	151,738	1,098	-	-	3	93	967	35	-
Sistan	340,785	1,723	70	-	-	134	1,131	290	98
Kurdistan	449,142	1,711	12	-	12	914	625	136	12
Persian Gulf Coast	42,436	55	-	-	-	18	37	-	-
Char-mahal	347,283	938	4	18	2	73	784	57	-
TOTAL	11,887,717	39,406	1,644	812	713	13,569	16,522	6,005	120

Source: Extracted from 1956 Population Census, vol. 1 to 119, Ministry of Interior.

mention here that in almost all cases of khaleseh, saltanati, vaqf, and arbabi ownership the owner of the land also owned the irrigation network. In fact landownership in Iran was meaningful only if ownership also extended to the water supply.

## 6.2. Khaleseh (State-owned) Lands

Before the land reform, the government was the largest single landowner. Four per cent of Iran's villages were owned by the government (total 1,444 villages). In addition, the government technically owns the unclaimed land of the country, most of it desert and arid mountain areas.

Most of the khaleseh villages were in the provinces of Khuzestan-Ilorestan, 718; west Azarbayjan, 262; Kermanshah, 125; Fars, 106; Sistan-Baloochestan, 70; Mazandaran-Gorgan, 84 (1956 Population Census: table 2). Going by districts, those with 50 or more public domain (khaleseh) villages were Ahvaz, 431, Shadegan, 167, and Dezful, 64 in Khuzestan; Zabol, 167, in Sistan; Urmeyeh, 67, in West Azarbayjan, Ghasre Shirin, 140, in Kermanshahan; and Bojnood, 81, in Khorasan. Thus 7 (out of 119) districts accounted for 58 per cent of the public domains (Ibid). It can be seen that the distribution of the state villages between the provinces was quite uneven. It was all the more uneven between districts.

Traditional landownership in Khuzestan Province was unusual in that the majority of the villages were Khaleseh. The khaleseh lands were mostly in Southern Khuzestan and in

the Dezful area. The State owned two groups of villages: Chogha Mish and its immediate neighbors, and a number of villages in Sar Dasht sub-district, to the north of Dezful town, as well as about 3,600 hectares of the 212,660 hectares of agricultural land in Shushtar and about 75 per cent of the 4,000 hectares of agricultural land in the rural districts of Masjed-e Suliman in the north of the Province (Nezam-Mafi, 1961: 81-6).

After the abdication of Reza Shah (1941) a special institute was set up for exploitation of khaleseh. As a consequence, all khaleseh was placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Agriculture. Since then, Khaleseh were administered in two principal ways. Either the proceeds of the land were leased for a period of three to five years, or the right to harvest the crop was sold each year after its value was determined. The leasee might either sublease it or directly supervise its cultivation (Rudolph, 1971:28). The practice of putting up villages for a short-term lease led to bad farming and an attempt by the leasee to extract the maximum from the land without regard to its future productivity. In so far as administration was concerned and the relations between the peasant and leasee, there was little difference between khaleseh land and other types of large-scale landownership. The conditions and terms of the lease for khaleseh in different provinces varied considerably.

The tendency was for khaleseh to be in a state of decay and to make little or no contribution to public finance



(Lambton, 1953:239). For this reason it became official policy to decrease the amount of khaleseh by sale. The policy of selling khaleseh to private individuals was dictated mainly by a desire to improve the state of cultivation of the country and thereby to increase the revenue. In 1944 a Public Domains Office had added to the Ministry of Finance in order to oversee, among other tasks the transfer of the khaleseh to the peasants (Denman, 1978:260). Attempts to do so started from Sistan province.

The policy and its implementation in Sistan always created the disputes between leasee and state, peasants and state, or between officials of the state. In the case of leasee, a commission to Sistan reported that:

The first was the case of Muhammad Amin Narui, who complained that land which had been in his possession for several years and which he was cultivating was taken away from him and sold to Arbab Mihdi, a merchant dwelling in Tehran (Lambton, 1953:247).

In the case of unsatisfied peasants, another commission to Sistan reported that there are peasants

... who complained that (1) they had not received any land, (2) the share allocated to them was less than the regulation, (3) their shares had been allocated to some one else, (4) others had usurped their shares, (5) the limits of the shares allotted to them were not defined, and (6) the land allotted to them was not capable of cultivation (Ibid, p.249).

Finally, the policy created some discountenances among the officials, and a commission reported that



...the average surplus of wheat and barley before the division of the khaleseh was 11,600 tons; while after the division it fell to 2,045 tons.

The commission proposed that

The existing system should be abolished, and the lands sold by auction so that the land should be in the hands of large landowners or leasees from whom the government should demand the maximum possible surplus (Ibid, p.250).

Despite these discontents, the government continued the wholesale distribution of the khaleseh. This distribution of the khaleseh villages eventually was caught up in the national land reform.

In the process of distribution of khaleseh, some of the lands were sold to government officials at ridiculously low prices (Keddie, 1960:20). Some others, especially in Kordistan, where there were formerly considerable areas of khaleseh, were usurped by neighboring landowners (Lambton, 1953:256). The conditions in Khuzestan were different. The regulations of the law of 1947 provided for the transfer of land to individuals or companies who were prepared to irrigate the land by means of pumps (Ibid., p.254). Demands for khaleseh were filed mainly by landowners, merchants, and others of the wealthy classes. Some local peasants were given one hectare each with a title-deed. The landowners, merchants, and bureaucrats received at least 20 hectares each (Ibid., p. 255). In some cases, however, the land given to the peasants was above flood level and therefore valueless. In this way a labor force for the landowners' allotments was obtained.

To sum up, the number of state-owned villages varied throughout the post-war period, but the general trend was for their sale. The majority were located in Khuzestan province, but there were also notable concentrations in the southeast and in the northwest. These villages were among the poor villages of Iran since they were super-exploited by the leasees. The conditions of the peasants in these villages, if they were not worse than peasants in other villages, were not better since they were under the more or less same relations of production.

### 6.3. Saltanati (Crown-owned) Lands

The Crown lands were the property of Reza Shah. These lands were acquired legally or illegally, taken by usurpation or bought under pressure at exceptionally low prices. Over the sixteen years of his reign from 1925 to 1941, he had become the owner of 2,167 villages (Echo of Iran, 1959). He tried to monopolize the finest land of the country for himself. As a consequence, he became the largest landowner in the country.

Although scattered over the country, for the most part the Crown land villages were concentrated in three main areas: to the west of Kermanshah in west of the country; along the Caspian sea in north of Iran from Babol westward to Rasht and south beyond Tehran; and in the far northeast from Gorgan to Bojnurd. Pockets of villages were also located south of Mashhad at Fariman and at Jiroft in the far South (see Figure 6.1). Going by the provinces, Mazandran

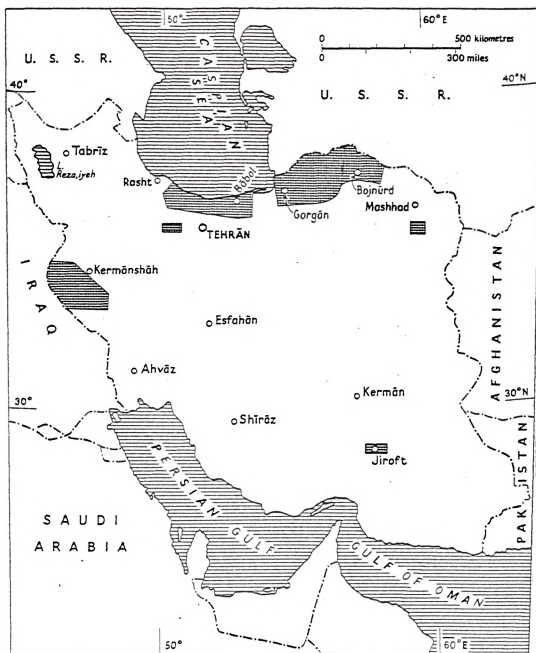


Figure 6.1: Location of Pahlavi Crown lands.

and Gorgan were contained 54 per cent of the Crown villages; next to Mazandran was Markazi with 20 per cent; Kerman-shahan was hold 16 per cent; Kerman was embraced almost 9 per cent; and finally Khorasan included only one per cent of the saltanati lands (see table. 6.3) (Ibid.).

Table 6.3: The location and number of the saltanati villages at 1941.

Province	#of villages	per cent	# of household
Mazandran-Gorgan	1,174	54	32878
Markazi	428	20	4424
Kerman-Shahan	355	16	6365
Kerman	191	9	4250
Khorasan	19	1	1200
Total	2,167	100.	49117

Sourc: Echo of Iran, No. 25-26, 1959.

Since the abdication of Reza Shah there were certain changes in the extent and status of Saltanati estates. In September 1941 his lands were transferred to his son Mohammad Reza Shah, who shortly thereafter ceded them to the state. In accepting these lands the Majlis passed a law providing for (a) the placing of the ceded properties under the supervision and management of the Bureau of Public Domain in the Ministry of Finance; and (b) the examination of claims of ownership of ceded lands (Hadary, 1951:186).

Many of the original owners of the land challenged the State's right to control their property, which they



asserted had been usurped illegally by Reza Shah. Boards of Investigation and Settlement of Claims on Ceded Properties were established in the Ministry of Justice on 2nd June 1942. Those saltanati lands which were taken by usurpation or bought from its former owners for a price less than 10,000 rials (\$ 143)<sup>3</sup> by the Reza Shah were returned to the former owners. Lands which were bought from former owners for a price of over 10,000 rials (\$143); and lands which were exchanged for estates elsewhere were referred to the courts. In most cases the decisions were given in favor of the crown (Lambton, 1953:257). However, by the time the Boards were abolished in 1947, the bulk of the ceded property still remained in the hands of the Ministry of Finance because of the denial of the original owner's claims. On July 11, 1949 the Majlis retroceded the royal domain to the Shah for the "endowment of the Pahlavi family" (Hadary, 1951:186).

Crown estates were administered by the personal bureau of the ruler, called Edareh-e Amlak, which handled them in various ways such as managing them directly by the Shah and his brothers and sisters, leasing them out, assigning them as rewards for service to the Shah, or sometimes allowing them to be idle and grow up in weeds.

In 1950 the Shah decided to sell the crown lands. There was an economic motive behind the sale: to convert the value of his lands into hard currency and start to invest it in bourgeois activities (GOPF, 1976:23-24). From 1950 to 1956 61 Crown villages were sold to 8,725

peasant families, mostly share-croppers (Denman, 1973:67-68). According to the 1956 Population Census, at that time the total number of Crown villages was 812, almost 2 per cent of the country's villages (see table 6.1 in this chapter). During the years between 1956 to 1961 an addition of 456 more villages were distributed.<sup>4</sup> In 1963 a further 289 villages were sold to the residents (McLachlan, 1968:692). If we subtract the total amount of villages distributed between 1956 to 1963 from the official number of the villages at 1956 (812 villages), there must be almost 67 villages reserved for the members of the royal families.

The common traditional relations of production dominated in the Crown lands. However, in some areas and based on growing some particular crops, the Crown lands were among the first using machinery and wage laborers. This was mostly practiced in Gorgan and Dasht regions. Unlike the khaleseh lands, the Saltanati lands were very beneficial. According to a report of the Pahlavi Endowment Properties Committee, the gross income in 1949-50 from its farms was 737 million rials (approximately \$10 million), and the net income was 550 million rials (\$8 million); the share of the tenant farmers cultivating the crop was 157 million rials (\$2 million) (quoted in Hadary 1951:186).

In short, the last monarch of Iran became the second most important owner of land in Iran. He owned some of the best villages in the country. The relations of production in these lands were predominantly the traditional Iranian

relation between landlord and peasant. The positions of the peasants were like other peasants in other types of lands (e.g., khaleseh and arbabi). The incomes drawn from these lands were high since the villages were among the finest villages of the country. Since 1941 the ownership of the villages became under the challenge of the real owners. As a consequence the majority of the villages reverted to the original owners. The rest were sold out to the peasants for economic reasons, but there was speculation of some of the villages on the hands of the Pahlavi families and high officials which were exempted from the national land reform and became mostly mechanized lands.

#### 6.4. Vaqf (Religious endowment) Lands

Vaqf properties were those lands which had been endowed in perpetuity according to provision of Shi'i Islamic law for charitable or religious purposes. These lands, in existence since early Islamic times, were held in trust either for groups of persons or for religious and educational purposes. There were two kinds of vaqf lands: (1) those constituted in the general interest, i.e., charitable vaqf, and (2) those constituted for private purpose, i.e., personal vaqf, as, for example, property placed in trust for the granter's descendants. The former contained the majority of the vaqf lands, while the area occupied by the latter was probably not large.

While vaqf lands have been connected rather closely with the clergy, command over them actually has been an



issue between the state and their religious institutions during the period before the land reform. The Endowment office (Edareh-i ouqaf) within the Ministry of Education was responsible for the appointment of vaqf administrators and the allocation of vaqf income. In the case of personal vaqf, the donor would normally vest the office of administrator (mutavalli) in himself and his descendants after him, and in this way his family would preserve their estates and live on the revenue therefrom. Usually, the office of mutavalli of personal vaqf was vested in the eldest and most learned survivor. Although in theory the government exercised supervision over personal vaqf, in practice the supervision was of the most perfunctory kind, except in the case of sale, when its sanction was required (Lambton, 1953: 233, 236). The administration of this type of vaqf differed little, if at all, from that of an ordinary landed estate. All personal vaqf lands which had no administrator were placed under the Endowment office, though the office was at liberty to leave the vaqf in the hands of whoever was its overseer at the time.

In the case of charitable vaqf lands, the administration was also centralized under the Endowment Office. However, the extent of the control was dependent on the relative power of the clergy vis-à-vis the rest of the ruling class. In these cases, the disputes were a source of conflict. It was laid down that the Endowment Office was to receive a fee of 10 per cent of the net income of a vaqf for its administration unless special terms for

administration were laid down in the deed of settlement. In the event of supervision alone being exercised, the remuneration of the Endowment Office was to be 5 per cent. An exception was made in the case of vaqfs constituted for the benefit of schools and hospitals, in which case the Endowment Office was to tax 2 per cent for supervision and 3 per cent for administration (Ibid., p.233).

Vaqf land was sometimes worked directly by the beneficiary of the grant, but it was usually leased, sometimes to the administrator, sometimes to a third party. The subletting of vaqf property was not uncommon. In the case that the administrator himself was the person who rented the property, he paid a fixed sum to the foundation and kept for himself the remainder of the profit from the land.

The purpose for which charitable vaqfs were constituted ranged from the upkeep of shrines and religious schools, to the support of descendants of the prophet Muhammad, and others of the religious strata. In order to make these purposes more conceivable, the following example from Salmanzadeh's field reserach in Dezful area of Khuzestan province would be helpful. He had explained that five villages were publicly endowed. "The purpose of endowment varied; Bialtian Raffat was endowed to benefit the locat theological school, Zavieh Mashali was endowed for the Javad ul-Aameh Hospital in Mashad. [The rest] benefited mosques in Andimeshk and the shrine of the prophet Daniel in Shush" (1980:59).

As in other sectors of Iranian agriculture, there were no long-term improvements of the property and many of the lands were misused. As Lambton has indicated:

Where vaqf land was let on a short-term lease, the leasee had no permanent interest in the land and no security of tenure. The result was that long-term improvements were not under taken and the land tended to fall into decay (1953:234).

As a consequence, although lands were worked, like private land, by sharecroppers or tenants according to customary rates, the mutavallis (administrators) usually did not care about villagers' conditions as much as did large landowners.

Considerable areas of the country were vaqf lands. There were 6,389 villages, 9 per cent of the total, which belonged to endowment (713 villages totally and the rest partially). About 1,935 endowed villages, or a little less than one third of the total, were located in Khorasan. Mazandaran and Gorgan with 857 endowed villages came next, after which came Kerman with 652 villages, Isfahan and Yazd with 618 villages, and the Markazi Province with 576 villages. The rest were scattered all over the country (1956 Population Census).

Districts with 150 or more endowed villages were Birjand, 541, Sabzevar, 222, and Mashhad, 343, in Khorasan; Yazd, 327, in Yazd; Kazeroon, 239, in Fars; Amol 204, in Mazandaran; and Tehran, 150, in the Markazi Province (Ibid). The distribution of vaqf villages between the provinces was quite uneven. It was all the more uneven between districts.

Like public domain, another 7 districts accounted for 30 per cent of the endowed villages.

The most important groups, both with regard to extent and income, were the vaqf belonging to the shrine of the Imam Reza in Mashhad. The shrine was one of the largest landowners of Khorasan Province. Of the 6,389 villages entirely devoted to vaqf, some 466 were dedicated to the shrine, with 430 of these actually located in Khorasan province (McLachlan, 1968:688). The properties which constituted these vaqfs were exempted from taxation, on the grounds that the income of the Imam is not taxable, but ten per cent of the revenues of the vaqf went to the administration.

To sum up, the historical role of the vaqf lands was being a supportive source for the Islamic clergies and religious institutions (Petrushevsky, 1965:466). Some of the vaqf lands were for personal purpose, but they did not contain too many of the villages. Vaqf land was usually run by an administrator. The lands were mainly under lease for short-term. Being under short-term lease often caused misuse of the land and pressure on the peasants. These lands were among the poorest lands of the country, since on the one hand the lessee did not care about the long-run improvement, and on the other hand, the peasant felt alienation in relation to the landholder and therefore did not have any incentive to improve the condition of the land and cultivation.

#### 6.5. Arbabi (private ownership of village)

Arbabi was a private ownership of a village (deh). In this category, the owner(s) (arbab or malik) of an entire village regarded his holding as an operating unit, to be bought or sold as such. The deh, therefore, was not merely a plot of land covering a certain area but was also a unit of ownership which brought a constant amount of rent yearly in kind or in cash. As Ono indicated, "...the Iranian deh belongs to the 'personal privileges' of the malik" (1967:151).

Landownership in irrigated areas was always accompanied by water rights. If the source of water was a qanat, he owned the qanat; if the village was irrigated by a river, he owned the water rights. In addition to land and water, the owner usually owned the forest, pasture, range, and so on. In short, arbab was the legal owner of the village as an entity, and he had juridical and financial control over the villagers. As Ono has pointed out, when a transaction was involving an entire deh or a part of it was concluded, not only the lands changed hands but the peasants who have tenanted the specific lands would also be brought under the control of the new arbab (1967:453). Arbab was not the owner of the peasant (raiya) in the sense of European feudalism, but the raiyas were attached to the deh through cultural customs and a debtness to the arbab. The villagers, however, might and did move from one village to another or to the towns.

This category of landownership was itself distinguishable into two sub-categories, namely shesh dangi and dangi. Shesh dangi ownership meant that the entire village belonged to one landlord. Technically the residential plot and the houses there on, especially in the small villages, also belonged to the arbab, but in practice it was possible for the peasant occupier to sell and buy houses. Dangi meant that a village (again as an entity) belonged to two to six owners, and each of them owned a dang ( $1/6$  of the village) to five dangs ( $5/6$  of the village).

Available statistics indicate clearly that about 34 per cent of cultivated land was included in the arbabi land ownership (13,569 villages). There were the large landed proprietors whose estates ranged from single villages to several villages, the number of which, in some cases, were in the hundreds. These villages tended to be consolidated in one area, but in some cases the arbab hold land in widely separated areas. Table 6.4 indicates that the majority of the arbabi villages were shesh dangi. About  $1/2$  of the shesh dangi villages were owned by those who had more than five villages (1956 population Census). The rest were owned by those who had between one and five villages. Generally speaking, the majority of the shesh dangi villages belong to a few owners. According to Khosrovi 122 arbabs owned more than five villages (1972:30).

Table 6.4: Types of arbabi landownership before the land reform.

#	Type of ownership	#of village	per cent
1	<u>Shesh dangi</u> (whole of one village) ownership	9,239	68%
2	<u>dangi</u> (1/6 to 5/6 share of a village) ownership	4,330	32%
	Total	13,569	100%

Sources: 1) the 1960 National Census of Agriculture, Ministry of Interior. 2) 1956 Population Census, table 2, vol. 1 to 119, Ministry of Interior.

There are no statistics available to show how many hectares were the size of each village so we can figure out how many hectares were the holding of each landlord. For the most part properties were registered based on the statement of their boundaries, the actual area which the landlord occupied not being measured (Lambton, 1953:266). However, it is clear that there were arbabs who owned more than 300 villages each. For example, the Farmanfarma family owned land twice the size of Belgium; and lands owned by the Batmanghilij family were as big as Switzerland (GOPF, 1976:17).

The arbabi landownership system was complicated with the Islamic law of inheritance permitting division of land among all heirs of a deceased landowner (in the ratios of son: daughter: widow=8:4:1). Theoretically, as a result of devolution at death, a village must be divided among the

members of a single family; and this process must have stopped the concentration of the properties in the few hands, while the statistics show the reverse in Iran. One of the main reasons is that when a large landed property was transmitted by inheritance, villages retained intact and became the joint property of all the heirs who subsequently divided up the profits on a fixed share basis. The individual shares were not delimited, each of the joint owners had a right to a specific share of the total proceeds (Jacobs, 1966:203). In such cases it usually happened that one of the joint owners was nominated by the rest to manage the property. This form of holding was known as musha and nevertheless conformed to the general pattern of the arbabi estate with one difference, that since any major changes in the management of the land required the permission of all the joint owners, measures involving change were more difficult to bring about than in an arbabi village owned by one person.

Arbabi villages were found less commonly in the areas immediately around the large cities. According to a governmental report on the ownership of villages, the distribution of arbabi properties in various regions based on order to their percentage was as follows: (1) Azarbayjan, (2) Khorasan, (3) Mazanran, (4) Kordestan and Luristan, (5) Khuzestan, (6) Fars, (7) Markazi and Isfahan Provinces, (9) Persian Golf Coast, and (10) Kirman (Department of statistics quoted in Lambton, 1953: 270-1).



Villages owned by local owners or belonging to absent arbabs were, by contrast to other types of landownership, much more evenly distributed throughout the provinces. The highest and lowest concentration of local owners occurred in Sistan-Balochestan, 79.2 per cent of the villages, and in Kordestan, 17.7 per cent, respectively; conversely Kordestan had the highest concentration of absentee arbabs 92.3 per cent, and Sistan-Balochestan the lowest, 43.2 cent (Khamsi, 1968).

It was very common to see in some arbabi lands a third party in the shape of a rentee who was interposed between landowner and the raiyyat. These rents were chiefly in cash. The usual period for a lease was three to five years, on the assumption that during such a period an average yield, allowing for good, bad, and normal years, may be expected. On the other hand, among arbabs of long standing the sale of land was looked upon as a discreditable operation, and was kept away from as long as possible. One of the reasons was that large landed properties before the land reform were a socio-political base, rather than economic one. As it has been illustrated during the 1950s:

... the return on large landed properties in most areas is probably not more than 10 per cent, or, when grain prices are high, perhaps 15 per cent... (Lambton, 1953:263).

This was mainly because of the nature of the uneven growth of the economic activity on behalf of the bourgeois activity in the urban. The large landowners of Iran had direct

control in the government apparatus. Some of them (i.e., Asadollah Alam) even became prime minister for a few years.

To sum up, in the arbabi system of landownership the unit of ownership was the village. The agrarian structure was dominated by this type of ownership. The villages were concentrated in the hands of a few large, and often absentee, landlords who had little interest either in improving the land or the conditions of peasant share-croppers or tenants. This type of ownership was more evenly located in the country. The inheritance law did not have that much effect on delimitation of this type of ownership. Finally, the owners of the arbabi villages enjoyed much power in the government.

#### 6.6 Khurdeh Maliki (petty landownership)

Khurdeh maliki was an ownership of a small share of the land in a village--less than a dang. This type of private ownership contained both dehqani<sup>5</sup> (independent peasant) and absentee small ownerships. According to official statistics, 16,522 villages (42 per cent of the totall) of the country were on the hand of the khurdeh maliks (petty-owners). In fact, from the ownership point of view both dehqan and small-owners belong to the same category. But from the size of holding point of view, absentee small ownership is much more prevalent than dehqani. Indeed, a absentee small-owner is an intermediate owner "between the peasant proprietors who lives on and works his own holding and the large landed proprietor

(Lambton, 1953:281). The existence of the khurdeh maliki villages in general, and absentee small-ownership in particular, was a sign of the weaknesses of the traditional large-ownership.

The absentee small owners were living in the neighboring town. Since there was a general tendency for small merchants in the towns to invest their profits in land in the neighborhood, because land offered them an opportunity to earn more profit, this type of ownership was constantly increasing. In many cases much of the land in the immediate zone of a city was owned by the merchants. Sometimes, an area extending a few miles around a town was owned by absentee small-owners. In many cases, the essential inducement was not making profit, but the wish to get there to relax during the summer.

This type of small-holding was seldom the only type of holding in any given area but tended to be mixed with peasant proprietors. For example, many of the villages in the north of Tehran were owned in part in this way (Lambton, 1953:281). That was the case, for example, in Masumabad and Tuqab near Birjan, which were partly owned by residents of Birjand and partly by peasant proprietors (Lahsaeizadeh, 1974).

In contrast to absentee small-ownership, the dehqani proprietorship was not an important form of land-holding in Iran. There are no official statistics indicating the proportion of the dehqani ownership to absentee small-ownership. However, one estimate indicated that if we

"...assume that plots of less than 5 hectares normally belong to petty peasant proprietors,<sup>6</sup> then...the total area of lands belonging to this category of farmers did not exceed about 6 per cent of the total agricultural lands of the country" (Parham, 1971:99). While dehqani may have accounted for up to one-half of all khurdeh maliks (there are no reliable statistics), they represented only an estimated 5 per cent of all peasants (Hooglund, 1982:17).

Dehqani proprietorship was located in all parts of the country but was nowhere widely spread. It occurred alone and mixed with absentee small-ownership. In some areas, notably in Kirman, it was virtually non-existent. Some scholars (Lambton, 1953) saw irrigation as the main reason for this absence. Lambton argues that the qanat maintenance needed heavy capital which was beyond the pocket of the average dehqan (Ibid., p. 275). Dehqani alone villages were found in areas that were relatively isolated and not easily accessible (Hooglund, 1982:17). Many of the villages discovered during the land reform program must have been of this type. The main concentration of dehqani proprietors was probably to be found along the south-west and southern borders of the central desert, from Qum through Kashan, and Ardistan, to Yazd stretching in the south-west through the mountain district of the kuhi karagis to Maymeh and Murchekkhord (Lambton, 1953:275).

Dehqani proprietorships mixed with absentee small

ownerships were concentrated in the neighborhood of the cities. There was a certain amount of dehqani lands in the neighborhood of Yazd. In the Ardistan area, with some 330 villages, the dominant landownership was dehqani. Sedih in Isfahan was predominantly owned by dehqan. In Azarbayjan, except in the Urumyeh area, there were few of them. In Kurdestan also there was little dehqani lands. In Fars, villages owned by dehqan proprietors were the exception (i.e.,Davan). Similarly, in Baluchistan there was little landownership of this type. In Khorasan dehqan proprietors were more widespread than in many other provinces. In the neighborhood of Tehran they were mainly mixed with absentee small ownership (Ibid.,pp.275-6). The dehqani proprietorship was not common in Khuzestan and probably did not exceed more than 5 per cent of the total private holding (Salmanzadeh, 1980:59).

During the decades between World War II and the 1962 land reform, a few measures were taken which somehow contributed to the increase of the number of the dehqani lands. During the short period of Democrat rule in Azarbayjan in 1946-7, certain large landed estates were handed over to the share-croppers and as a result some dehqani proprietorships were emerged in this province. As I mentioned before, to encourage dehqan proprietors, a step was taken for the selling and distribution of khaleseh. Although the lands were distributed, this attempt was not marked by conspicuous success. However, in that distribution and sale, some share-croppers became dehqans.

Finally, the distribution and sale of a proportion of the Crown lands between 1950 and 1961 created some 25,000 dehqans proprietorship (GOPF, 1976:27).

The dehqani proprietor was on the whole enclosed to the less productive and more heterogenized lands of the villages. The holdings of the individual dehqan proprietors were not necessarily consolidated but might be found in different parts of the village land. For example, in Davan (near Kazeron), there was (and still is) considerable fragmentation of holdings. The land was divided into small plots which were subdivided among different owners, and each dehqan may have few plots in different parts of the village.<sup>7</sup>

The pasture and waste-land around dehqani villages, as distinct from the cultivated lands, belonged in common to the villagers, each dehqan having a share commensurate with his share of the cultivated land. The villagers had the right to graze their flocks on pasture lands. Unlike the pasture, the control over the right of the water was an individual right. The controller of the water was usually the most influential person in the area. If water was relatively scarce, the value of the land usually depreciated to a point at which dehqans lost their distinction of ownership and became little more than hired peasants of the controller of the water.

Sometimes, a dehqan flourished in extending his holding. In a majority of dehqani villages there were usually a few families who owned land more than the average size of their

fellows. But, there was a general tendency for the dehqan proprietor to lose land to merchants, money lenders, and other after a bad year. For too many dehqans, the effects of the inheritance system were such that the amount of inherited land was too small to insure a minimal satisfactory livelihood. In these cases, if migration was likely, the dehqans sold the lands or left them to their relatives to cultivate and share the harvest. To summarize, the khurdeh maliki villages contained both absentee small-ownership and dehqani landownership. They were located mostly around the towns and cities. In small properties, traditional share-cropping and tenancy were practiced. In dehqani land, which were usually small in size and poorest in quality, family production was predominant. There was a contradictory trend in dehqani proprietorship: on the one hand, there was a tendency to expand them; on the other hand, there were different factors involved to enforce the dehqans to lose their lands.

## 6.7. Endnotes

1. In some area of Iran (e.g. in rural Dezful) it was more common to divide a village into 24 equal parts; each being called a nokhud (a pea), overall ownership then being called bist-o-char nokhud (ownership of 24 parts). Each nokhud could be subdivided into 24 jow or shaeir (barley) and each jow further subdivided into 24 kunjed (sesame). Thus a village could be divided into 13824 parts and each part could have a different owner or title holder (Cf. Salmanzadeh, 1980:56-7).
2. In rural Iran the word khurdeh maliki is being used, at least in daily conversation, for both peasant proprietorship as well as small-ownership whose absentee owner allows peasants to cultivate the land in return for rent or share of crop. This might be the reason for the lack of distinction between the peasant proprietor and small-owner in the governmental statistics before the 1962 and reform.
3. Here and elsewhere in this chapter, U.S. dollar equivalents of rials given in round numbers.
4. This number has been calculated from the official statistics quoted in Denman's The King's Vista, 1973. p.66.
5. Although the word "khurdeh malik" has been used for both absentee small-owner and independent peasant, there is a term--"dehqan"--which can be used for independent peasant and makes a distinction between independent peasant and small absentee owner. This term has been used by some Iranian scholars in the field of peasant study (i.e., Soudagar, 1978; Khosrovi, 1979). Therefore, by dehqani I mean a land belonging to independent peasants (dehqan) and it should not be confused with the same term used for the pre-Islamic village-owner.
6. Of course the area of land possessed by dehqan who themselves worked their land depended on the type of crop and the region. For example, in the north of Iran, plots



of land usually had an area of 0.5 to 3 hectares while in the south it seems that the area of land by dehqan was a little greater. As far as the type of product is concerned, we should mention that cotton growing in Turkoman Sahra for instance sometimes involved plots of land a little larger than 5 hectares. However, taking the country as a whole, the average area of the plots did not exceed this limit.

7. This is based on my personal observation in Davan.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### FORMS OF PRODUCTION AND DIVISION OF PRODUCTION

#### 7.1. Introduction

The review of historical accounts about Iranian rural areas reveals the existence of a variety of social relations of production. Examples of one form of productive relations can be found in one place, while others can be found in a different location. The different forms of social production indicate the existence of various modes of production in the social formation of Iran.

This chapter will show the variations of the system of production in Iran's countryside before the 1962 land reform. Although the organization of production in Iranian agriculture was predominantly pre-capitalist, there was some independent peasant production scattered over the country, and some areas under the capitalist system of production.

Relations between the peasants and the landowners varied considerably from district to district. They were, for the most part, based on a muzara-eh (share-cropping) contract. Another type of relationship was based on muqasa-meh (fixed-rent). In these two systems, generally speaking, the division of agricultural surplus was determined by the interaction of two main, in many cases contradictory, groups.

Independent peasant production (dehqani) was rare, and found only on marginal lands. In this system of production,

the peasant owned the land and other means of production. The organization of production was mainly based on family labor. The aim of production was chiefly for family consumption.

In some areas of Iran, the capitalist relation of production started in agriculture after the Second World War. This was predominantly in the regions of Gorgan and Dasht. In those areas, a mechanized agriculture was set in operation, based on wage labor, for the purpose of production for profit rather than for consumption.

In short, it is my intention in this chapter to show how the predominant pre-capitalist relations of production in the countryside were subordinated to the capitalist system of production in Iran.

According to one estimate, 71.6 per cent of the sown land in Iran were cultivated by either share-croppers or tenant-farmers; the rest, either by dehqani system or based on hired laborers (Okazaki, 1968:5). This shows, at least the quantitative importance of the muzara-eh and muqasa-meh systems of production and division of the products in agrarian sector of the country.

## 7.2. Share-cropping (muzara-eh)

The basic form of feudalistic exploitation of the peasants in Iran during the period under consideration was muzara-eh.<sup>1</sup> Muzara-eh was a contract<sup>2</sup> between the landlord and the peasant according to which the latter was obliged to pay rent to the former. This rent was usually paid in

kind, i.e., a share of the crop.

The vast majority of the peasant population in Iran was composed of share-croppers. This type of farming was in practice on more than 84 per cent of the total agricultural lands of Iran (Ministry of Interior, 1960:6). In some areas of the country however, share-cropping was even more widespread. For example in Kermanshahan and Kurdistan, and in Azarbayjan (both west and east), 86 per cent of all agricultural lands were farmed by share-croppers (Ibid, PP.6-7).

Peasants falling under this category did not own any land. But they had the right to use it (nasag). The right to use the land was specified on the base of a contract between the landlord and individual share-cropper or the peasant's production team (buneh<sup>3</sup>). The period of contract was unspecified and completely determined by the landlord the contract was both written and oral, but the latter type predominated. The contracts were always unclear.

The landlords distributed their holdings among the peasants who gained the right to use the land in return for rent. In many cases the land was redistributed regularly (i.e., annually or every three to four years) among the share-croppers of a village by lot. Methods of determining how much land was to be allotted to each peasant or family varied. In most cases distribution was based on juft,<sup>4</sup> the amount of land one pair of oxen could plow in a given year, or to land plow in the course of 2 years in places where alternative-year following is practiced (Gunderson, 1968:25;

Kramer,1982:65). Since soils and topography vary, the metric value of a juft varied as well. The average size of the land cultivated by a share-cropping household was calculated to be 47 hectares (Ajami,1973:1).

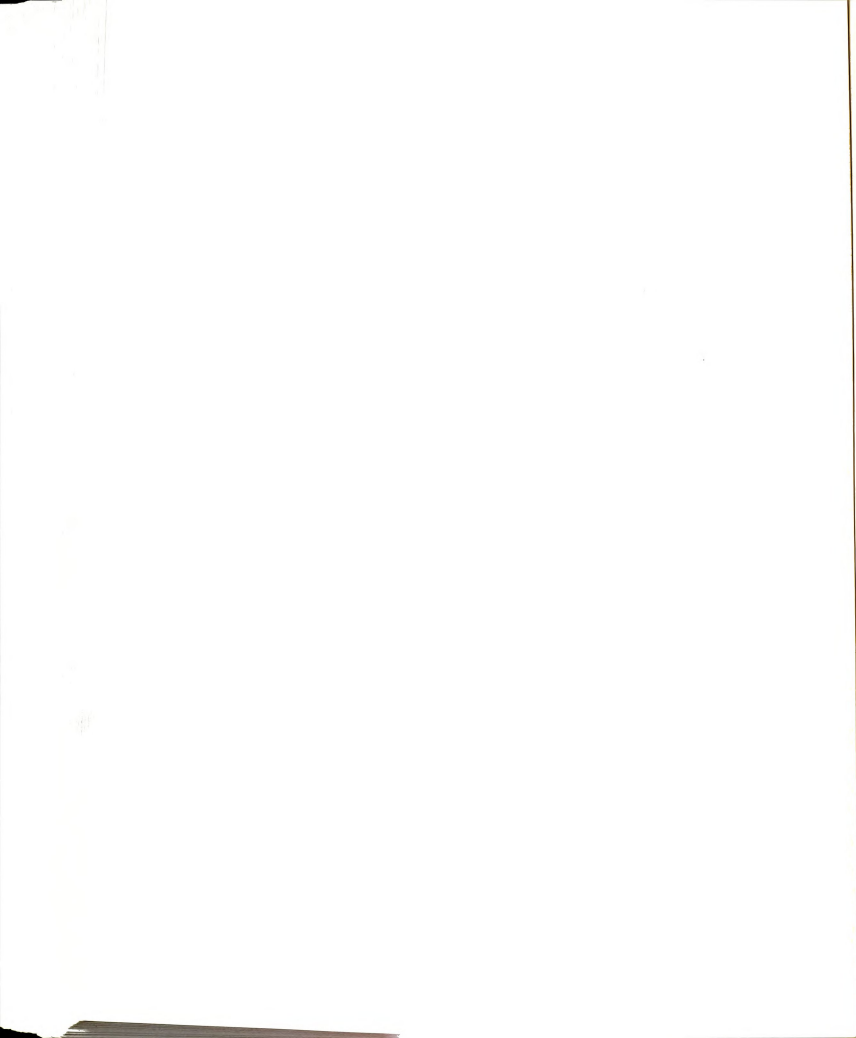
In other cases landlords did not want to be worried with periodic redistribution, therefore, the land was permanently allocated to the peasant. Peasant holdings generally were not inherited, but the owners often made an adjustment with a deceased peasant's son to carry on in his place without disrupting the predominant distribution pattern. In this case, one member of the family, usually the oldest son, frequently took charge and worked the land on behalf of all (Lambton, 1953:303).

In both cases--periodic redistribution and permanently appointed land--peasant's contracts and rights were usually not guaranteed even for a period of a few years (Lambton, 1953:297-8). In most areas of the country, the share croppers were vulnerable to dismissal at the discretion of the landlord. While this right was rarely used by the landlords, the mere existence of the threat and its maintenance through annual land redistribution and other tactics were designed to preclude share-croppers from gaining permanent rights and created an atmosphere of insecurity. In short, if a landlord was angered with a peasant for any reason, the peasant could be denied the right to cultivation. Here then was an awesome tool to be used against any recalcitrant peasant or village. Through this system of institutionalized insecurity the landlord could demand and often receive the

peasants' submission. He could always use it as a point in his favor when bargaining over the terms of their relationship.

There is unanimous agreement that the division of crops was based on the provisions of means of production. It was based on a regulation called avamil-i panjganeh (five elements). The five basic means of production were: land, water, draught animal, seed and labor. Theoretically one share was allotted to each factor. Actually this was little more than a theoretical abstraction and the division was seldom made on this basis. The peasant provided, apart from labor, mainly his own and occasionally that of others, a portion of the means of production,<sup>5</sup> draught animals and sometimes seed. The landlord, apart from the land which he owned, provided another part of the means of production, water. The product was divided between the landlord and the production team in definite proportions. In practice, the landlords were excluded from the gross product seed required for the next harvest before the division of the crop on the basis of the production (Stack, 1912; Lambton, 1953; and Ginsberg, 1958). In fact, it was the 'net product' that was divided between the lord and the peasant or production team (that is, gross product minus seed required for the next harvest) (Vali, 1980:33). This meant that the share-cropper lent to the landlord a part of his share in the form of working capital to renew the cycle of production.

In some areas, a third person known as the gayband was interposed between the share-cropper and the landowner or



the leassee. The gavband usually managed some units of production known as buneh. The initial division of the crop was between the gavband and the landowner or leassee; the share of the gavband was then divided between the gavband and the peasants after the deduction of any dues. There were several other villagers who received a share of the product: carpenter, blacksmith, watchman, irrigation officials, etc (Lambton, 1953:302 and Golabian,1977:217). In fact, the actual distribution of the product was very complicated and was developed so as to guarantee a minimum living to all people who, directly or indirectly, were engaged in village life.

The basis of share-cropping was primarily and mainly local custom, which though it displayed a certain homogeneity throughout the country, differed considerably in detail from area to area. The major differences in the widely varied methods of dividing crops centered on whether a crop was irrigated or unirrigated, a summer crop or a winter crop, what the peasant supplied and where he lived. The peasant's share varied from one-fifth to nine-tenths of the crop (Lambton,1953: 308-312).

The share of the peasants in their produce was dependent upon the power of the landlords and the tradition of the surrounding areas. As we can see in table 7.1, for the same crops, under the same irrigation conditions, and with the supply of the same means of the production, the share of the peasant was different in different areas. This indicates that in practice the division of the crop based



Table 7.1: The division systems of different crops in some areas.

Name of rural areas	Type of farming product	Factors supplied by landlord	Landlord's share from production	Factors supplied by share-cropper	Share-cropper's share from production
-Markazi	wheat&barley irr.	land, water	1/3	oxen, seeds, labour,	2/3
-Khonsar	"	"	1/2	"	1/2
-Markazi, Ashtarinan, Dorood	"	"	1/2	"	1/2
-Aligodarz	wheat	"	1/3	"	2/3
-Hume, Selseleh, Zagheh, Chegni, Sepid-dasht Malavi	"	"	1/2	"	1/2
-Vissian	"	"	1/2	"	1/2
-Markazi	wheat&barley dry-farming	land	1/5	oxen, seed, labour	4/5
-Markazi, Ashtarinan, Dorood	"	"	2/5	"	3/5
-Aligodarz	wheat, dry-framing	"	1/5	"	4/5
-Hume, Selseleh, Zagheh, Vissian Chegni	wheat&barley, dry-farming	"	1/4	"	3/4
-Sepid-dasht, Malavi	"	"	1/5	oxen, seed, labour	2/3
-Markazi	cotton	land, water	1/3	"	2/3
-Khonsar	"	"	1/2	"	1/2
-Markazi	"	"	1/3	"	2/3
-Ashtarinan, Dorood	"	"	1/2	"	1/2
-Hume, Selseleh, Chegni Sepid-dasht Malavi	"	"	1/3	"	2/3
-Markazi	pipe-tobacco	"	1/3	"	2/3
-Khonsar	"	"	1/2	"	1/2
-Markazi, Ashtarinan, Dorood	"	"	1/2	"	1/2

Source: Extracted from 1957 Census questionnaires.

on supply of the five means of production was far from what was commonly believed. One thing ascertained by looking at the table is that these division ratios could vary from area to area, but the ratio must allow producers to satisfy their primary needs; otherwise the reproduction of agriculture would be impossible.

Lambton has indicated that in the case of unirrigated or dry (daymi) farming of wheat and barley, which was only found in certain parts of Iran, usually the seed and draught animals were provided by the share-cropper. In most areas

the share of the landowner was for the most part either one-fifth or one-quarter. Sometimes, if the landowner provided the seed he took half the crop (1953:314). This shows that the provision of seeds was the most important factor for unirrigated cultivation. As a rule, where the share-cropper provided all three his economic position tended to be more favorable.

The following example of the division of products between members of a buneh<sup>6</sup> and landowner in Taleb-abad is a typical representative of the division of the crop in the rural areas of Iran before the land reform. From 30,000 kg. of wheat, gross product, 1.2 per cent was allotted to service personnel of the village such as blacksmith, carpenter, watchman and other non-cultivators. The 10 per cent share allotted to seed and the 21 per cent share for draft animal were assigned to the gavband, who supplied ox and seed. The landowner, who provided land and water, appropriated 42 per cent of the gross product as his ownership share. And the remainder, 22.3 per cent plus 4.5 per cent, was deducted before division as a remuneration to the producers, making a total of 26.8 per cent of the total gross product allotted to peasants who provided the labor factor. Each of the peasant households received approximately 5.4 per cent of the total gross product, about 1534.5 kg. wheat for each household, or 250 to 300 kg. per capits (Golabian, 1977:217,219).

The landowner's share of summer crops (sayfi), in contradistinction to grain crops, was usually decided by

valuation (momiazi). A valuer came around in the person of the village headman or some other individual, looked over the crop in the most cursory fashion, and estimated it at a certain amount. The peasant's share was higher than in the case of grain crops. This process caused much discontent, and it is alleged that overestimation was common. In the case of summer crops, "the provision of seed was of less importance than in the case of wheat and barley" (Lambton, 1953:315). The landowner's share was more often paid in cash.

Share-cropping for the produce of trees was called musaqat. Theoretically, musaqat was a contract between the owner of trees and the gharas (gardener) in return for a specified undivided share of the produce, i.e., fruit, leaves, flowers, etc. (Nomani, 1977:65). In this case the garden owner's share was paid in cash, too.

In addition to the portion the peasants paid the landlord under the share-cropping contract, they suffered other burdens either in cash or in kind. The most burdensome of these was bigari, any kind of compulsory labor which peasants were required to perform on demand without remuneration (Parham, 1971:102). The kind and amount of these extra obligations were fixed on the basis of custom and varied in different areas of the country. But whatever their form, they were an over-present and burdensome reality endorsed by the Civil Code.<sup>7</sup>

There was also another important factor which reduced share-cropper's actual share of the harvest. That is, a considerable part of his share was taken away after the

harvest as payment for past debts that carried.

Consumption loans were the main type of the share-cropper's perpetual indebtedness (Vali,1980). He acquired consumption loans in order to be able to reproduce himself and the household labor: reproduction of the conditions of production. He was also in need of money for the reproduction of the means of production. It is unanimously agreed that the lender of the consumption loan was almost always the landlord. Apart from the landlord, the share-cropper had other choices: the existing local money-market and rich peasants such as village headman, village shop-keeper, peddler,etc. But whether the source of the loan was the landlord or a rich peasant, the result was the same. The share-cropper did not have a marketable surplus and he was provided with the required loan only against his share of the crop in the next harvest.

Owing to the lack of a marketable surplus of considerable size, the Iranian share-croppers had a very limited contact with the market. Lack of marketable surplus on the part of share-croppers meant that they did not have any access to the 'commodity market' as sellers of their surplus products. This, in effect, implied that there was a very low or total absence of engagement in exchange relations in the market for agricultural products (Vali,1980:35,49). It hindered the development of the social differentiation among the mass of Iranian share-croppers, a process which had to take place if capitalist relations were to develop in agriculture. On the other hand, "...the landlord transferred

the surplus physically to urban areas..." (Abrahamian, 1975:14) and rarely reinvested in agricultural production. This shows that landlords did not have the incentive to improve agricultural production and consequently the conditions of share-croppers. Under such a landlord-peasant relationship, no endeavor to increase productivity can be expected on the part of the share-croppers.

Before I close the investigation about the muzara-eh, I should explain a particular form of muzara-eh called muqata-eh or eka-reh. This system was based on the assessment of landownership share as a fixed sum (Golabian, 1977:215). The holder or holders of the land compound for a certain sum, which does not vary with the extent of the area sown or the crop. In the case of measurement the area actually sown only is taken into account.

In the system of eka-reh, akkar or barzegar (landless peasant) does not have nasaq. He and his family stayed in the village temporarily. They usually worked for six months. They had the least favorable contracts and usually did not own any means of production such as draught animals (Khosrovi, 1976:78-9). They usually rented the oxen and paid the owner after the harvest. This system was found in northern Iran mostly on rice farms. In most cases, before cultivation, the landlord loaned the akkars some money and necessary goods like tea, sugar, rice and oil. They had to give the equal price back at the time of the harvest from their share (Ibid., p.79).

The division of the crop between the landowners and

akkars was as follow: The landowner provided land, water, 1/2 of the seed or all the seed, and one ox. If landowner provided all the seed, the akkar had to contribute a pair of oxen; if 1/2 of the seed was the landowners responsibility, the landowner must contribute one ox too. If landowner did not bring seed, he had to provide a pair of oxen. In any of the cases, the crop was divided by half and each party received a half (Ibid, pp.80-91). Sometimes, the share of harvest for akkar and his family's labor after six months work were two sacks of rice (each sack had 100 kg. rice, and for each hacter there was 300 kg. rice products) (Ibid, p.79).

To sum up, the amount of the feudal rent seems not to have been proportional to the peasants' income, but rather determined mostly by the condition of extra-economic compusions of the peasants and the existing traditions. This peculiarity was clearly observable in the muzara-eh system and it showed the feudal characteristics of the surplus exaction in the period under consideration. Under the conditions of muzara-eh the landlord was able to extract a surplus product which would not be obtained under capitaist conditions of production with employment of the same amount of labor.

### 7.3. Fixed-rent (muqasa-meh)

Along with share-cropping, fixed rents were likely common in the rural areas of Iran (Stack,1912). It was a payment for the right to cultivate the land, and was a

result of the monopoly ownership of land by the landowning class. Fixed rent was paid in kind, or in cash, or both, in place of a share of the crop. Payment in kind was prevalent.

The rent was exacted by means of extra-economic coercion. The direct producer was not kept apart from the means of production. As Lambton has stated, "where a fixed rent was practiced, seed and draught animals were provided by the peasant" (1953:321). Major irrigation works were the charge of the landowner and the tenant peasants were responsible for the cleaning and up-keep of the secondary canals and ditches which carried water to their crops (Jones, 1967:66). If a tenant failed to keep the irrigation ditches in a workable condition, the landlord took action to reduce the acreage allotted to the negligent peasant.

Land under the fixed-rent operation constituted 7.4 per cent of land cultivated in Iran, although this type of farming was much more common in areas such as Mazandern, Gilan, Fars, and Isfahan. This was particularly the case in Mazandaran where about 34 per cent of the land was exploited on the basis of tenancy (Ministry of interior, 1960:6-7). Perhaps the relative unimportance of the water problem in this region and the type of crop (rice) had some effect on increasing the prevalence of this system of holding.

Fixed rent was pre-capitalist in character due to the non-separation of the direct producer from the means of production. As we know, the mechanism of extraction of a surplus product in a pre-capitalist mode of production is

primarily non-economic. In the case of payment in kind the surplus extracted was not unpaid labor but a portion of the product. It did not presuppose the separation of the land of the direct producer and that of the landowner.

Payment in cash was not very significant. However, this type of rent presupposed a limited exchange of commodities for money in the market. As Keddie has indicated, cultivators paying cash rentals were concentrated in prosperous and market-oriented areas (1968:75). In fact, as Vali (1980:41) has discussed, in this case the existence of money rent presupposed a commodity exchange but it did not presuppose the existence of the capitalist mode of production. It was pointed out, however, that this type of rent was not of considerable importance in Iran.

The practice of fixed-rent was not uniform. The rents paid in various areas were based on various units. In some areas it was based on per plough-land (the size of which varied). It ranged between 40 to 110 pounds grain, both in irrigated and unirrigated lands. In certain villages the rent represented a payment for the water rather than a rent for the land. In this case, it was based on per unit of water (the amount and volume of which varied), the unit of water varied between 8 minutes to 12 hours. The corresponding rent in kind ranged between 6 to 110 pounds of grain. Finally, in certain villages the fixed-rent was based on acreage the amount of rent in kind ranged between 10 to 110 pounds grain (Lambton, 1953: 319-323).

There is much evidence that the level of rent in Iran



was relatively high. It usually amounted to half if not two-thirds of the total produce (Stack, 1912). High rents absorbed almost to entire surplus product over and above necessary cost of production. As a result, the peasants were usually forced to underfeed both their household and their draught animals in order to attain the very conditions of production, land and water.

The main reason for such high rents was insecure tenancy rights (Stack, 1912), which itself resulted from the monopoly of land by a few large landowners. This insecurity of the tenure has been illustrated by Jacobs:

In fact, the lack of security for a tenant reaches the extent that a tenant even does not know if he will be allotted the same tract of land to farm one year to the next (1966:135).

This meant the landlessness of a very high proportion of the rural inhabitants. Lacking alternative job opportunities the landless laborers contended for subsistence within agriculture. They were ready to work for low wages. This accessibility of surplus labor exerted the state of tenancy and moved the level of rent up. The tenant had to secure the situations of tenancy in harsher terms. Consequently, he had to pay higher rents to gain land and a livelihood.

Rents were raised at any time except in those areas where rents had been fixed by a written contract<sup>8</sup>(assuming that the contract could be enforced). Despite the high level of insecurity, some security was provided by custom, which in many areas provided that a peasant who was allowed by his landlord to cultivate lucerne had a right to that

land as long as the roots of the crops remained in the ground. Sometimes this gave him up to seven years of tenure (Vreeland, 1957:192).

Under a system of fixed rent, says Issawi (1957:76), output will be greater and investment more likely to take place than under a system in which the landlord shares the crop with the tenant, whatever the ratio of share-cropping and whatever the size of the rent. This was true in the case of Iran since Vreeland (1957:194) has indicated that where peasants worked the land of a large landowner on a fixed rent basis, the level of output and the standards of cultivation were higher than on land worked on a share-cropping basis<sup>9</sup>.

The tenants did not share the increase in output with the landlords as was the case under share-cropping. Documentary evidence refers to the share-croppers' struggle to convert from share-cropping to payments of a fixed rent (Cf. Lambton, 1953). This happened because system of fixed rent allowed the peasant to accumulate some surplus, but it was always opposed by the landlords (Keddie, 1960:12). On the whole, it was appeared to be a marked preference on the part of the landowners for share-cropping contracts rather than for leasing at a fix rent.

#### 7.4. Independent Peasant Production(dehqani)

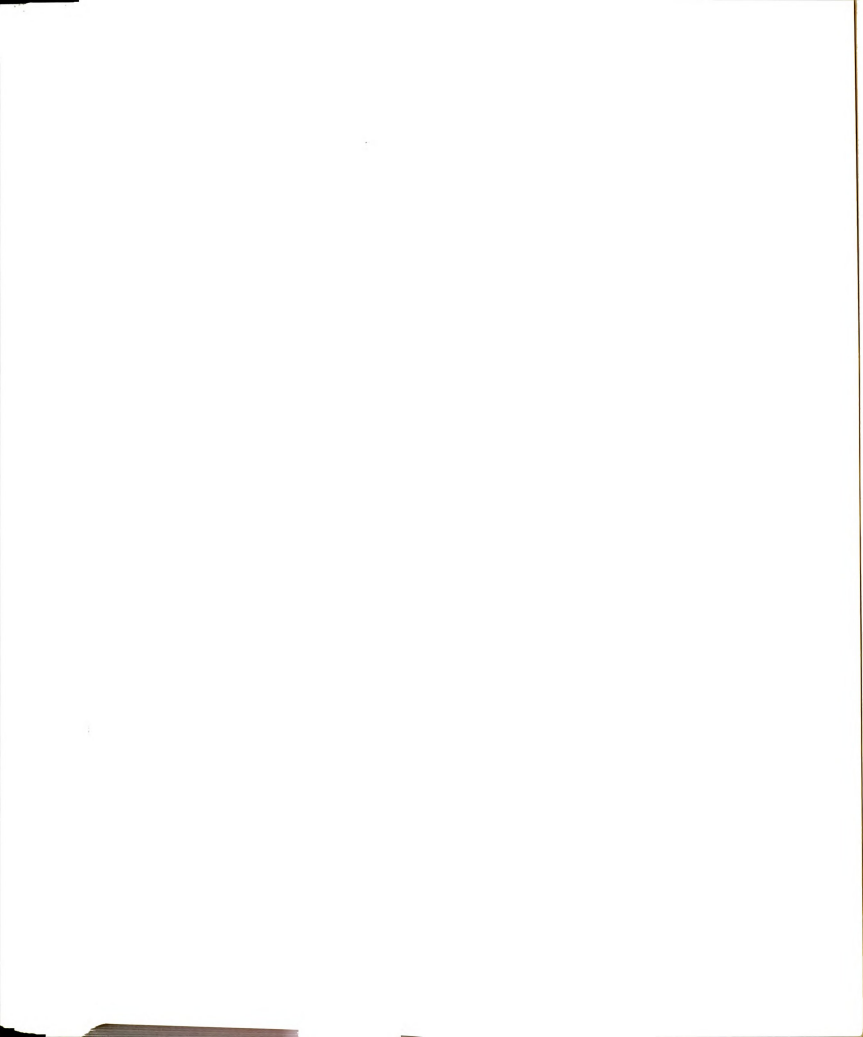
A characteristic peculiarity of Iranian feudalism was the combination of feudal relations of production and independent peasant production. By independent peasant

producer (dehqan)<sup>10</sup> we mean the land-owner who cultivates his own land with his family-labor as the main labor source, and using his own means of agricultural production.

Specialist on Iranian agriculture agree unanimously that the dehqani system played little if no part in the reproduction of the agrarian structure of Iran in the period before land reform (Lambton, 1953; Keddie, 1960). Lambton relying on various sources, argues that independent production did not provide an adequate livelihood in the existing circumstances (1953). It was extremely rare, and found only on marginal lands (Keddie, 1960).

The difficult natural conditions under which agriculture was carried out, and the lack of socio-economic supports for independent peasant producers, were two main factors which made dehqani system unfavorable before the land reform. Because of the importance of irrigation to Iranian agriculture, the independent production was at a disadvantage compared with the other systems of production in that dehqan did not possess capital nor the manpower mobilization capacity to work the qanat. Nor for the most part did he have organizational facilities, such as cooperatives (buneh), to help him in production, get the supplies he needed, market the crops he produced, and see him through bad years on a decent term. However, there were instances of independent producers owning their water supply collectively (Vreeland, 1957:197).

Independent production was practiced mostly on the northern part of the country since there was no need for



artificial irrigation. Also, independent producers were scattered around the big cities, because they bring their little surplus to the market. Their most frequent sales to the market were summer crops or fruits. Most of the small garden around the big cities like Isfahan, Mashhad, Tehran and Hamedan belonged to them (Sodagar,1978:119).

The socio-economic ends of the independent producers were satisfaction of the household consumption needs. In dehqani system, the relation of production was based on the plan and calculation of the capacity of the family. The family supplied all essentials for production (English, 1966:146). The labor force was provided by the members of the extended family. Occasionally, the independent peasant worked the land with hired labor (barzegar). The payment of this labor was usually partly in kind (Rudolph, 1971:41). As Vreeland has indicated, some few peasants in the more fertile areas reached the point of being able to employ other villagers as seasonal laborers (1957:196). In this case they produced more than a bare subsistence livelihood.

The total area of lands under the operation of independent production did not exceed approximately 6 per cent of the total agricultural lands of the country (Parham,1971: 99). On the one hand, the land owned by dehqan was generally in less fertile parts of the country, on the other hand, the size of the holdings tended to be small. Consequently, dehqans were quite poor and rarely provided more than a bare subsistence livelihood. According to Lambton, one dehqan and his family could cultivate some 30 jarib

(approx. 30 hacters), while the actual size of holding owned by most dehqans varied from 2-3 jarib (2-3 hacters). Peasants hold 2-3 jarib normally owned two donkeys, but for ploughing borrowed or hired an ox or oxen from a more prosperous neighbor (1953:277). The average independent peasant proprietorship functioned as a household enterprise (Issawi,1971). This, however, did not apply to the poorer areas where the holdings were often too small to allow for the reproduction of the household. Generally speaking, the independent peasants owned enough land and means of production to be able to reproduce the existence of the household. These peasants were able to meet the reproduction of the unit of production.

The average income of a dehqan from his land before the land reform was between 10,000 rials (\$173) and 50,000 rials (\$715) (Lambton,1953:227). Usually, the independent peasant producer had little advantage over the share-cropper or tenant, except where he owned good crop land and where his crops could be large enough to help him avoid the money lender. According to Ono, the income level of villages where independent peasants represented a sizeable portion of the population was higher than that of villages where this was not the case (1967:459). Where dehqani villages were found in the same area of as landlord villages with share-cropping peasants, although both were often poor, the position of the dehqan proprietor compared favorably with that of the share-cropping peasants, and lands owned by the independent peasant, in most cases, had

appeared to be better cared for and better cultivated (English, 1966:146). This was partly because of the greater security of landholding and the larger measure of independence enjoyed by the dehqan compared to their share-cropper fellows.

Where the independent peasant grew cash-crops which fetched a relatively high and stable price (i.e., cotton), he was relatively better off (Vali, 1980:25). In such areas the average holding was 2-10 jarib (approx. 2-10 hectares) (Lambton, 1953:278). Likewise, where he owned a garden in addition to arable land his economic condition was usually more favourable. As a result, the dehqani villages which consisted largely of cash-crops or garden and orchards appeared relatively successful compared with those villages which were engaged mainly in the rising of grain or summer crops. Productivity, however, varied with location.

Inadequate communications and costly means of transport greatly added to his costs of production and made it more difficult for him to do anything but sell his goods at the nearest market at whatever price was offered. The almost constant condition of need and the series of transient crises, which are usual in peasant life, obliged him to dispose of his produce immediately after harvest, if it was not already pledged in advance to local shop-keepers or moneylenders (Rudolph, 1971:47). This meant that he had no alternative but to sell or barter his surplus crops at the period when prices were lowest. Barter was more frequent than sale. If, moreover, his reserves were drained before

the winter was over, he then had to buy when prices were at their peak. His need almost always forced him to take the price offered, however disadvantageous it was.

The poor layer of independent peasant producer must always borrow for seeds, tools, livestock, and other expenses. High interest rates and low peasant income made it difficult for the independent producer ever to repay the principal on a loan. These high rates not only impoverished the producers, but placed them permanently in debt (Keddie, 1960:15). The state of permanent debt frequently ended in a loss of the independent producer's land to the money-lender. This was one of the major reasons for migration of adult independent producers before the land reform.

For too many dehqans, the effects of the inheritance system were such that the amount of inherited land was too small to insure a minimal satisfactory livelihood. This was one of the main reasons that rural youth were leaving the farm and going into the urban centers to seek casual labor, either as landless or as owners of landed property too small to insure an adequate income. Sometimes, in such cases the villagers did not cut themselves off completely from their roots, but often retained some land in their original home. Many of them returned in summer to their village to collect their dues from the harvest. The land was usually taken care of by their relatives (e.g., the village of Davan in Fars province is the best example).





### 7.5. Capitalist Farming (Keshavarzi-yi Mechanizeh)

The capitalist farm enterprise is of recent origin in Iran. It follows the rule of uneven development. Regional differences were observed in the pattern of agricultural production. In Iran new types of agricultural activity based on Mechanization have been brought forward. The development of agriculture along capitalistic lines, nevertheless, had been set in motion in the postwar era.

The first effort to farm with machinery and wage labor on a large scale was made near Bushir after World War I, but ended in failure (Wilber, 1958:242). The fact is that local circumstances worked against the use of tractors and other power-driven units. On the one hand, the mechanical aspect of the operation was not easy to be set up. On the other hand the pattern of land and water ownership created some obstacles to this development.

After the Second World War, especially in 1949, the spontaneous increase in the prices of agricultural products, especially cash-crops, in the Middle East led to the emergence of large scale, mechanized capitalist extensive agriculture with wage labor and plantation farming.<sup>11</sup> In Iran, before the 1962 land reform, the main regions in which capitalist farming was developed were the Gorgan and Dasht regions (1.6% of total agricultural land of the country).

Several factors created the expansion of farm capitalism in the Gorgan and Dasht regions in the period after the War. A large area of free and highly productive land, suitable for mechanized agriculture, was accessible; the

ownership of a large section of this land was condensed in the Crown property; a large segment of the available land in the region was located, therefore, without the boundaries of village communities, and there was no practice of traditional agriculture and land and water ownerships; the high demand for grain in the post-war era; the accessibility of road and railroad in four seasons; and ultimately, the encroachment of profit-seeking member of the dependent bourgeoisie class from Tehran, initiated capitalist enterprise in that region.

The Gorgan region is located on the eastern part of the Caspian Sea. It was the territory of nomadic tribes of Turkaman before the 1920's. Livestock breeding was the main activity in the region; cultivation was of less important, and it was carried out only at the foot of the mountain, by Persian peasants. It was small scale self-sufficient agriculture for family subsistence.

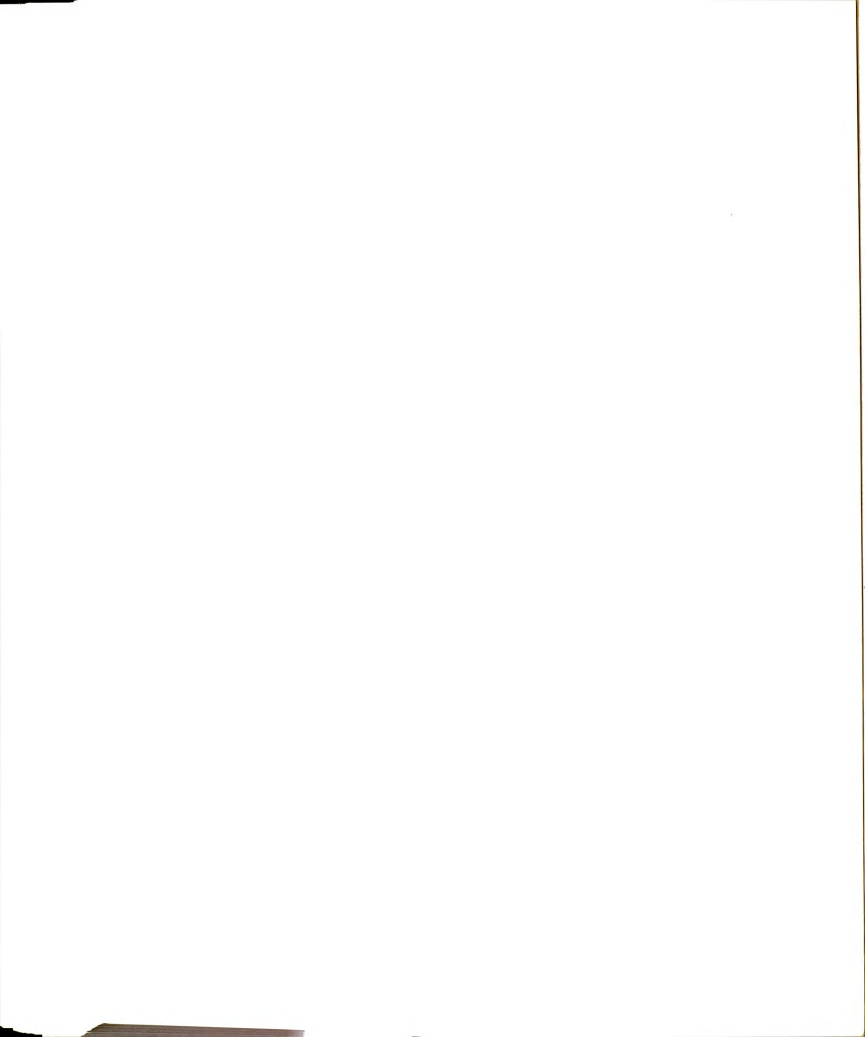
As I discussed in a previous chapter, Reza Shah confiscated the total area of Gorgan into Crown property.<sup>12</sup> He paid special attention to this portion of the Crown lands. "Some twenty tractors and combines were introduced to the Agricultural Office at Gorgan which was in charge of the management of the Crown land" (Okazaki, 1968:8). The cultivation of cash crops, in particular cotton and tobacco, was started (Ashraf, 1977:68). Foreign agricultural engineers were hired and American cotton seeds of good quality were brought to the region.

After the abdication of the Reza Shah, part of the

Gorgan Crown land were restored to the former owners, the rest remained in the control of the royal family (Cf. chapter 6). Those whose land was returned from the Shah employed wage-paid laborers and set about to manage the farms directly and introduced tractors. The Turkaman landowners employed nomads and planted wheat for the market. They invested money accumulated through commercial activities in agriculture (Kristjanson, 1960:7). The purpose of their farm operations was to gain a profit through the growth of cash crops.

In order to encourage more rapid mechanization the government permitted agricultural machinery, well-drilling machinery, and irrigation pumps to be imported free of duty from 1947 through 1957 (Wilber, 1958:242). In 1949, several capitalists from Tehran came to Gorgan in order to operate farms. The Gorgan Dry Farming Company (Skerkat-i Sehami-yi zara-ati-yi Deimi Kari-yi Gorgan) was among the pioneers who played the most important roles in the expansion of mechanized capitalist farming (Okazaki, 1968:11). The company leased uncultivated Crown land, reclaimed it and with hired laborers and tractors started the production of wheat with dry farming methods.

The establishment of this company stimulated others to invest in the region. Native landowners and merchants as well as outsiders rushed to Gorgan and set up farms in the second half of the 1950's. A large number of farms were found almost everywhere. There are no exact statistics available on the number of farms; however, Gorgan had



numerous capitalist farms, and it has been called a "large-scale farm area in Iran."

The farm capitalists in Gorgan set about their activities on virgin land in the region. In the early period, the land was leased from the Crown, later, most of the farm capitalists appropriated ownership rights as the Crown land was partially sold out. The process of land acquisition of fourteen farms is shown in detail in table 7.2. It varied for different farms according to the period of establishment and the place the farm operators came from.

Although the size of the farms ranged from 50 to 6,000 hectares, the general structure of them was almost the same. Each farm had: a central office located on the farm itself; houses for the farm operator, technical and clerical employees and supervisors of the agricultural laborers; a service station for farm machinery; a generation plant; pump station and garages around the office (Okazaki, 1968:12).

The shortage of labor was a great obstacle in the region. The solution for the Turkaman landowners was to hire a considerable number of nomads. For the Persian capitalists, there was some difficulty in hiring Turkaman nomads.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, Gorgan province did not have surplus labor at the time. At the beginning, since wheat was being predominantly cultivated with fully mechanized activities, not too many laborers were needed. With the increasing cultivation of cotton, a great quantity of human labor was required. As a consequence, Gorgan became attractive and people began to come in large numbers from

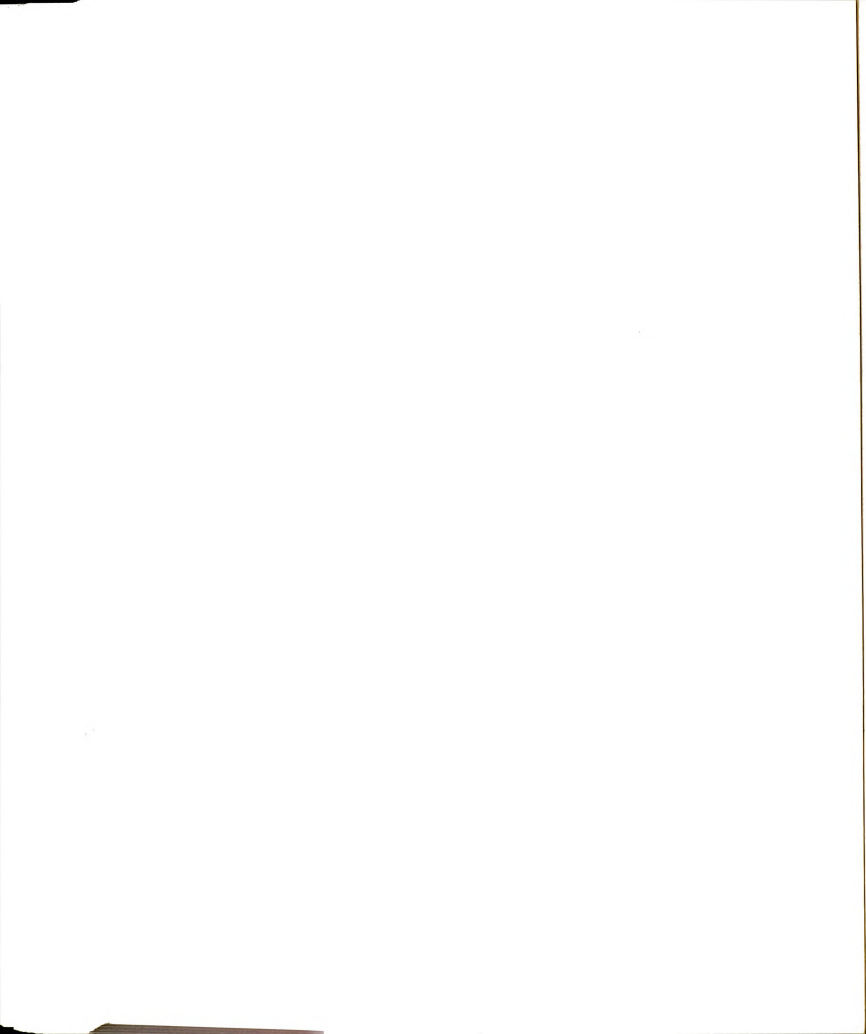


Table 7.2: The process of land acquisition of some capitalist farms in Gorgan before the 1962 land reform.

Name of Farm	Year Established	Scale of Holding as of 1963* (ha.)	Process of Land Acquisition
1 H.I. Muhammadi Farm	Before 1949	2,800	Leased Crown land in about 1947, purchasing it in 1952; also leased private land; subsequently leased additional Crown land, later purchasing it.
2 Asudeh Farm	Before 1949	490	Leased Crown land after the War, purchasing it in 1948.
3 Mahdavi Farm (Former Gorgan Dry Farming Company)	1949	2,150	Leased Crown land near Aliabad in 1949; leased <i>vagf</i> land of 200 hectares at Hajikoloteh near Aliabad in 1950; leased Crown land of 1,300 hectares in 1954; re-claimed 500 hectares of own property in 1955; purchased all of the leased Crown land in 1959; purchased additional 150 hectares of Crown land in the same year.
4 Maqsudlu Farm	1950	1,000	Leased <i>vagf</i> land uncultivated for 99 years in 1950; incorporated land already under cultivation into the farm.
5 Tabatabai Farm (Former Wheat Planting Company)	1950	1,000	Leased private land and Crown land in 1950; purchased the leased Crown land; extended farm scale to 2,100 hectares from the initial 50, afterwards reducing it to 1,000 hectares.
6 Faryabi Farm	1949	350	Purchased uncultivated land from a Turkoman landowner. (The land had formerly been Mr. Faryabi's own property, had been annexed to the Crown land in 1934, and had been given to the Turkoman landowner after the War from the Crown.)
7 Monajem Farm	1951	200	Leased Crown land near Aliabad in 1950, restoring it in 1951; leased Crown land near Kalaleh in 1951, purchasing it later.
8 Muazeji Farm	1951	300	n.a.
9 Avanes Farm	1954	400	Reclaimed 50 hectares of his own property; leased 350 hectares of private land (50 hectares of which were already under cultivation at the time of establishing farm; the rest, uncultivated land).
10 Muhammad Ismaili Farm	1957	500	Reclaimed his own land; incorporated that part of his own land already under cultivation into the farm; leased Crown land of 200 hectares in 1952, purchased it later.
11 Khatibi Farm	1948?	100	Reclaimed his own land; incorporated land already under cultivation into the farm.
12 Deihim Farm	1960	1,200	Leased 1,200 hectares of Crown land for six years in 1960 (215 hectares were under cultivation when leased).
13 Mazrae Kamal (Army Farm)	1961	4,000	Reclaimed Crown land in the desert region.
14 Abol Qasem Farm	ca. 1960	100	Purchased right of perpetual tenancy from peasants.

\* Some of the data may be underestimated.

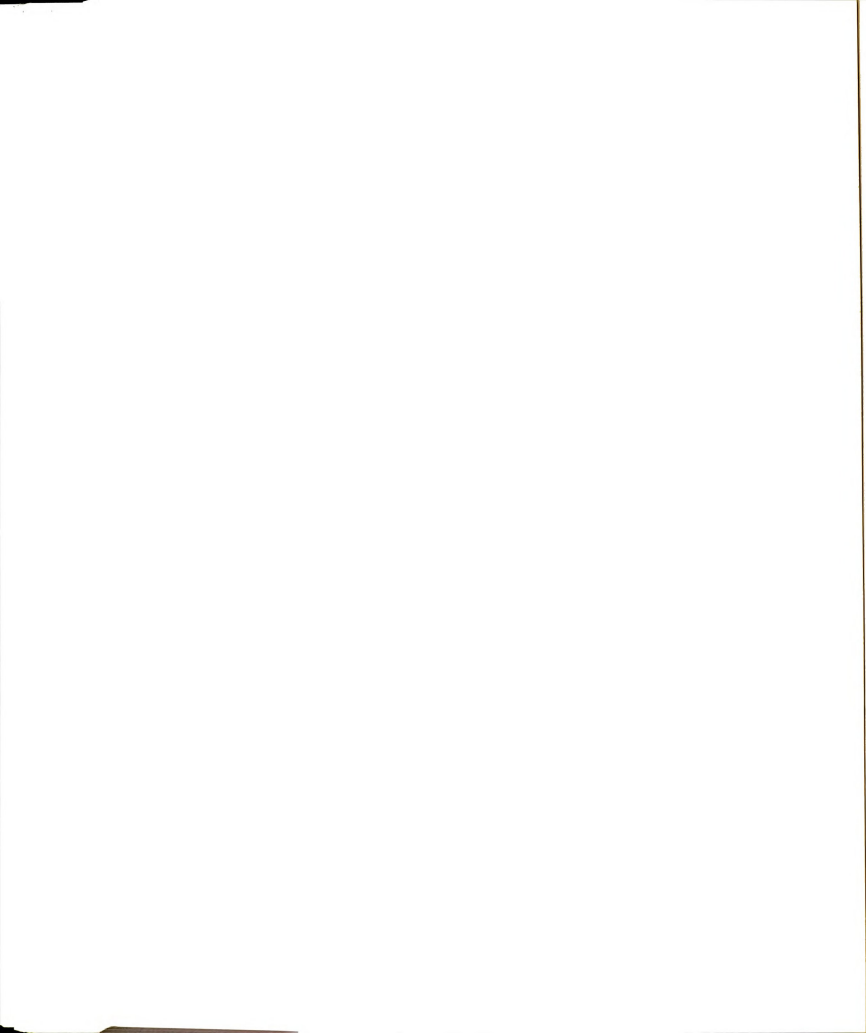
Source: Okazaki, 1968: 19-17



Zabol<sup>14</sup> (of the province of Sistan, located at a distance of 1700 kilometers from Gorgan) and Khorasan. Gradually, the Turkaman farm capitalist also employed the farm laborers from Zabol and Khorasan. These laborers, called kargar-i kuch or emigrant laborers, came to constitute the majority of the farm laborers on almost all the farms (Ibid, p.20).

There was severe shortage of technical employees in these mechanized farm. The farm owners either employed unskilled young men and trained them at farms, or hired the graduates of the farm machinery schools (Kristjanson, 1960:7). In any case, in order to keep them on the farm, the operators had to treat them well. In the case of the Mahdavi farm, for example, a driver and an assistant-driver had a yearly income of 83,600 rials (\$1,115) and 50,250 rials (\$670) respectively, and they were provided with two-room brick house; while an agricultural laborer received 28,000 rials (\$373) for seven months' work and was provided with a mud house. Nevertheless, the income of migrant agricultural laborers in Gorgan was far better than that in their home lands, such as Zabol (Okazaki, 1968:20-21). The reason for that was the low level of agricultural laborer's income in Sistan and Khorasan Provinces.

Farm capitalism could appear only in those region characterized by the specific conditions mentioned above. The question raised here about other regions of Iran is:



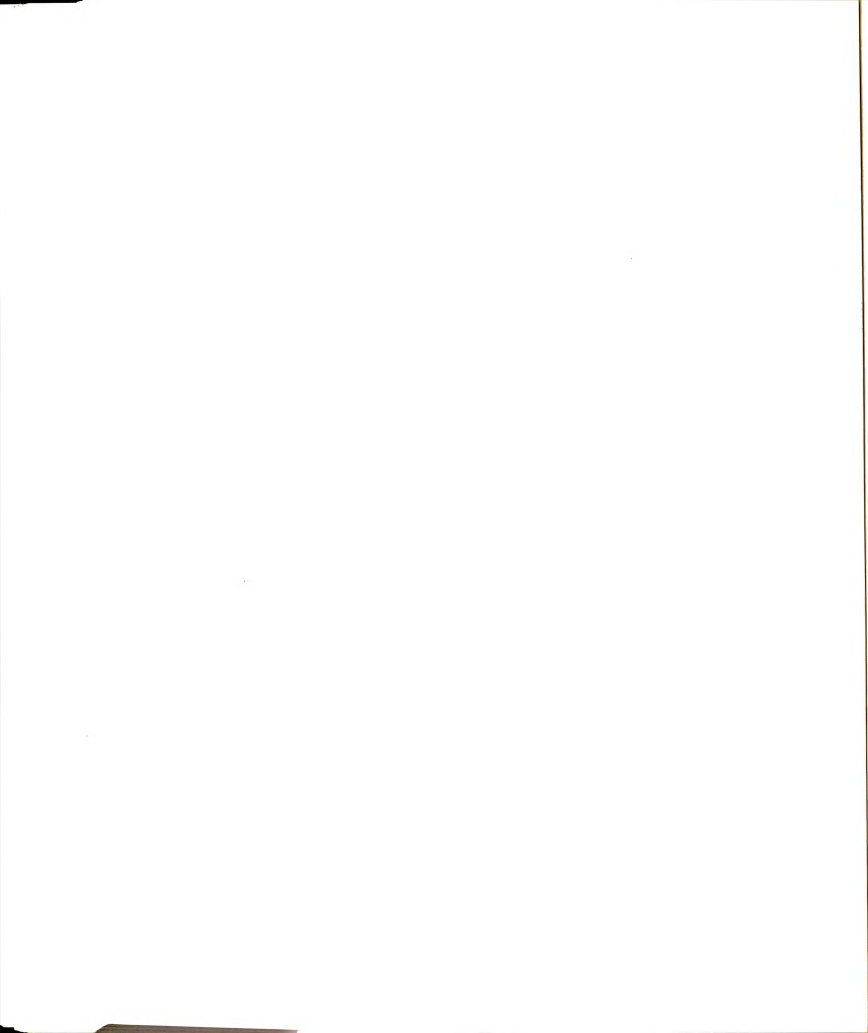
Was it possible for the bourgeoisie to invest in the agriculture of other regions of the country? I will deal with this question in part IV of this dissertation.

100  
100  
100

## 7.6. Endnotes

1. Muzara-eh comes from the arabic word zar meaning sowing together. Although it emplys cultivation by both parties, in reality, one party gives the means of production, the other works on land. Muzara-eh is a advance form of Muaka-reh which was the common relation of production during the Sasaned (Cf. Khosrovi, 1976:67-69).
2. Muzara-eh was not a mutual agreement, as most of researchers on this subject argue (e.g, Lambton, 1953), because share-croppers did not have the right to challenge the landlords' offers.
3. Buneh will be discussed fully in the next chapter.
4. Comparable terms existed elsewhere in Iran, e.g., the Khish in Khuzestan and the Zouj in central Iran.
5. According to Islamic law, in muzara-eh contract the peasant must provide some means of production beside his own labor otherwise the contract is not muzara-eh. Najm-i Razi, in his book Mersad al-ibad, indicated that muzara-an (share-croppers) were those who had some access to the means of production (1973:519). Atabak al-Juvayni also mentioned peasants who had some of the implements of production (1950:67).
6. This buneh was composed of five share-cropper households.
7. Article 520 of the Civil Code reads as follows: In a muzara-eh it is lawful to make a condition that one of the two parties should give to the other party some other thing in addition to a share from the produce (quoted in Parham, 1971:102).

8. The fixed-rent contract was often merely a verbal one (Lambton, 1953:319).
9. This is not to overlook the fact that share-cropping had advantages over the fixed-rent system where there were great fluctuations in crop prices.
10. The word dehqan has been used for different peasant group and sometimes as a general category of the peasantry. We have found that some scholars have used the word "dehqan" specifically for independent peasant producer, e.g., Khosrovi, 1979 and Sodagar, 1978.
11. Northern Syria had changed from nomadic grazing to mechanized grain growing, and irrigated cotton cultivation after the War (Cf. Warriner, 1952:70-112).
12. In 1925 the Turkaman tribes were disarmed by the army.
13. There were some socio-cultural reasons for not hiring nomads. For more information on this see Okazki, 1968.
14. According to the 1956 Population Census, the number of emigrants from Zabol reached 5,687.



CHAPTER EIGHT  
PRE-CAPITALIST DIVISION OF LABOR

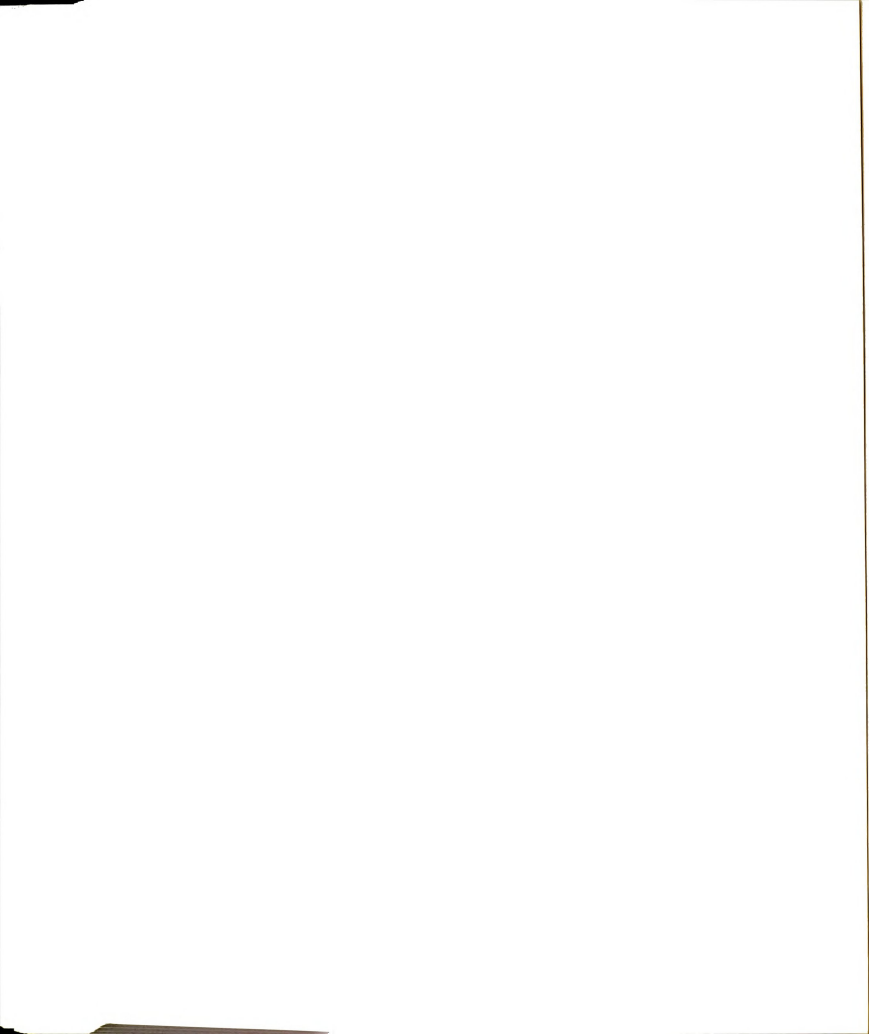
8.1. Introduction

One of the essential aspects of rural life has always been the organization of production. In the pre-land reform period (before 1962), the labor force of every Iranian village was organized within a framework of pre-capitalist institutions. In other world, the mobilization of the labor factor for participation in production took place in the framework of prevailing scio-economic conditions and relations. The social division of labor in the village has developed under the influence of two main traditional institutions: Khanevar<sup>1</sup> (peasant household unit), and the buneh<sup>2</sup> (cooperative unit of production). Three fourth of the labor factor in agriculture of an average village was framed within these institutions (Golabian, 1977:155).

The cooperative form of organization of agricultural production (buneh) could be seen in dry areas of the country, including the central, eastern and southern regions, while, in rainy parts of the country, north, north-west and west, the household agricultural unit of production (both nuclear and extended families) was prevalent.

The village society was not a simple agglomeration of peasants and agricultural producer, but rather was a very complicated formation with many internal divisions of labor.

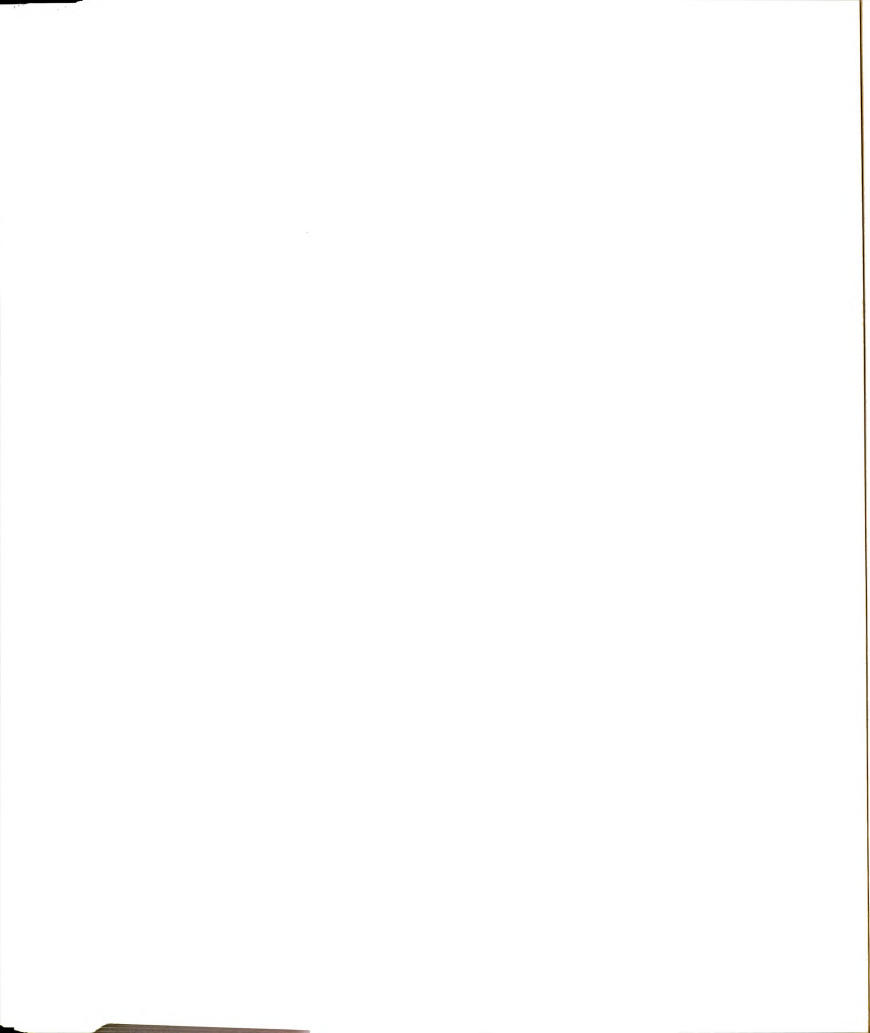




The villagers were involved in flock productions. This section of their economies was also operated individually or cooperatively.

In addition to the actual agricultural production and processing activities there were often other activities without which the rural communities could not function; service occupations such as barbers, bath-keepers, builder, craftsmen, etc., are some examples. Each of these activities was either responding to the individual household needs or cooperative's. For instance, some of crafts were individual household independent activities, e.g., weaving carpets, straw-mats, etc; others such as muqanni (well and qanat digger), ahangar (blacksmith) and najjar (carpenter) which were serving both khanevars and bunehs were in the various stages of separation from cooperative agricultural teams.

All the factors of production were divided and distributed among these units of production, through various legal and socio-economic channels. The whole production process was marked by this pattern of division. Different population groups, in relation to their political, social and economic power, controlled a bigger or smaller portion of these factors. For example, in the beginning of every agricultural year, when the general land-use pattern of the village was decided, each plot of land was divided among the buneh or individual household.

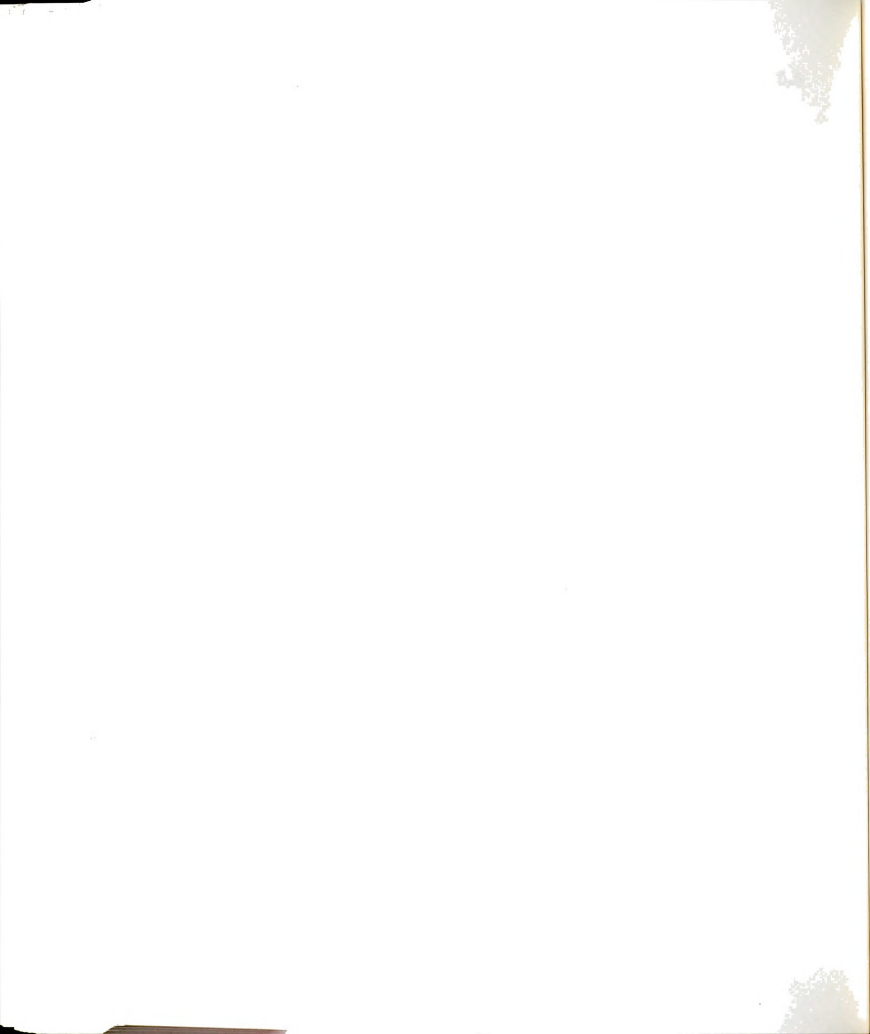


## 8.2. Khanevar (Peasant household productive unit)

The household structure (khanevar) is, in practice, the smallest unit of working organization. It is a group of considerable importance to the peasants. Peasant khanevar is strong and cohesive, held together by traditional bonds of loyalty, common economic striving, mutual dependence, and the prospect of inheritance. Cooperation within the immediate household is essential, for without a household the individual in the village stands unprotected and isolated. All member of the khanevar, from small children to retired elders are members of this unit. They work in the framework of the household and earn for the family. In other words, it is the khanevar unit that is recognized as a working unit, not the individual member.

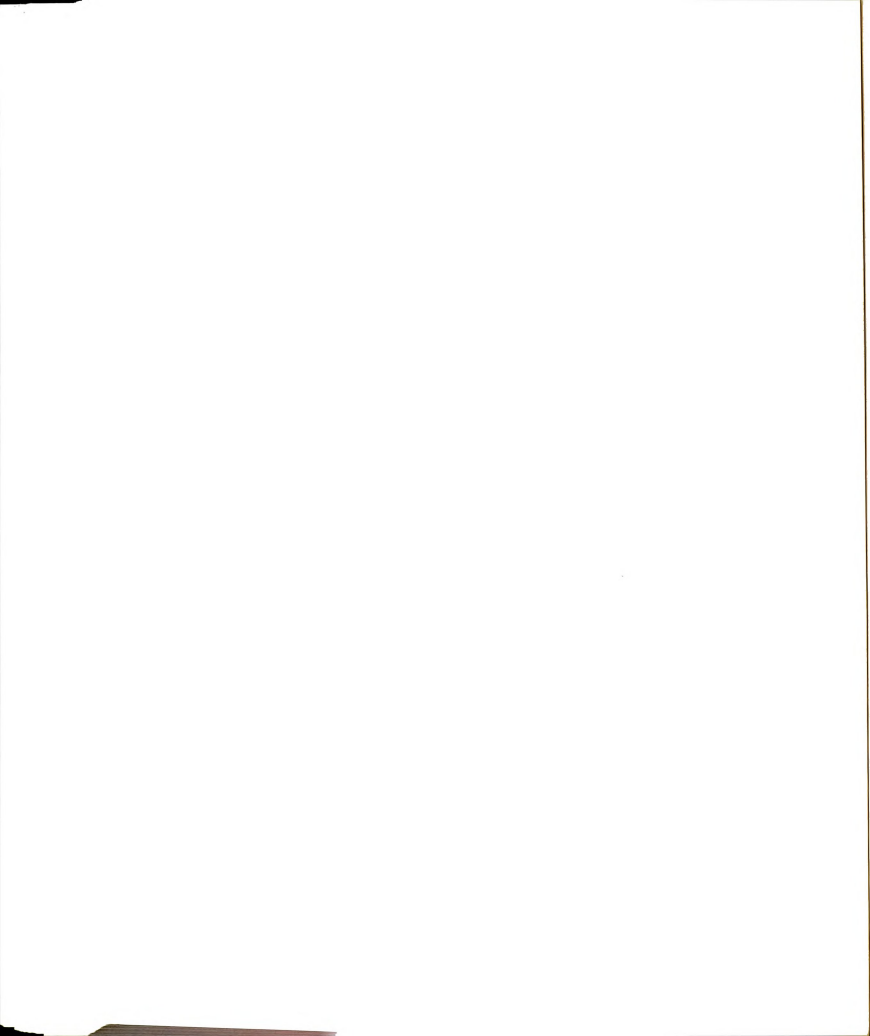
The indivisibility of the peasant household, as the strongest and smallest socio-economic unit in rural Iran before the land reform, affected and modified the internal proportions and external dimensions of the agricultural production process. The nature of each production factor, the prevailing socio-economic forces and factors divided all production activities in a household into different tasks with certain dimensions.

The peasants knew that their productive power was tied to the number and especially the cohesion of the extended family they formed. The means to assure this cohesion were two: ties of filiation and matrimonial relations. First of all,



each family tried to multiply its descendants and gave considerable value to the fecundity of its women. Next came matrimonial relations: uniting families within a lineage, and trying to unite families among several lineages or segments of a lineage (Vieille, 1978: 452). Patri-parallel first-cousin marriage has been popular in rural Iran. There are a number of socio-economic reasons for this practice, but the major consideration was one of perpetuating alliance patterns for work and social reasons. This type of marriage maintained close ties between related families, which were traditionally necessary for joint agricultural activities such as harvesting (Salmanzadeh, 1980: 133).

The typical Iranian peasant family is patriarchal. The father rules the household and makes the decisions; the wife's opinion is unimportant for her activity is confined to household tasks, housekeeping and assisting in agriculture at times of peak labor demand. The activities of the wife are, like herself, devalued. The value of her work seems unknown not only when she is occupied solely with domestic activities, but even when she does activities of agricultural production (rice and so on) or craft (carpet-weaving and so on) equivalent to those of a man (Vieille, 1978:459). Usually, sons and daughters are excluded from any major family decision, especially if they are young and unmarried. Boys have considerable freedom and enjoy household privileges denied to girls, but learn early on to obey their father's decisions, a custom which extends into adulthood and after marriage. The

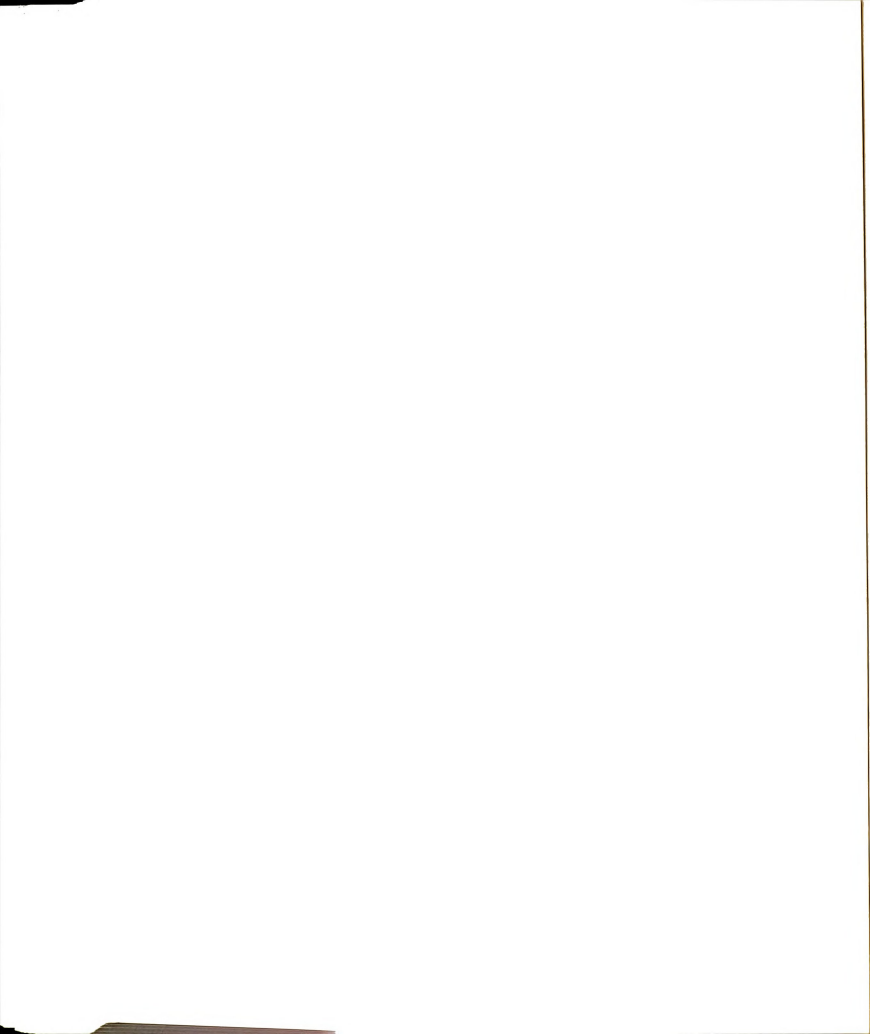


young man must defer to his elder, despite marriage, since he will live in his father's house, with whom his new nuclear family generally pool their resources. His livelihood is often dependent on his father to whose authority he must submit. Upon the father's death authority usually passes to the eldest son and, the male hierarchic structure still prevails within the household.

Peasant khanevars were involved in various agricultural tasks including farming, livestock rearing, orchard gardening and domestic industry. There was labor division based on age and sex. In general the age distribution of active individuals in rural Iran related to traditions of agricultural activities. In village life economic activity could start as soon as a boy could control a dankey or mule during harvest, and a girl could work, for example, at rice transplanting-- at about ten years old --until the villagers were physically incapable of further work--at perhaps 70 years old. Taking into account the type and the difficulty of work, three main sex-age grouping of the household members were recognizable: men, women and children, and the old.

The most important work tasks were those associated with the production and harvest of field crops. Men and teenage boys of the khanevar performed the land preparation (Jones, 1967:70). Plows were drawn by a single team of cattle, as was the harrow (Kramer, 1982:32). If the household needed more hands for plowing, the usual practice was to ask other male relatives to perform some help. It was usually expected, in



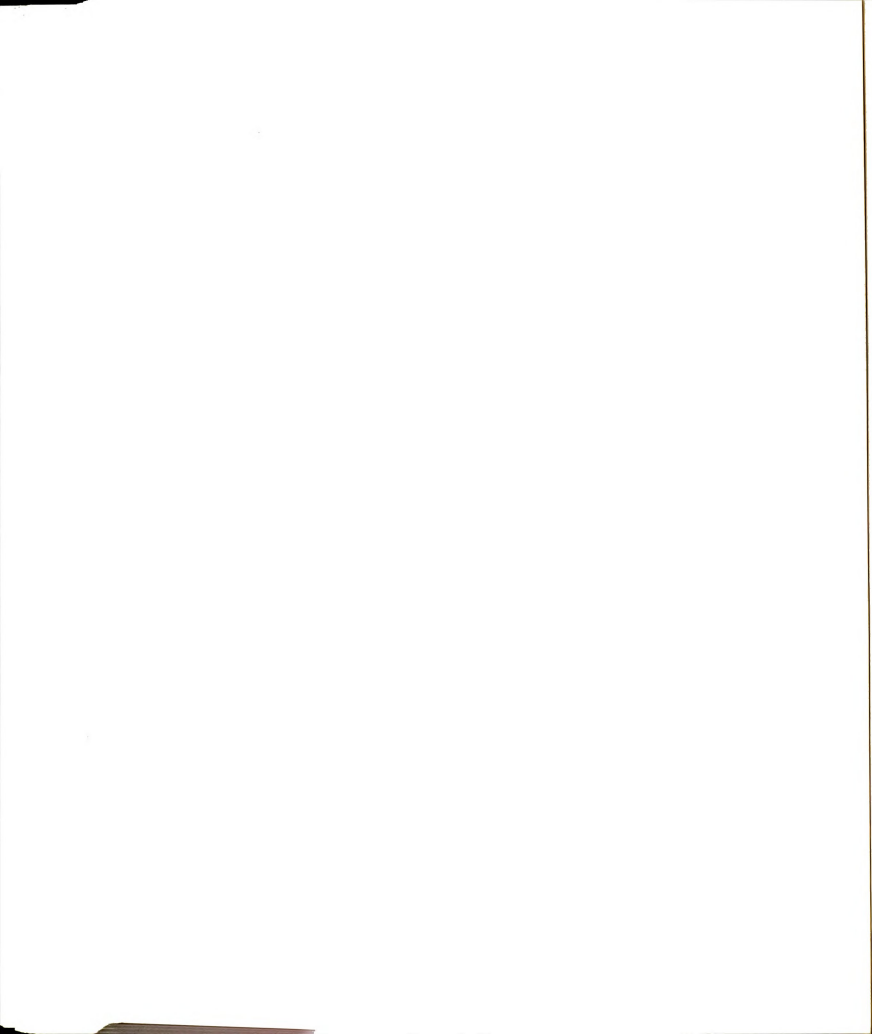


the case of need, that the beneficiary of the help would return the favor to the donors.

Irrigation in the rural society of Iran has a priority. Iranian peasant households had a long history of cooperative activities in irrigation. In most of the villages there was an irrigation council whose task was regulating the irrigation operation (Khosrovi, 1979:71). Here I should emphasize that in spite of the operation of the irrigation councils, the irrigation was the most important cause of the conflict between the peasant households. Irrigation was carried out entirely by men. It was tightly scheduled and implemented on an individual basis by each peasant, in his turn, using a shovel to create or destroy miniature dams bordering the canals (Kramer, 1982:32).

In planting crops like wheat and barely usually men and teenage boys performed the work of broadcasting the seed over the prepared land. Rice was started in beds and then transplanted to the paddies. Men and boys planted rice in beds and after the seed had sprouted and grown into a small plant, women and children then transplanted it to the paddies. Since the task of transplanting the rice requires a great amount of "stoop labor" the men delegate it to the women and younger children, preferring to act as supervisors themselves (Jones, 1967:71). Although much of the planting work was carried out by men, rural women were involved in the different stages of growing rice, tea, cereals, cotton and other cash crops.

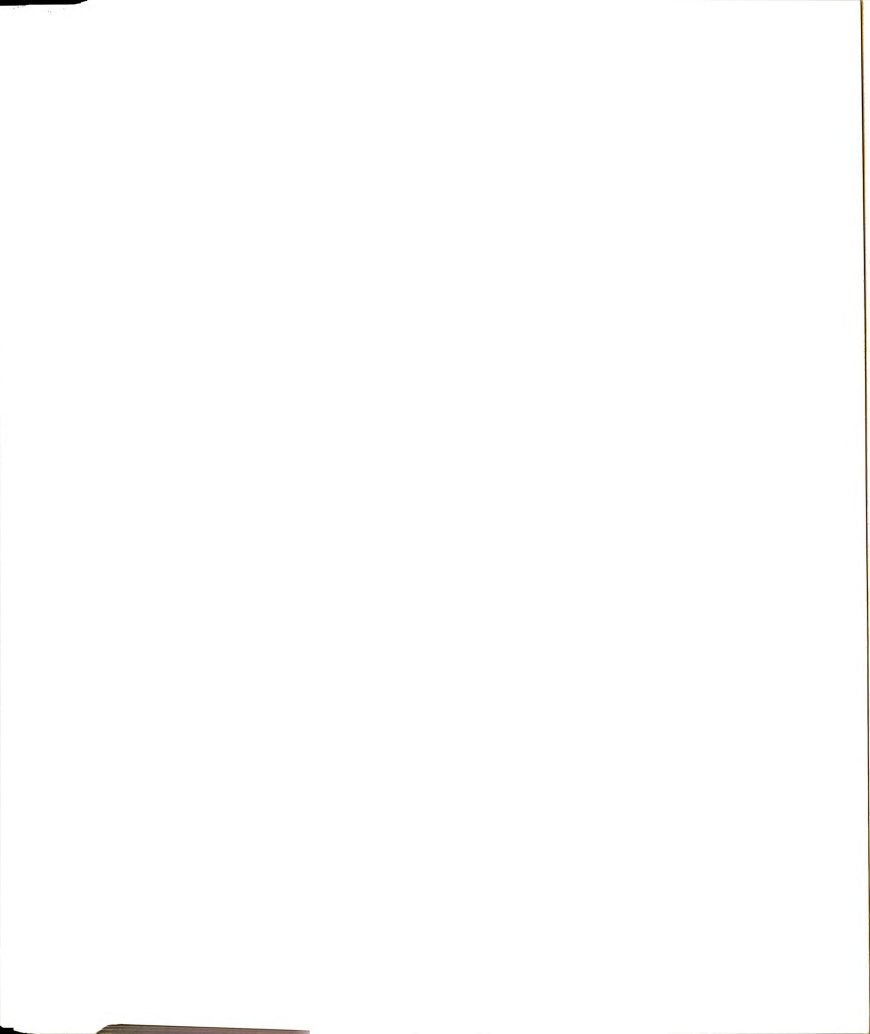
The gathering of crops employed all members of the family



except for the very young and their caretakers. "Young girls age probably from 8 to 12 years, act as baby-sitters, while the rest of the family is engaged in the harvest" (Jones, 1967:71). Wheat and barley is harvested by hand method usually done by men and teenage boys. As Khosrovi has indicated, during the harvest, male members of the household established the harvest team for grain, while during summer, female members of the household arranged the harvest team for summer crops (e.g. water-melon and so on) (1972:90). The role of women in harvesting the crops like cotton and tea was substantial.

For threshing, teenage boys directed animals in a circle on grain stalks which were placed on the ground, and men introduced more grain stalks to the circle until the seeds were separated from the stalk. The grain was then tossed in the air, usually by men working with crude wooden forks to remove the chaff. At this stage, women usually helped the men to put the clean grains in a bag. The task of removing the clean grain to the home or storage was performed by men.

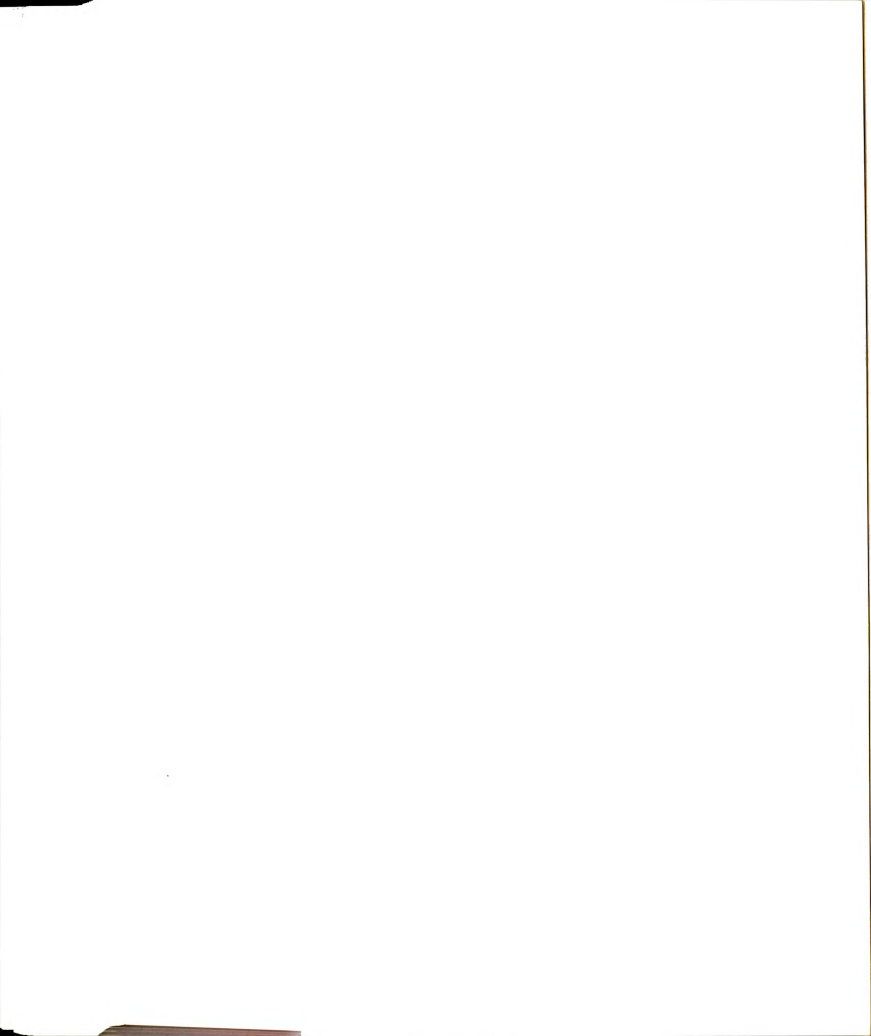
As I mentioned before, the peasant households were involved in other activities beside cultivation. Rural households typically owned several chickens, a few goats or sheep, a donkey or a cow (English, 1966:82). The livestock was under the supervision of one person--usually a male adult--who collected the animals from the various households each morning and drove them to a communal pasture to graze during the day. At night the animals were driven back to the village and



distributed to their proper owners. The heavy task of in-home animal husbandry was shouldered by women of the household.

Iranian villages have also inherited some crafts. Some of these crafts, as I mentioned before, belonged to and were operated by the individual households. The more important of these were weaving carpets, loosely woven woolen mats (jajim), straw-mats, short-napped coarse rugs (gilim), pottery, etc. Along with a partial participation in agricultural production, nutrition and sustenance activities (including preparation of meals, backing bread, preparation of dairy products) which are highly differentiated and performed by the females, all the rural women were involved in the different craft activities.<sup>3</sup> As English has observed, some of the less talented women worked at lesser crafts, spinning wool into yarn, cleaning hair of goats, and making woolen hats, stockings, and felts (1966:82). With regard to weaving crafts, women received some help from children and older members of the household.

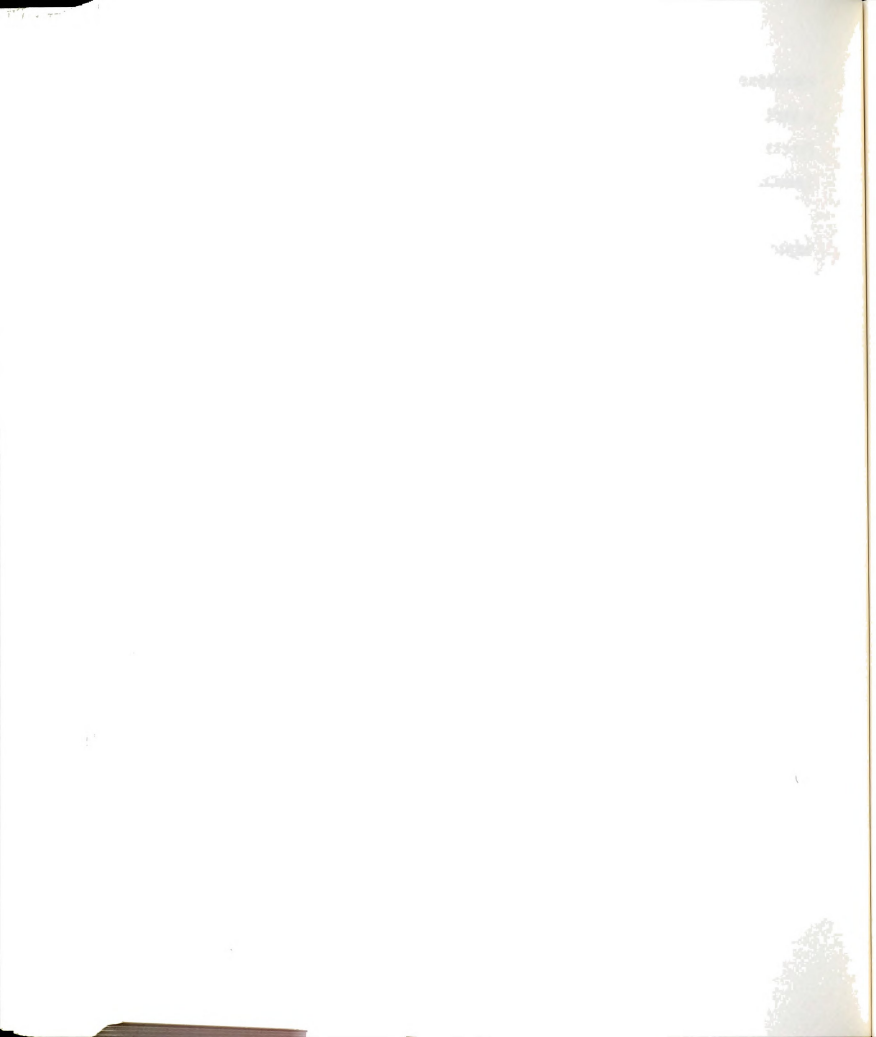
In spite of the fact that rural women always played an active role in the economic life of peasantry production they are never reported as economically active. They had no control over finance or the household's budget and they were allowed only to exchange minor commodities, which they produced at home, with the pedlar. Although the bulk of economic production was shouldered by women, the sociolegal superiority of men remained intact. This overall dominance by men, however, does not imply that women did not have recognized areas of



competence and authority. On the contrary, as I have presented, a strict division of labor and differentiation role and functions between men and women were characteristic of the Iranian rural household.

Generally speaking, the limits of peasant property, especially water, compelled him to limit the size of the family (Azkia, 1980: 109). Some studies of Iranian peasantry have shown a relationship between the amount of water rights (haqqabeh) for irrigation and family size: the larger the water right the larger the family (Rural Research Group, 1975:120). Others have shown the same relationship between the amount of landholding and type of family. For example, Ajami has found the higher percentage of extended families among the larger farms than the smaller ones (1969:68). From the findings of these studies one can conclude, as Okazaki has, that in the case of peasants with a small amount of property, all the family's labor would be used for the family's farm; while in the case of large-scale peasants, if the extended family's labor was not sufficient, it was clear that wage labor was absolutely essential to household production. Traditionally, in such a case, each peasant household would recruit a landless laborer to assist him with ploughing, harvesting and other work. The landless laborer and his family would join the peasant household sharing meals with his employer and living in his compound. The landless laborer's wife would usually assist in the household chores. He was hired on an





annual verbal contract basis. His salary was paid in kind at some proportion of the peasant's harvest share (Salmanzadeh, 1980: 119).

In conclusion, I would say that the peasant household (khanevar) with whatever means available was able to manage the production process in spite of facing many difficulties. They divided the task among the members of the household. And, in the case of shortage of the labor, extra hands were brought into the production process either from other relatives or neighbors, or from landless laborers. In any case, the organization of production operated within the framework of the household.

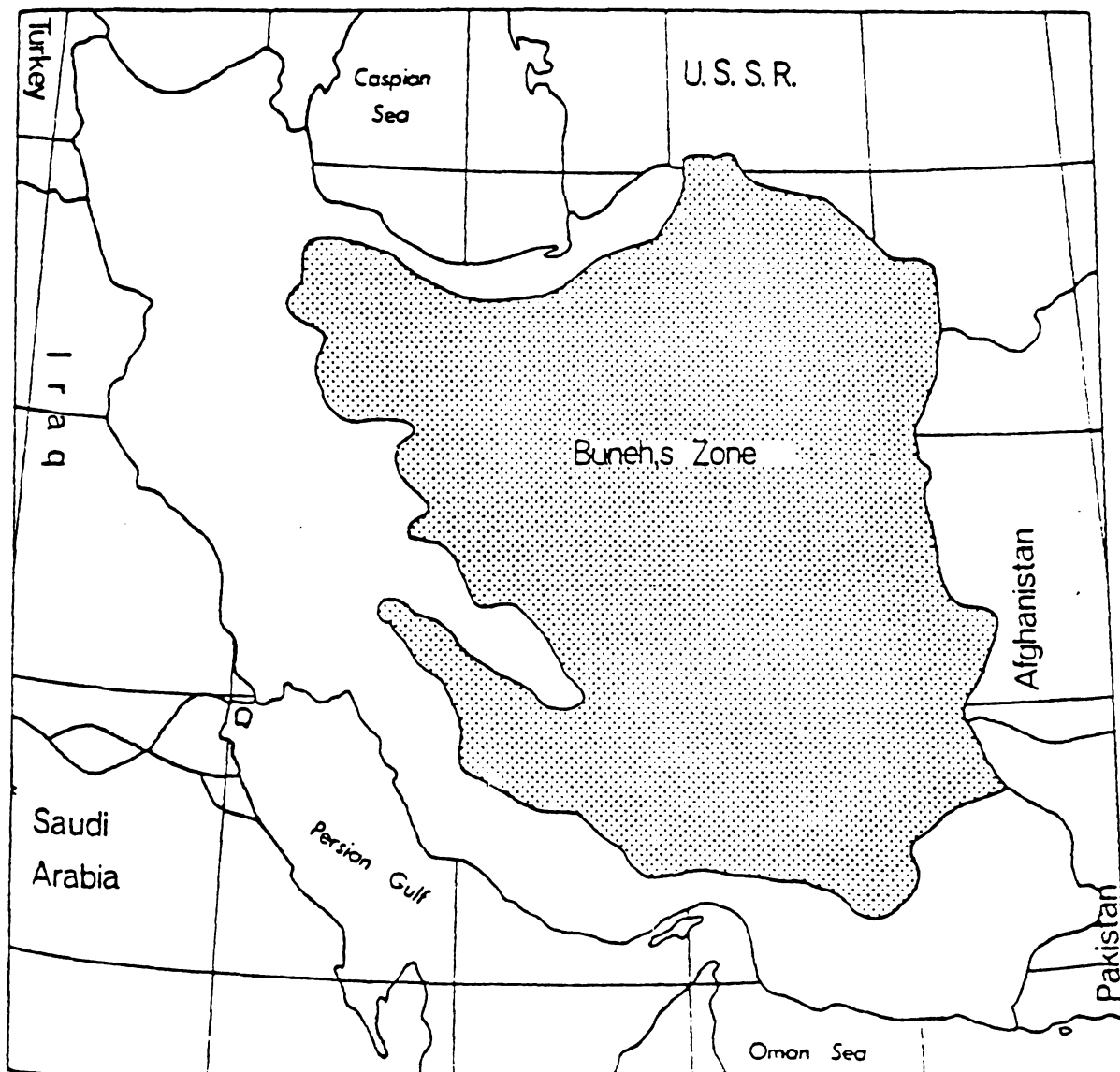
### 8.3. Buneh (Cooperative unit of production)

The household was, however, not the only working unit. Agricultural production was further organized in the larger working organizations called buneh. Until the period of land reform, production activities in some Irnain rural areas and communities were organized in a hierarchically ordered structure, the buneh, a unit composed of several households. In the areas which buneh was common, the peasant holding a nasaq usually did not work an assigned plot of land alone. Rather, it was typical for the arable land of a village to be organized into units farmed cooperatively by teams of share-croppers. The whole population of the village was divided into bunehs. Nearly all the labor power in a village was trained and channelled toward production inside the traditional institutions.

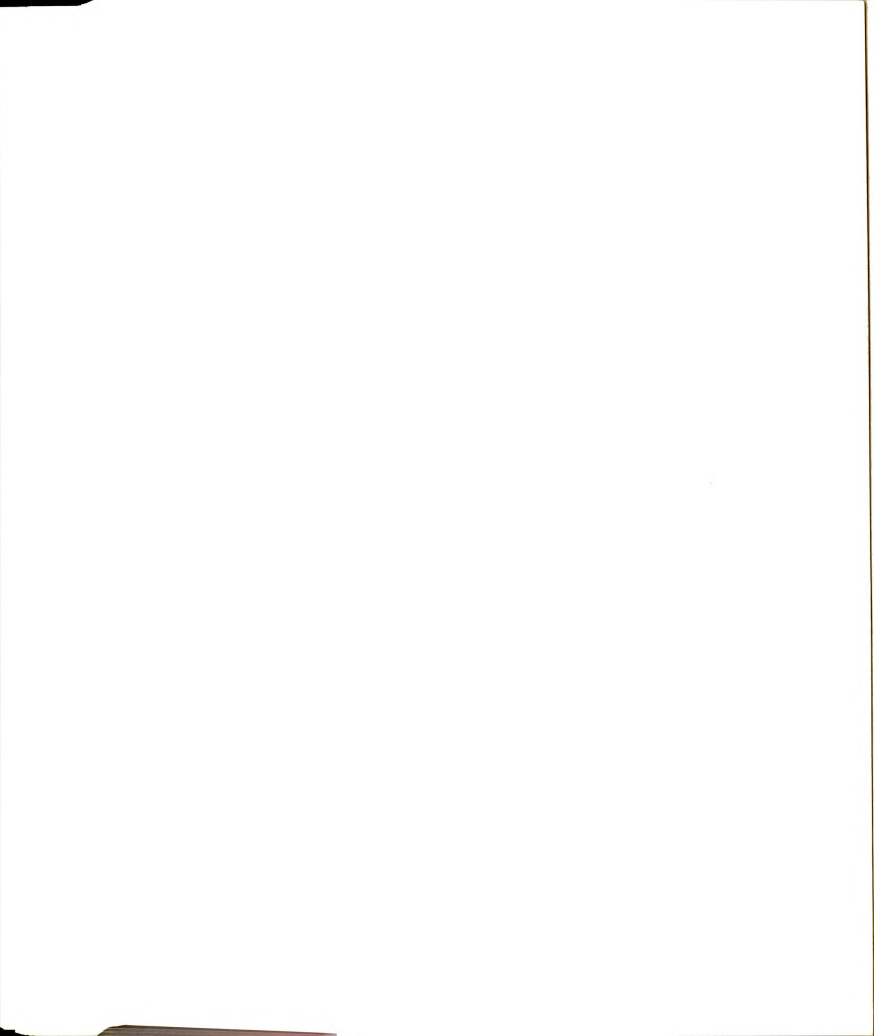
Buneh was developed as an independent cooperative organization for agricultural production in which a team of share-croppers, based on the division of labor, cultivated the land cooperatively (Safinezhad, 1974:3; Azkia, 1980:39). It had evolved as a complex social organization for agricultural production with distinct cultivation and water rights, and a semi-structured farm management. The major function of the buneh was the efficient exploitation of productive land and careful use of the scarce water resource; however, since village life and agriculture were intrinsically interrelated, bunehs necessarily influenced all aspects of rural life. The buneh unit was more than a simple assemblage of peasant households. Its members were interwoven by social and economic relations with each other, creating a coherent and integrated social and economic totality. "Kinship and family had great power in establishing the bunehs" (Alipour-Fard, 1971:27). In fact, membership in a buneh gave social status to a share-cropper while his actual position within the buneh determined the relative degree of influence he could exert in village affairs (Hooglund, 1982:23). In short, the buneh was the key unit of agricultural organization under the Iranian pre-capitalist share-cropping system.

In fact, the buneh system developed in Iranian villages, was a response to the challenges of a merciless natural environment. Safinezhad, an Iranian authority on study of buneh, has illustrated that bunehs have developed mainly in the eastern half of the country which faces the shortage of water (see Figure 8.1 ).

Figure 8.1: The Zones of Bunehs



Source: Safinezhad, 1974



He emphasized that the situations of nature in these areas forced the share-cropper to establish an organization of production to use the scarce resource in efficient ways within the existing relations of production (1974:nine). The formation of these production units was an agro-technical and agro-economic necessity, because agricultural production could not take place without special collective regulations and co-ordination which would solve the environmental constraints arising from the scarcity of production factors especially water. As Khosrovi indicated:

The reliance on irrigation works necessitated communal solidarity and village cooperation (Khosrovi, 1970:48).

Or by another researcher in this field:

The irrigation system required team in the utilization of the village water resources, especially the digging and maintenance of the qanat, the main underground water channel (Ajami, 1976:15).

Because of the agro-environmental constraints in most of Iran, the preparation of land, supply of irrigation water, and organization of necessary labor power for tillage and cultivation were beyond the working and administrative capacity of the individual family. It is believed that this was the basis for the emergence and formation of buneh or muti-family collective, which have affected almost everything in rural communities.

5000

5000

In the pre-land reform period, all resources of the villages were distributed according to the buneh system of each village to each individual household. Therefore, each individual received a plot of land within the framework of the buneh. For example, the land was parceled into plough-lands or khish. Every plough-land had a special water-right to a part of the village's water resources (Golabian, 1977:56). As long as the village had sufficient land and water resources, it was possible, if the population grew, to increase the buneh group's holdings, or to create new buneh teams. On the other hand, if resources were fully exploited, an increased population could only be provided with land by reducing the area of the buneh holding or by more intensive exploitation of the non-irrigated land, which was held individually.

The size, structure and number of bunehs in each village was determined by the amount of irrigation water, the extent of cultivable land, the number of adult share-croppers, and the availability of draught animals for ploughing (cf. Safinezhad, 1974:8-15). The size and structure of the buneh were not at all permanent but changed constantly. The population structure continually changed, some share-croppers grew old and withdrew, new generations grew up, married and formed new families. Hence, during a generation some bunehs disappeared, many changed and many were formed. Generally speaking, the range of the bunehs' size was between six to sixteen men.

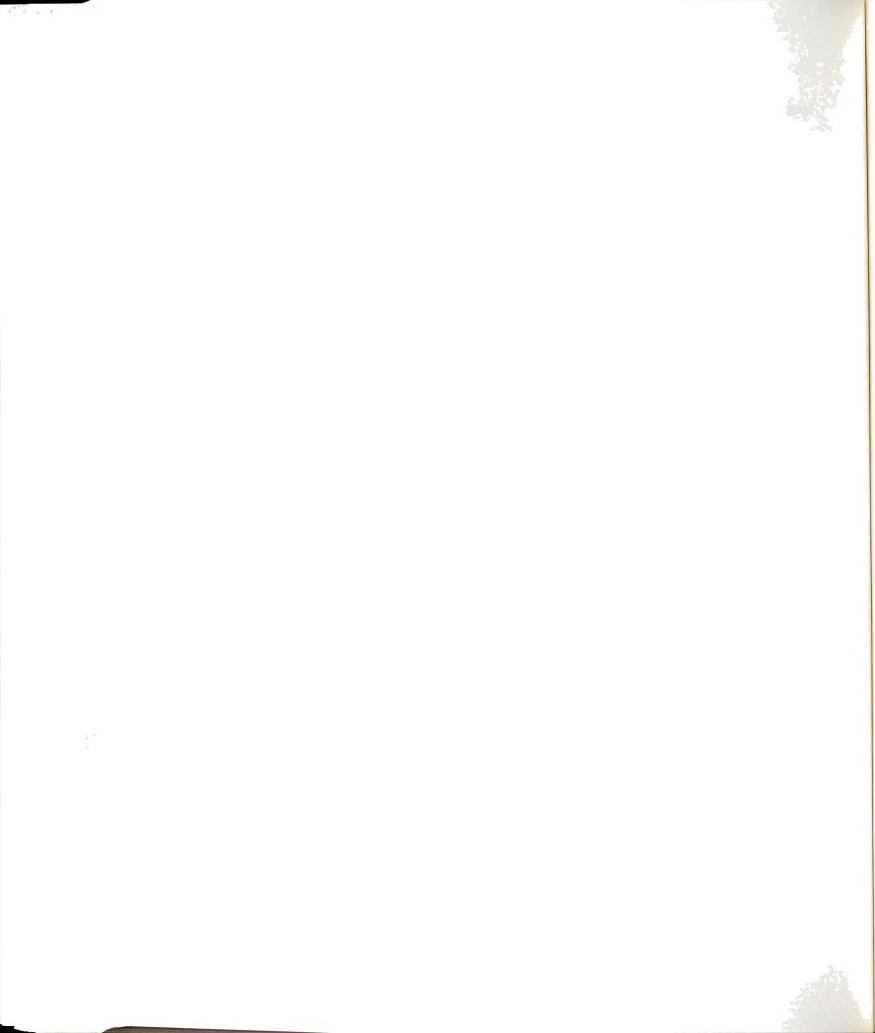




As I mentioned above, the buneh pattern of each village was approximately in harmony with their kinship relationships.<sup>4</sup> These two structures, while reinforcing each other, were constantly interacting. These interactions took two major courses. On the one hand, the kinship network of the community tried to homogenize the buneh structure in order to create a pure relationship between kinship ties and buneh membership. On the other hand, sex and age restrictions constrained the family-based buneh teams to accept members from other households, in order to complete their working capacity (Golabian, 1977:171). Consequently, the base of new bunehs, rearrangement of existing ones and termination of old ones were normal in villages.

The basic structure of bunehs was mainly invariable throughout rural Iran. Basically, each buneh had six main members. It was under the charge of one peasant known as the sarbuneh.<sup>5</sup> He was chosen by the land-owner or his bailiff. Experience and expert knowledge in agricultural affairs was a necessary qualification for the sarbuneh. Each sarbuneh had two assistants known as varbuneh, and they were chosen by the sarbuneh from among his friend, and relatives. Finally, the foundation of a buneh structure, at the bottom of the buneh structure, was share-croppers (Azkia, 1980:37).

The main director of the buneh was the landlord. His orders through the bailiff or village headman (kadkhoda) were passed to the sarbuneh. Sarbuneh transferred those order to his varbunehs and share-croppers. In some areas, a third person known as the gavband was interposed between the buneh



and the landowner or the lessee. The gavband usually managed some four to six bunehs (Safinezhad, 1974:39). If buneh, were under the direction of the gavband, half of the landlord's responsibility was on the gavband's sholders. In fact, gavband was considered the second arbab of the village. Based on the agreement between gavband and landlord, gavband used the landlord's and water and were responsible for preparing seed and oxen, arranging the labor force (buneh members), offering some credit to the members of buneh in advance, making contracts with pillage blacksmiths and carpenters, supervising the division of crops, coordinating the cleaning of irrigation canals, and making arrangements to sell the crops (Safinezhad 1974: 95-6).

I have indicated that the main structure of buneh consisted of three categories namely, sarbuneh, varbuneh, and zare'in. A significant characteristic of the buneh was its internal division of labor, based on experience and skill in agricultural affairs. As supervisors, sarbunehs had considerably easier work than other peasants (Safinezhad, 1966:116). At the beginning of each agricultural year all the sarbunehs of a village gathered to decide how the field should be distributed among the bunehs. Once these basic decisions had been made, the important tasks of each sarbuneh included marking off the boundaries of his buneh's fields and plots, determining type of crop for each plot, assigning the task of each member, coordinating the irrigation, sowing the seed, contracting with seasonal labor if it is necessary,



supervising threshing the grain, controlling the division of crops, and finally mediating between buneh's members and the landlord (Cf. Safinezhad, 1974:46-47). It was not customary for the sarbuneh to assist with difficult tasks of ploughing, breaking up of the soil, weeding, irrigation, and harvesting. He did, however, inspect this work, since his own economic welfare was tied up with the productive success of his buneh (Hooglund, 1982:24).

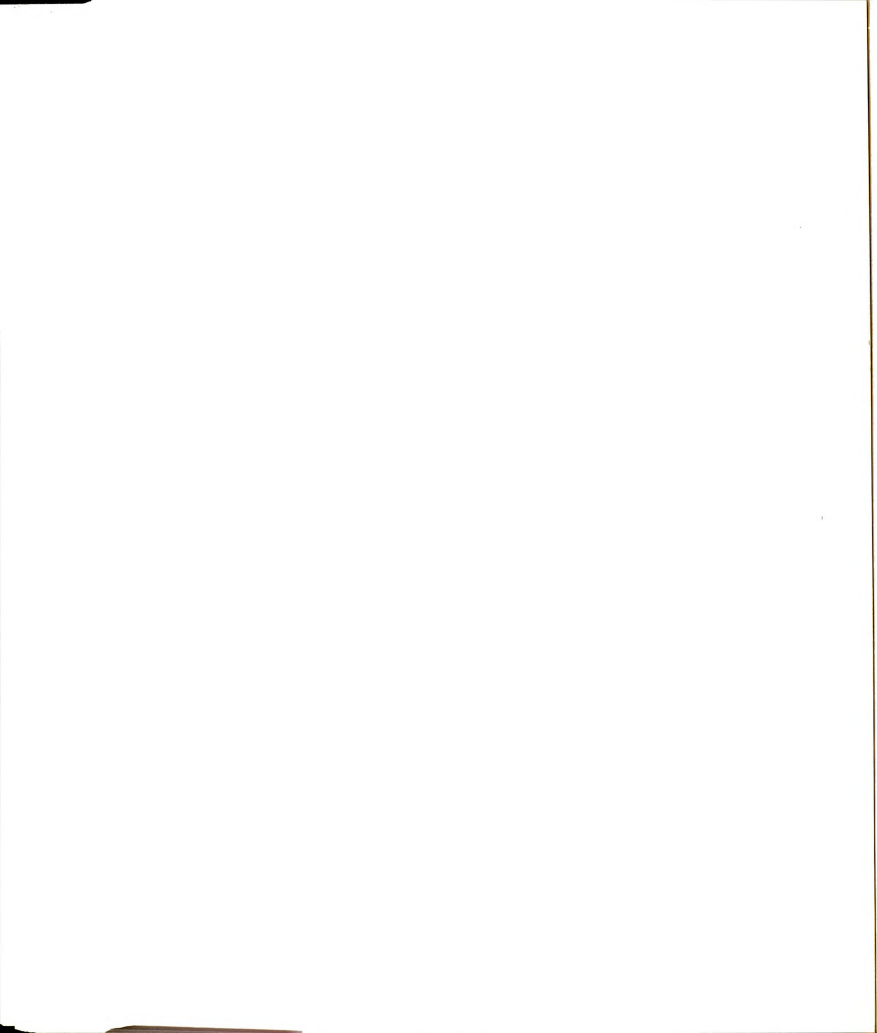
The assistants, varbunehs, helped supervise the work of bunehs, a relatively important responsibility, since the several ploughlands in each buneh were typically noncontiguous. Therefore, while a sarbuneh was busy in one field, he could dispatch his assistants to be present at other fields. The major tasks of varbunehs included irrigation of the field, making boundaries based on sarbuneh's orders, bringing manure to the fields, guarding the fields under cultivation, harvesting summer crops (syfi), and controlling the work of the peasants (Safinezhad, 1966:119; 1974:47-48). In their supervisory capacity, assistants often were exempted from performing some of the difficult labor of the bunehs.

I have indicated that the foundation of the buneh structure was the peasant share-croppers. From the initial autumn ploughing of winter wheat and barley to the final harvest of summer fruits and vegetables some ten to eleven months later, the peasants were responsible for performing most of the labor of the bunehs. Their days included tedious chores and many long hours. Their most important task was to work with and take care of the oxen team. Usually, each

Peasant was in charge of one team.<sup>6</sup> Generally, all the peasants of a buneh worked together in doing the other work. First the fields had to be ploughed. Following that, the earth clods turned up by the ploughing had to be smoothed (Wulff, 1966:266). After the seeds were planted, there was a slack period in the winter. Spring brought a feverish revival of activity. Earthen channels and barriers for conducting and diverting irrigation water had to be constructed. Ploughing and sowing for summer crops, spreading manure, and weeding all took time. During harvest, peasants were expected to transport the cut grain from the fields to the threshing area on their backs (Safinezhad, 1966:118; 1974:48-49). In addition to the above mentioned tasks, the peasants must take care of the oxen. Guarding the stack was another task of the peasants. I should mention here that most of the free duties for the landlord were carried out by these bottom members of the buneh.

A brief comparison between the tasks of the different categories of the buneh illustrates a significant feature of buneh, namely the unequal nature of the division of labor. As a result, the share of a crop which each member of the buneh received usually depended upon his position in the division of labor. The absentee land-owners encouraged group farming in order to run their large estates and to deal with share-croppers with relative ease.

As has been indicated, buneh was related to some marginal groups as well. The first group consisted of those craftsmen who produced directly for the bunehs. Members of this group





were such as muqanni (well and qanat digger), ahangar (blacksmith), and najjar (carpenter) (Safinezhad, 1974:83). They were paid in kind at harvest and carried out repairs for the buneh throughout the year (Lambton, 1953:345). The second group were barbers and bathkeepers. Members of the buneh were allowed to go to the public bath regularly without payment during one agricultural year. Also, the village barber went to each buneh field weekly and cut their hair and shaved their beards free of charge. In return, both bathkeeper and barber received a share of the crop at the harvest time (Safinezhad, 1974:85). Finally, each buneh needed some extra hands during the harvest time. For this purpose, daily wage laborers were hired. This fragment of the labor was allocated by means of a very primitive labor market, which reflected the traditional buneh structure. They were temporarily employed by bunehs and paid either in cash or kind or a combination of the two.

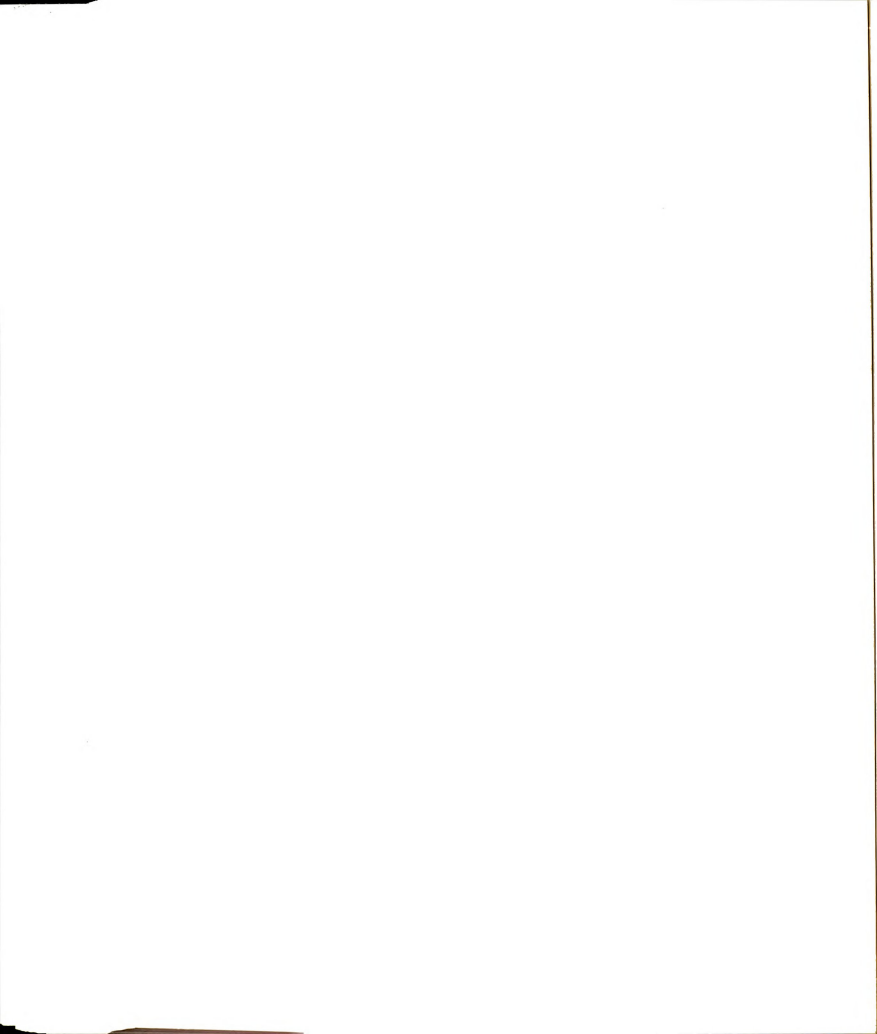
As has already been discussed, the share of the crops that went to the landlord from the harvest was determined by the five elements of production. Each buneh, as a unit, divided its harvest with the land-owner on the same basis. The share of the crop which was left for the buneh, after paying the share of the marginal groups, could be subdivided unequally among its members. Usually the sarbuneh and his assistants had a higher percentage than the share-croppers, and the sarbuneh received an additional bonus from the landlords (Khosrovi, 1972:79).

To sum up, buneh as a cooperative organization of agricultural production was beneficial to the Iranian peasants since by means of these institutions the rural population succeeded in using scarce production resources in a very efficient way. Although it had some disadvantages, e.g., an internal unequal division of labor and crop, it strengthened the socio-economic position of the peasants.



### 8.9. Endnotes

1. According to Petrushevsky, since the Middle Ages, each rural economic unit in Iran has been called khaneh and/or khanevar (1965:543). Also, the members of a household are collectively referred to as a khanevadeh, in contrast to family, which in a village is used with the more restricted meaning of immediate kin (as in nuclear family) or the broader connection of "relatives." We have used khanevar since it is more common among Iranian scholars.
2. The multi-family production units have different names in various parts of the country: Sahra, Haraseh, Sarkar, Pycal, Pagav, Tirkar, darkar, Joeqh, and bonku are some examples.
3. Iranian rural women are weavers of the finest carpet in the world.
4. For a detailed information on relation between structure of buneh and kinship network see extensive scholarly work on bunehs by professor Javad Safinezhad (1974) of the University of Tehran.
5. Sarbuneh was the term for a buneh head. Other terms have been used in different parts of Iran such as abyar, oyar, and sarsalar (Safinezhad, 1974).
6. A peasant did not necessarily own the pair of oxen with which he worked. If he owned only one ox or none at all, it was necessary to rent from a gavband, or landlord (Cf. Alberts, 1963).



## CHAPTER NINE

### LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES

#### 9.1. Introduction

In Iran, like other societies, the forces of production are the motive forces of the society. The changes in these forces will change the economic relation. In other words, changes in the productive forces sooner or later compel the social relations of production to change. Each relation of production coincides with specific productive forces, but, it should be mentioned here that relations of production themselves affect the development of the productive forces.

It is the intention of this chapter to study the level of the development of the productive forces in rural Iran prior to the land reform.<sup>1</sup> As I have discussed in the theoretical chapter, the clue to the level of development of the productive forces may be sought in the instrument of labor, material resources, labor power and associated technological arrangements. In this chapter, I will consider these element separately and also in relation to other elements of the modes of production.

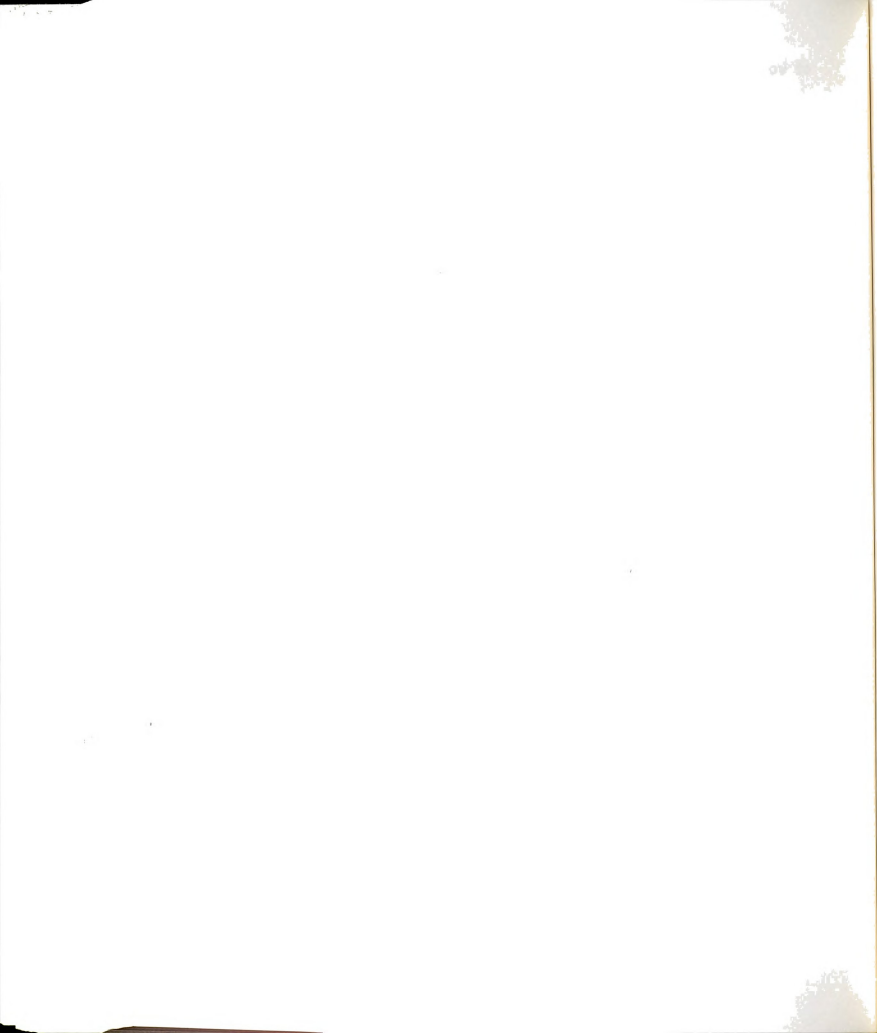
Instruments of labor, or tools, are things or combinations of things that function as links between the labor and the subject of labor. The agricultural tools such as the plough, spade and threshing machine are means by which peasants exercise their agro-economic intentions on nature. The subjects

of work in agriculture, or material resources, are land, water, seed, etc. They come into contact with the labor factor through tools and equipment. Labor power, as a purposeful power generated and raised by the population of rural communities, materialized in the body of any member who is able to work. Finally, the associated technological arrangement in agrarian society is all the methods and manners that peasants use in order to enable him to raise the plants and harvest their yields.

These factors were combined in certain quantitative proportions and thus account for difference in the agricultural activities of different places and groups settled there. Any quantitative or qualitative changes in these factors result in some changes in relations between the social groups. The nature of each productive factor played a very important role in the pre-land reform relations of production. On the other hand, through the history of rural Iran, fluctuation of the relations of production in the countryside has promoted some aspects of productive forces, while at the same time has stagnated the others.

## 9.2. Instruments of Labor

In fact, little is known about the tools used in Iranian agriculture. Except for very few studies and information, there has not been any serious research on this major aspect of agricultural production. Tools, which according to the predominant economic, technical and social conditions, from





shovels and scythes to tractor and combines, used in rural areas were not limited to those used directly in agriculture; many others were used in activities such as qanat construction, weaving industries, etc. The equipment used in a particular part of the production process were closely connected to the socio-economic relations of that production process and designated those relations.

In rural Iran, many different instruments have been used. Few of these tools enter into the production process only once, while others enter in several long and short periods. It is important to analyze the chain-link relation between different instruments in production process, if we are willing to understand the effect of the introduction of a new tool (e.g. a tractor or combine) into a village. There are instruments which are used in different process. For example, the spade is used for cleaning irrigation canals, gardenning, planting, etc. In contrast, the threshing machine is used only in threshing of crops.

In this section, I consider the instruments of labor under three sub-categories namely: 1) equipment ; 2) draft animals; and 3) machinery.

#### 9.2.1. Equipment

Most of the rural agricultural implements were made of wood and manufactured locally, sometimes not in the village; metal was used but it is of recent phenomena and being more

expensive than wood (Kramer, 1982:32). I should say, technologically, rural Iran is in a transitional stage from wooden implements to metal ones. For instance, the main tillage implement was (and to some extent still is) the animal-drawn wooden plough. Here, in or near its place of origin some six millenia ago, This equipment was dominant in one or another of its varient forms, all of which are characterized by the absence of a sod-inverting mould-board and the leaving of an uneven mulched rather than furrowed surface (Bowen-Jones, 1968:584).

There were two types of ploughs in Iran. A heavy plough drawn by a team of sixteen to twenty-four oxen is known to have been used in the western and northwestern parts of Iran. The light plough, also known as the nail plough, drawn by one or two draft animals, was, however, the type most widely used. It was the standard implement of the majority of peasants. This plough has remained essentially unchanced for many centuries (Wulff, 1966:262-66). This plough has two wooden hoops extend downward from the yoke to encircle the necks of the animals. It pierces the soil to a depth of four to seven inches. It does not invert a furrow slice (English, 1966:120). In pre-land reform time, the khish (plugh) as it is most generally called, tended to be regarded as primitive and inefficient and today it is in the process of being replaced relatively by the mould-board, or disc plough, usually tractor drawn.

Natural conditions cannot be blamed for the primitiveness of the plough. For instance, "the plough used in the Caspian

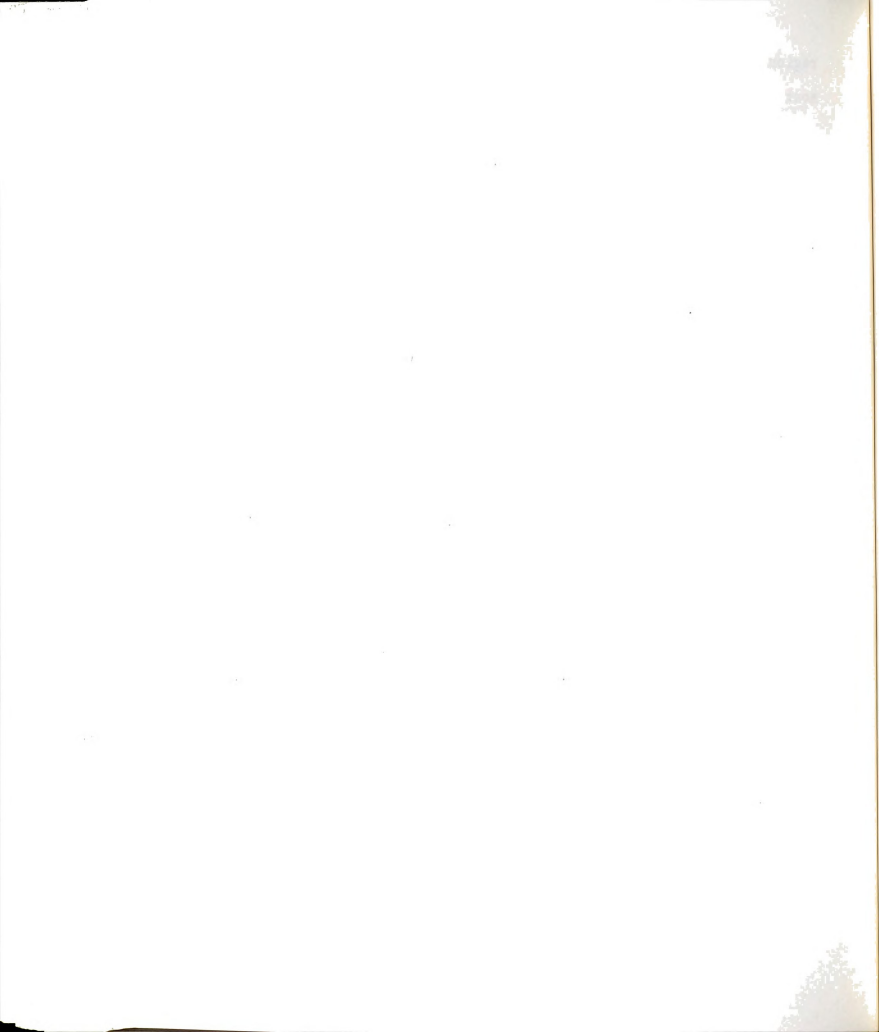
1898

1899

1900

region, where there is an abundance of rich pasture, is the most primitive of all nail ploughs, being wholly carved from one branch" (Khamisi, 1968:23). The reason for the lack of development here, as well as in other parts of Iran, should perhaps be partially sought in the relations of production. For one, the high rate of exploitation prevailing in Iran prevented the accumulation of peasant wealth. Thus, not only was the peasant unable, in many instances, to raise livestock, but he often had to rely on the landowner for draft animals. On the other hand, the system of muzara-eh prevented the landowner from concentrating his outlays on part of the land and of fully benefiting from the results. The fact that the yield from an outlay, in general, had to be shared probably inhibited investment by both landowners and peasants.

Other implements used were primitive as well. A long-handled spade is used; above the blade is a wooden cross-piece upon which the man who wields it places his foot, and drives the spade into the earth with a jump or lunge forward (Lambton, 1953:360). Threshing was done by a threshing-sledge, which is made entirely of wood, approximately 165 cm. long, 110 cm. broad and approximately 8 cm. high (Golabian, 1977:180). Very few ancillary implements were used in agriculture. An implement called the panjeh piles the soil in ridges separated by deep furrows. The panjeh is a curved metal or wooden plate with seven or eight widely spaced teeth attached to a long handle. As a farmer presses it into the ground his assistant pulls on the rope tied to its base to pile the soil into



ridges (English, 1966:121). Reapers often wear long sheaths called nakhonij, on their left hands. It is made of sheet metal bent around the fingers or of leather sewn together, so as to extend the length of the fingers. The function of it is primary to increase the grasp of the hand, so that the reaper could gather enough for a single slash when cutting a plentiful crop.

Since the equipment during the course of production gradually amortizes and finally is destroyed, it must be replaced by a new one. Thus a process of reproduction of implements of production took place through the village craftsmen; gypsies which migrated constantly among villages; and finally in the regional market of agricultural equipment in the towns. From the late 1950's small workshops in towns began to introduce improved equipment by adapting features of imported ones.

#### 9.2.2. Draft Animals

Before the 1962 land reform, the predominant motor power used in agriculture to put agricultural equipment into motion was provided by animals, and transportation were mostly carried out with the help of draft animals. The used in agriculture varied from place to place: ox, buffalo, horse, mule, ass or camel. The main source of energy used in cultivation by the peasant labor was oxen.

The geographical distribution of draft animals before the land reform was highly uneven. About 46.8 per cent of all



the cattle, 83 per cent of all the buffaloes, and 64.2 per cent of all the horses were found in the north and northwest of the country; 49.4 per cent of all mules were found in west and southwest; and 53.5 per cent of all the asses were found in the third, sixth, seventh and ninth provinces (Ministry of Interior, 1960: Table 116). About 85.9 per cent of all the draft animals in Iran were oxen. There were, however, several provinces in which other animals were used extensively for ploughing (Ibid., Table 126). About 73.3 per cent of the holdings under 1 hectare and 36.5 per cent of the holdings 1 hectare and under 3 hectares had no draft animals (Ibid., Table 125). The small holdings were at yet another disadvantage: as one went from the higher to the lower groups, the percentage of inferior draft animals (asses) increased, and the percentage of superior draft animals (horses, mules) decreased (Cf. Ibid). This shows that draft animals were not only geographically unevenly distributed, but they were highly unevenly distributed among different socio-economic groups.

The draft animals have some individual characteristics; they cannot be used the whole 24 hours, the maximum is only 8-10 hours per day. Since the raising and feeding of draft animals are economically restricted, each draft animal has a certain work capacity during each agricultural year. For example, in the ploughing and harrowing of land, the areas that can be tilled with the help of one ox during an agricultural cycle is limited to a certain amount. This





area, in each locality, was determined by the interaction of several factors such as: the time-limitation of a draft animal's body, limitations in the period during which the ploughing and harrowing can be carried out due to the predominant agro-climatological circumstances, the type of soil, the type of equipments, and so forth. As Golabian has illustrated, on the Ghazvin plain, for example, the amount of land that one pair of oxen can till is altogether about 7 hectares (1977:187). The above-mentioned restrictions in the utilization of draft animals in turn influenced the organization of agricultural production and consequently the relations of production.

#### 9.2.3. Agricultural Machinery

The use of machines before the land reform was side by side with traditional implements, i.e., the landowner or the holder used machines on part of the land while the customary tenants used traditional implements on the rest. In a few localized areas of the country, agriculture was becoming highly mechanized. As I discussed before, the case of Gorgan region was kind of exclusive use of machines, i.e., the landowner or holder extended the mechanized area to include all the customary holdings.

In order to encourage rapid mechanization the government permitted agricultural machinery, well-drilling machinery, and irrigation pumps to be imported free of duty from 1947 through 1957 (Wilber, 1958:242). Introduction of tractors

and modern machinery took place at a slow pace up to the increase in the importation of tractors and machinery after 1958 (See table 9.1). At the beginning of the 1950s, the Iranian government set up a contract with American dealers for farm machinery (Platt, 1970:32).

Table 9.1: Imports of Tractors and Agricultural machinery, 1955-61 (weight in thousand metric tons; value in million rials)

year	tractors		machinery		total	
	weight	value	weight	value	weight	value
1955	0.6	47	1.0	92	1.6	139
1956	0.9	69	0.6	32	1.5	101
1957	1.6	168	1.3	99	2.9	267
1958	6.3	621	4.8	369	11.2	990
1959	6.0	570	3.8	310	9.8	880
1960	6.4	717	3.6	353	10.0	1,070
1961	6.1	632	4.9	589	11.0	1,221

source: Bharier, 1971:142

As the farm machinery ordered from the United States arrived, it was sent to the provinces for demonstration and use. Part of the task to introduce tractors and ploughs, harrows, disc floats, ridgers, planters or drills, cultivators combines, threshers, and balers was suppose to be carry by the Point-4. This project was not successful and did not attract the peasants. Part of reasons was its introduction by the Point-4. For two years from the fall of 1951 to late summer of 1953 demonstrations of an anti-Point-4 nature were common and anti-American elements were active. Everywhere, in towns and countrysides, the Point-4 agents' cars were attacked by the students and other anti-government political

activits (USU, 1963:30,62).

Generally speaking, mechanization was uncommon. As evidenced by the Ministry of Agriculture's estimate that only about 900 tractors, 100 combines, 40 threshing machines, 100 discs, and 60 sowing drills and harrows were in operation at the end of 1950 (Hadary, 1951:183). This figure increased to 3000 tractors at the end of the 1957 (Wilber, 1958:242). Ultimately, it reached the level of 5000 tractors and 750 combines in Iran before the land reform (Plan Organization, 1961:134). The majority of these machines were in the hands of the big landlords and capitalist farmers, particularly in the Gorgan region. Appoximately, before the land reform, 9.7 per cent of all holdings used tractors and 0.8 per cent used seed drills (Ministry of Intrior, 1960:Table 127). About 70 per cent of the area in holdings which reported the use of machines was worked with machines and animals. The remainder was worked exclusively with machines; customary tenants, however, probably existed on much of the land in this category (Ibid.). In short, mechanical energy and machinery were rare, even though it was growing.

### 9.3. Material Resources

Material resources in agrarian society contains all subjects that peasants work on and try to combine them together in order to use their potential powers for raising the plants. Among the variety of subjects of work in agrarian society of Iran, I will discuse the most important ones.

These include land factor, irrigation factor, seeds and finally fertilizer.

#### 9.3.1. Land Factor

The land is in fact a means of production of a very special type. Its quantity cannot be increased at will and its quality varies from one instance to the next, furthermore, the particular qualities of a given piece of land are specific to it and cannot be transferred at will (Kautsky, 1980:53). The land factor played an essential role in the process of agricultural production and the relations of production in the countryside. Consequently, it is essential to the understanding of the rural class.

Before the land reform, the amount of land which a peasant was able to cultivate during an agricultural year was limited by many factors. The primitive nature of agricultural methods employed, the quality of the soil, the adequacy of the water supply and the irrigation system, and the nature of the tools used are some examples which affected the size and productivity of the land by which the peasant and his family earned their livelihood.

In the case of scarcity of the land, the land, the reclamation of new agricultural land was taken in order to reduce that scarcity. Terracing of hills and mountains, desaltation of salty lands, burning and destruction of weeds and trees, removing of stones, draining swampland and building and digging the necessary qanats and irrigation



canals, were some types of land reclamation techniques.<sup>2</sup> For example, there were reported 75.5% expansion of land cultivation in the Zanzan area, as in most parts of Iran, for the period between 1926 and 1960 (Atai, 1965:26). As table 9.2 shows, there was an enormous land expansion in Iran between 1935 and 1958.

Table 9.2: Area Under Cultivation from 1935 up to the Land Reform. (hectare)

type of crop	1935-39	1945-49	1952	1953	1954	1958
Wheat	4,190,000	5,670,000	5,560,000	5,685,000	5,685,000	8,132,500
Barley	1,545,000	1,685,000	1,975,000	1,975,000	1,975,000	3,260,000
Rice	535,000	545,000	545,000	620,000	620,000	808,450
Cotton	455,000	240,000	450,000	555,000	620,000	735,500
Tobacco	30,000	40,000	40,000	65,000	45,000	29,000
sugar-beets	35,000	65,000	105,000	110,000	110,000	121,105

Sources: 1) Vreeland, 1957: 179; 2) Iran Almanac, 1956:262.

This enormous land expansion has taken place partly by the emergence and establishment of new households and buneh teams. The reclamation of land either took place spontaneously by poor and landless peasants or was initiated and controled by already existing institutions of power.

Simultaneous with land reclamation, agricultural land erosion has occurred effecting the conditions of the peasants. There were many socio-economic reasons for land errosion in

Iran. On the one hand, most of the peasants were so poor that they could not supply their land with enough manure or chemical fertilizer. Moreover, economic constraints forced the poor peasants to cultivate one single crop on their land constantly without any crop rotation or fallow, exposing their small plots of land to rapid depreciation. In addition as I have discussed, most of the land owned by state, religious institutions, royal family, and even private lands were leased and the lessee wanted to exploit the peasant as much as he could. As a consequence, on the one hand, the holder investment for improvement of the land was minimum; on the other hand, the peasant were under the pressure to extract more and more from the land and at the same time did not have any incentive to improve the land quality.

Despite the reclamation and expansion of the agricultural land, the land resources used for agriculture in Iran were severely limited, as is illustrated in the following table:

Table: 9.3: Land utilization in Iran before 1962.

	million hectares	per cent
Total land area	163.6	100.0
Cropland under annual and perennial crops	6	3.7
Fallow cropland	12	7.4
Pasture and woodland of village	1.3	0.8
Potentially cultivable wasteland	31.5	19.2
Desert and other wasteland	81.6	49.9
Forest and rangeland	28	17.1

Source: Bowen-Jones, 1968:566.



Thus, about 12 per cent of the land area could be regarded as productive under settled agriculture, of which less than one third was under cultivation at any one time. On this land depended the livelihood of eighteen million people, more than 75 per cent of the total population.

The mode of land utilization did not vary greatly from one province to another. The highest percentage of area under annual crops, 87.5 per cent, and the lowest percentage of fallows, 9.7 per cent, occurred in the second province. The percentage of fallow land for the other provinces ranged from 31.5 to 51.3 per cent (Ministry of Interior, 1960:table: 104). The mode of land utilization was actually much more uniform.

Although the method of annual redistribution of land among peasants was usually used by landlords in order to prevent the emergence of permanent rights to a certain piece of land for peasants, it had one advantage, namely the moveability of labor factor on the land factor within the village's structure. As a consequence, peasants received equal portions of bad and good lands. In his lifetime, every peasant would have cultivated and tilled nearly all the plots of land of village. This system had both a advantage and disadvantage from the erosion point of the view.

In short, the amount of land in any village, its (re-) allocation and fragmentation pattern were continually in a process of change.

### 9.3.2. Water Factor and Irrigation

In fact, the water factor and Irrigation and their economic, legal and social ramifications are among the main keys for understanding Iranian rural society. The irrigation systems and facilities have made possible the complexity of relations of production in the rural areas. Before the land reform, because of the existence of pre-capitalistic economic conditions in the rural areas, the water factor was not completely converted into a commodity, but its supply and allocation were accomplished through traditional legal and economic institutions.

The provision and allocation of the water factor in Iran required human efforts and labor. Water, by means of techniques such as canals and qanats that man had developed, could be transported and reallocated to a limited extent. In fact, in many parts of the country, the water was traditionally allocated to the land: each piece of land has a traditional hag-abeh (right to receive water). There were few villages where the water was owned separately from the land. The total amount of water that every village received, either as a share from a stream or from qanats and wells, was divided into shares measured by the length of flowing time. Every plot of land, no matter who owned it, had a traditional share of the village's water.

As I have illustrated in the climate section, the western half of the country is much more rainy than the eastern part. The eastern half always has a shortage of water for

irrigation. This is one of the main reasons that artificial irrigation is developed more in the eastern part than the western half. According to one statistics, about 73.5% of qanats and 60% of wells were located in the eastern half of the country; and western part of the country was mostly dependent on the rivers and rain-fall (Safinezhad, 1974:28).

The qanat system of water supply is, in principle, a horizontal adit leading water under gravity from the water bearing strata to the surface, with a number of vertical shafts for access (see figure 9.1.). As Vreeland has indicated, the qanat is fairly good engineering by modern standard (1957:184).<sup>3</sup>

It has been claimed that before the land reform the life of about 70% of the Iranian village was totally or partly dependent on qanat system (Golabian, 1977:134). This system of water supply was widely used for several reasons. First, unlike other traditional irrigation devices such as the counterpoised sweep, the Persian wheel, qanats required no power source other than gravity to maintain flow. Second, water could be moved substantial distances in these subterranean conduits with minimal evaporation losses and little danger of pollution. Finally, the flow of water in qanat was proportionate to the available supply in the aquifer and, if properly maintained, these irrigation canals could provide a dependable supply of water for centuries.

The scarcity of water affected the development of the means of production. It led to the construction of an

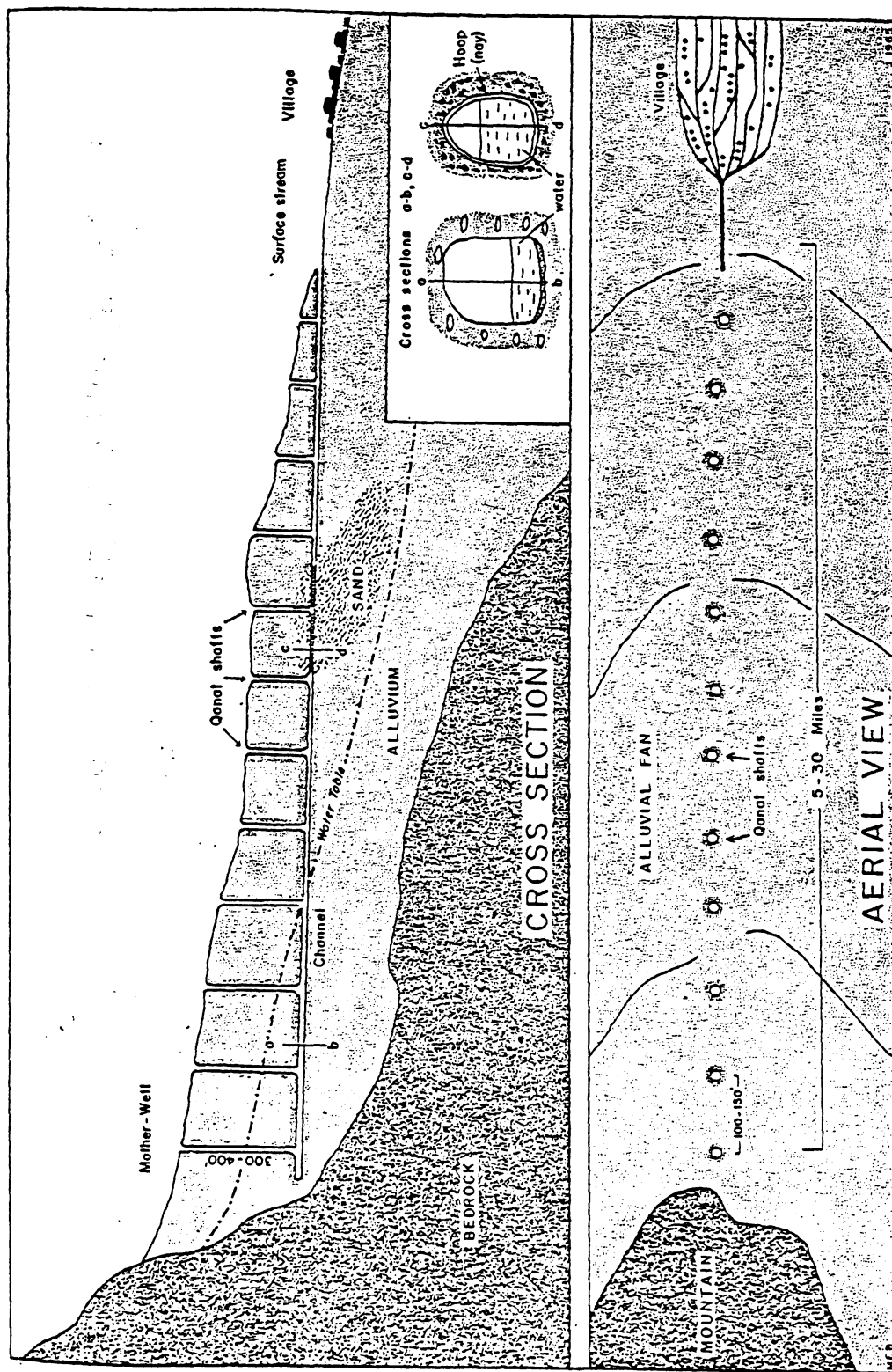


Figure 9.1: Diagram of a Typical Qanat.

intricate irrigation network. The monumental effort spent in this field is indicated by some estimates of the number and length of qanats: in the late 1950's there were 37,500 of these, 21,000 of which were in full working order, with an aggregate length of 100,000 miles and a total discharge of 20000 cubic meters per second (English, 1966:135-6). The Iranian landlords were willing to upkeep the qanat because their land without water did not have any value.

For those lands which because of their topographical situation could not receive any water from qanats or rivers, the only solution was wells. But the digging of wells and their geographical location was dependent on two factors; first, the depth of underground water at the place in question; and second, the methods and techniques for lifting and pumping water.

Most of the deep wells were sunk in the neighborhood of large cities, where the commercially produced crops could be sold (Golabian, 1977:137). Otherwise, the price of well water could not compete with that of qanats. Before the land reform, the only power source available for lifting the water from wells were human and animal. Only a small number of landowners had mechanical water pumps. It has been estimated that before the land reform some 30,000 shallow wells that were used in the countryside were mostly for household consumption (Ibid.). Few of these wells were artesian and operated with mechanical water pumps. In the region of Gorgan, as farm operations developed, the farms

turned their attention to investment in irrigation. Although qanats had been the principal irrigation means, much of the new investment was applied to digging artesian wells 20 to 30 meters deep, tube-wells 20 to 130 meters deep with pumping equipment and even some reservoirs (Okazaki, 1968:22).

Another source of water was rivers which are mostly located in the western half of the country. Since many of the all-season rivers run in deep valleys, the utilization of their water became possible when technical solutions were developed to raise the water to the level of cultivable land. One of the methods was the famous Persian wheel. There are very few remaining in Iran. The Persian water-wheels or charkhabs are normally placed on the edge of rivers in the hilly countryside, because the speed of the current is needed to turn these wheels. The wheels are 9 to 12 meters in diameter, and present blades to the stream which forces them to move continually. Secured to the edge of the wheel at short intervals are earthen water jars of a capacity of about a gallon a piece, and they are so arranged that, after submersion during the turning of the wheel, to which they are attached, they come up full and discharge their contents into a trough as they reach the top of the circuit and commence the downward turn. The result is a supply of about 180 liters a minute without any effort on the part of the owner (Golabian, 1977: 123).

In addition to the water-wheels technique, some other methods were used. In the case of Khuzestan, which the

principal rivers are the source of irrigation, a camel- or mule driven pot wheels, a primitive pumping method, were used. The most common source of power in the period before the land reform was cattle, with the help of which water was drawn up from the river.

It was based on these sources of water that irrigation became one of the most difficult sub-processes in agriculture of Iran. There were different system for irrigation of different crops. These methods varried from place to place in relation to the material conditions. In general, we can identify three main irrigation manners used all over Iran before the land reform, with some local modifications. These three methods were: 1) border irrigation, mostly used for irrigation of vegetables; 2) basin irrigation, used for irrigation of gardens and orchards; and 3) saturation irrigation, used for summer crops. In the latest one, the water is let into the land by irrigation trenches (Lambton, 1953:363).

Irrigation is very important in agriculture. It can damage the crop or spoil it. Therefore, this sub-process was done in Iran under the supervision of a local expert called mirab, greatly respected by peasants. The mirabs were the most skilled and knowledgeable of the peasants and in many cases were leaders of the production teams, buneh.

### 9.3.3. Seeds

Iran is one of the oldest sites for the emergence

and evolution of the grain crops. The wild barely and wheat were found for the first time in Iran, as well as other areas of the Near East. In addition, the first clear indication of domesticated wheat and barely have been found in prehistoric sites of the fertile lands of Tepe Ali Kosh in western Iran. This is dated to approximately 7500-6500 B.C. (Harlan, 1975:179). Because of the originality and the long history of cultivating grain, Iran became one of the richest country of grain seed. This high quality declined following different socio-economic as well as natural disruptions.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, during the past 200 years, no significant work has been carried out by the farmers or local people concerning seed improvement and seed certification. Before the land reform, seed improvement was not considered as one of the major factors that agriculture relies on. As a consequence, there was no specific effort to improve seeds. For years seed improvement was carried out by farmers, basically on a village scale without any contact with outside programs, if there was any.

Usually, seed was the fifth principal element of the organization of production. The method of preparing the seed for next years cultivation was as follows: during the harvest, the best seeds of village was collected from any buneh which produced them, before the division of the shares. It was carried out to the landlord storage and the providers



received the equal amount from other bunehs of the village. During the next cultivation year, every buneh received the seeds from the landlord storage. There were many cases where the landlord provided the seeds from his share, regardless of its quality; and or brought the improved seeds from outside the community (Safynezhad, 1974:79-80).

Formerly , cleaning and processing the seed were done by the peasant themselves. They spread the seed on a firm ground and then left it for a period of time until the moisture content decreased. Due to the weather conditions, this type of drying was carried out only in the area south of Iran that is dry and warm, especially in summer. After the seed was dried, they shipped it to the storage.<sup>5</sup> Storages were not safe for a long period of time, since the temperature and relative humidity were not controlled. In addition, dust and insects in the storage were some of the common problems that peasant faced. Therefore, loss was almost inevitable and a low quality of seeds has been reported for several years (Elboud Warej, 1981:15).

Seed testing to check the quality of seed has been done for a long time inefficiently. The test was done by an expert peasant who learned through experience to estimate from the general view of a batch of seed, and basically, no complicated physical or chemical tests were carried out. The experts were few and needed to travel from village to village to inspect the peasant's seed. This test was basically a visual observation of the seed. This kind of test,

however, was useful but not reliable for a good seed production. Generally speaking, shape, size, and color of seed were among the simple factor to be considered for the purpose of seed testing. Peasants with little knowledge of seed improvement techniques started mixing different types of cereal seeds to obtain better yields. These primary seed improvements were mainly due to natural conditions and the necessity felt by the local peasants.

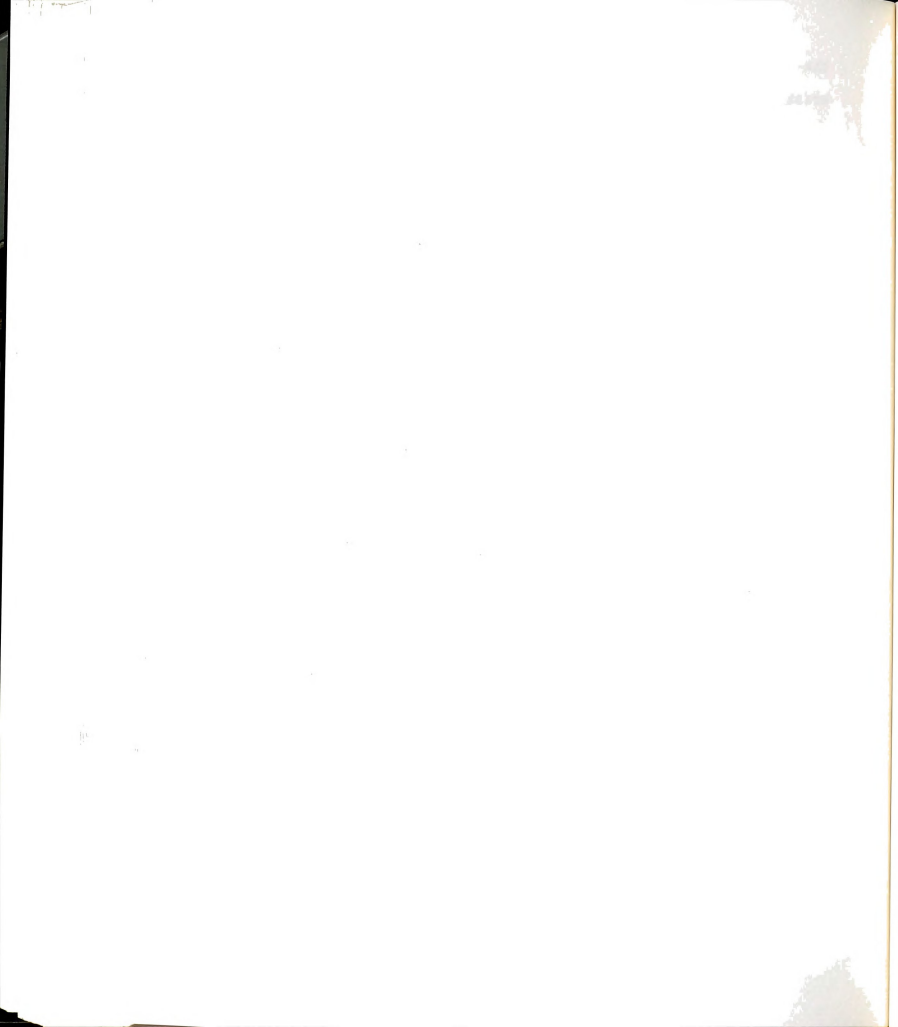
After 1950, seed processing was partially done by the government agencies to keep the high quality of the seed. Seed cleaning was done in two different places: first, at the village level by the peasants; then, the half-way clean seeds were bagged and sent to the nearest station for final cleaning (Ibid.). A system of seed multiplication station was established in the 1950's under the Ministry of Agriculture (Platt, 1970:32). American assistant groups came to Iran to work with the Ministry of Agriculture over the seed improvement program. This program consisted of two major plans. Plan one was the distribution and introduction of the new types of seed brought from abroad. This phase involved an exchange of 60 tons of a superior variety of wheat. Plan two was to establish a program to improve local seed varieties, and carrying out set of plant breeding works to find better varieties to meet local conditions. Shortly after the begining of the first plan, the second plan was started and the Ministry of Agriculture began to develop methods and regulations for production and distribution of

the improved seeds. By 1954 five major seed wheat production areas were established, and additional seed production was being supervised by the Extension Service on individual farms (USU, 1963: 17-18). Evidently, some of these programs were well managed, but, in reality, after thirty years Iran still does not have a self-sufficient and effective seed program.<sup>6</sup>

To sum up, there were no effective measures taken in order to improve the seed production in Iran prior to the land reform. The efforts were mostly upon the importation of good quality seeds from abroad. As we know, the quality of a seed taken from an improved seed itself. It happened in many cases that peasants thought if they bought just once an improved seed (especially an American one), they will have high yields for ever. This is one of the reasons for failure of the effectiveness of the imported improved seeds in Iran. In some regions like Gorgan, since the capitalist farmers were able to buy the new improved seeds every year, the quality of production was high.

#### 9.3.4. Fertilizer

Fertilizer is not the principal element in farming in the same sense as seeds, water or land, yet it is one of the main factors in increasing the yield of the crop. Iranian soils were generally depleted of nitrogen and phosphat by continuous cropping without adequate manuring (Aresvik, 1976: 153). Most of the peasants were so poor that they could not



supply their land with enough manure or chemical fertilizer. Great amounts of nutrients disappeared from the villages. without coming back in the form of, for example, neightsoil. On the one hand, economic constrains forced the poor peasants to cultivate one single crop on their land continuously without any crop rotation or fallow, exposing their small plots of land to rapid depreciation. On the other hand, animal fertilizers were mostly used by the peasants as fuel.

Until the 1962 land reform, manure was considered the main source of plant nutrients in Iran. The use of organic manure was fairly useful in contributing to the conservation of the soil's nutritional capacity,<sup>7</sup> but they were not sufficient in themselves (Jebraili, 1974:275). Manure was widely used on cash summer crops. Its value was universally recognized (English, 1966:122); and it had a determinative role in the livelihood of the summer crops producers (Petrushevsky, 1965:268).

Variety of sources were used for higher fertility of the soil. Sheep and goat manure and night soil were available for the fields. Mountain villagers sold manure to agriculturalists on the plains in the spring, after the underground shelters in which the goats and sheep were housed during the winter have been cleaned (English, 1966:122). Household sewage made up an important source of fertility as the lands in the neighborhood of the cities were more productive and were cultivated annually. Another source of higher fertility was the earth from the ruins of the old

house (Lambton, 1953:362). As plant roots were the only crop residue left in the fields, it was another source for fertility of the lands. The pigeons also provided part of the fertilizers. As Petrushevsky has indicated, pigeon manure was the most valuable manure for Iranian peasants and they recommended to mix it with other manures or with ashes (1965:268). In the Isfahan area, Pigeon manure collected in special towers near the town was used in the cultivation of melons, pear trees, and cotton (Vreeland, 1957:187). It was also used in other areas of Iran and for the cultivation of a variety of crops and fruit trees. Finally, human excrement was one of the most useful manure for the summer crops producers. The peasant made it dry and mixed it usually with ashes and then introduced it to the plants. In Isfahan areas, the peasants obtained it from the city.

Until 1962 application of chemical fertilizer was practically insignificant in Iran. There were at least five reasons for that. First, the production and import of the chemical fertilizer in the country were limited. Secondly, as we know, an important factor in the consumption of chemical fertilizers is water. In Iran, with the exception of the Caspian shoreline, the dearth of rainfall was a restricting factor. Thirdly, there was a general lack of accurate knowledge on the part of peasants about the method, quantity and time of consumption as well as advantages underlying the use of chemical fertilizer. Fourthly, the landlords' lack of incentive to improve the production yield was another obstacle to use the chemical fertilizer. Finally, the high

cost of chemical fertilizers was another reason that the peasants were unable to afford it.

Before 1945, all chemical fertilizers required for agriculture were imported and distributed by the private sector (Ahmadian, 1974:70). Production of fertilizer in Iran began in 1945, when the chemical factory at Karaj started to use primitive techniques and facilities to turn out 4,000 to 5,000 tons annually of bone ash, superphosphate, and thermophosphate, also known as Iranian phosphate (Rahnama, 1971).<sup>8</sup>

The first significant import of fertilizer--100 tons of ammonium sulfate, 100 tons of ammonium nitrates, and 50 tons of triple superphosphate--took place in 1950 (Aresvik, 1976:153). Since then, the import was increased every year until 1963 when Iran's first modern fertilizer factory started to produce (see table 9.4).

Table 9.4: Supplies and Utilization of Chemical fertilizers in Iran before the Land Reform (metric tons)

Year	Domestic		Imports		Utilization	
	Production	Govt.	Private	Total	Tons	%Increase
1956-7	0	N.A.	N.A.	2,000	2,000	-
1957-8	0	N.A.	N.A.	4,890	4,890	144
1958-9	0	8,200	6,800	15,000	15,000	233
1959-60	0	10,750	9,700	20,450	20,450	36
1960-1	0	26,000	10,145	36,145	36,145	77
1961-2	0	9,000	29,980	38,980	39,980	11

Sources: 1) Hill and Rhodes, 1968:83; 2) Iran Almanac, 1968:358

These amounts were imported by the chemical Bongah (agency) in the Ministry of Agriculture as well as private companies and individuals. Commercial fertilizer came into use in

significant quantities only shortly before the land reform.

Chemical fertilizers were used mostly in some irrigated cash crops. It was used more in the growing of rice than in all other crops.<sup>9</sup> After rice, the use of chemical fertilizers in irrigated wheat growing was greater than the other crops (Jebraili, 1974:278). Fertilizer was commonly spread by hand, which reduced efficiency. Sprinkler broadcasters were used in some larger farming enterprises. Little fertilizer was used under rain-fed conditions, but the use has been increasing rapidly on irrigated crops (Aresvik, 1976:79).

#### 9.4. Labor Power

The labor factor is the most important link between man as producer and the process of agricultural production. The labor factor emerges, develops and is realized in human bodies. It is quite integrated in the traditional, cultural and socio-economic structure of every society. In pre-land reform rural Iran, labor was strictly organized in rigid social institutions like khanevar or buneh and could only enter into production processes via these institutions.

The relations between labor factor and other factors (e.g., land and water) during the production process differed from area to area, under the effect of different natural, economical and agro-technical circumstances. For instance, in the arid rural areas of the country, an enormous part of accessible labor was used for irrigation, while in the humid areas with adequate rainfall, much less labor was required for irrigation purpose. Consequently, the amount of labor



required for production of a certain crop varied from region to region.

In many parts of rural Iran, the process of labor productivity was subjected to the sway of natural changes. As a consequence, the participation of the labor factor in courses of production was affected by the seasonal fluctuations. The most obvious effect was that "the distribution of the labor factor on the time axis of an agricultural year (was) not at all homogenous, but on the contrary very rough and uneven" (Golabian, 1977:151). Most of the production operations available in some particular terms of the year were concentrated in the end of Spring, the whole Summer and the beginning of Autumn. Therefore, there was a natural time-dependence between the labor factor and the whole process of production. The synchrony of different production processes, each needed a certain amount of labor which limited the supply of the labor factor as a whole during the critical time of production such as the peak time in the middle of Spring in some regions of Iran.

In some parts of the rural areas, despite the fact that even the women and children participated in the agricultural production, in some critical period of the production process, the peasant faced the shortage of labor. On the other hand, during some periods of the year (e.g., Winter) the actual amount of the work decreased and many of the village men remained idle. In the case of the poor peasants, they rushed to the nearby cities in search of

work and stayed there until the beginning of the peak periods in their villages.

In practice, the volume of agricultural activities in each village of Iran was geared to the availability of labor factors at times of cultivation and peak demand and not to the potential working capacity of the villagers as a whole and through the whole agricultural year. On the other hand, since in many areas of rural Iran, the only energy source for labor power was human muscular energy, obviously, the amount of work that could be done by the labor power during the peak time was limited to a certain amount of hours per day.

Finally I should mention that in pre-land reform rural Iran, one could recognize both the traditional institutions, inside which the labor factor was organized and allocated in production processes, and also some kind of labor market which contained varying portions of labor factor in different rural areas, depending on their level of socio-economic development.

#### 9.5. Associated Technological Arrangement

The production capacity of a rural production unit (khanevar or buneh) did not depend only on the quantity or dexterity of its labor power, but also on the methods and tools used. I already have explained the level of development of the equipment in the rural areas. In this section I explore the process and sub-processes of production and the variety of the production methods.

Practices in connection with fallow and crop rotation varied widely from village to village with the amount of level land and water available. As English (1966:122) has indicated, the use of fallow and rotation systems was keyed more to water supply than to soil conditions. Therefore, daymy (dry) land was more often left fallow than abi (irrigated) land. The land in the immediate neighborhood of a town or village was cultivated annually (Lambton, 1953: 362). In some parts irrigated land was sown in alternate years (Alipour-Fard, 1971:30). In general, crop rotation and fallow tended to be twofold or threefold. In twofold crop rotation, half of the land was sown with grain and the other half with summer crops (syfi)--i.e., melon, watermelon and so on. In the second case, one-third of the land was sown with grain, one-third with colver (shabdar), and one-third was ploughed in preparation for sowing. The first type of rotation was used in areas which did not have sufficient water-supply and had a poorer peasantry (Lambton, 1953:362-63). Though the peasants were aware that one piece of land was "strong" and another "weak" and acted on this knowledge, there was no systematic use of leguminous crops to build soil fertility (English, 1966:122).

As I have discussed before, the process of agricultural production in Iran contained several sub-processes of production. The sub-processes of cereal production schematically shown in the figure 9.2 are :1)ploughing, 2) harrowing, 3)seeding, 4) drainage and irrigation, 5)weeding, 6)reaping,

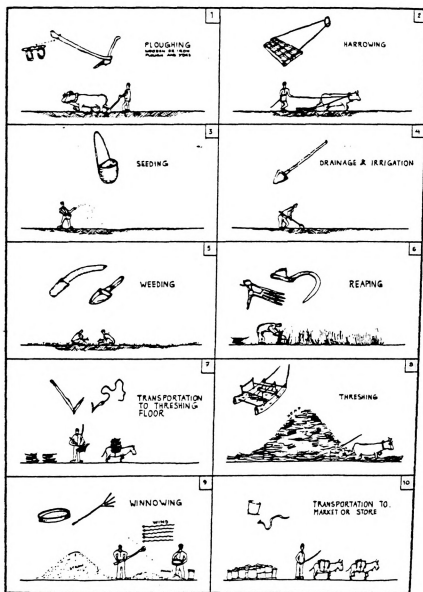


Figure 9.2: The sub-processes of cereal production

7) transportation from farm to threshing floor, 8) threshing, 9) winnowing, and 10) transportation to storage or market. In each of these sub-processes one or several tools were used, which altogether were results of technical development during generations.

Most of the ploughing was done by wooden-nail ploughs of the scratch type. Ploughing was usually done twice; once perpendicular to another--so that fields were often squarish rather than in long strips. But there were areas where cross-ploughing was not practiced (Lachini, 1974:113). There were also areas, such as Savoj Bolagh near Tehran, where the land was ploughed three times over (Lambton, 1953:375). But this was not all. The clods of hard earth left behind after plowing must be broken apart. A team pulled the harrow or plank across the furrows with two men standing on it to add pressure (English, 1966:121).

Seed was sown broadcast, the amount sown relative to the area of land being greater in the case of irrigated land than of unirrigated land. Broadcasting of seed was almost universal except for rice, seedling of which were transplanted (Aresvik, 1976:79).<sup>10</sup> I have already discussed the irrigation methods. Handweeding was the major means of control--a tedious and difficult operation in broadcast crops--and labor shortages could seriously affected crop yield (Ibid., p.79). For reaping, the traditional method consisted of hand-cutting and hand-collecting. For this operation a scythe, or in some cases a sickle, was used.

This time-consuming operation usually was undertaken in hot weather.

The transportation of the crop from the field to the threshing floor was either by donkey or by the peasants themselves through knapsack. The grain was then collected in heaps and threshed by a wooden threshing machine. Drawn by an ox, donkey, or mule the threshing machine was driven round and round the heap, the unthreshed grain being strewn in the path of the threshing machine which gradually cut it up into small pieces. In certain areas, however, even more primitive methods were adapted. For example, in Kurdistan and Sistan, the harvested grain was trodden out by some five or more oxen tied together (Lambton, 1953:361).

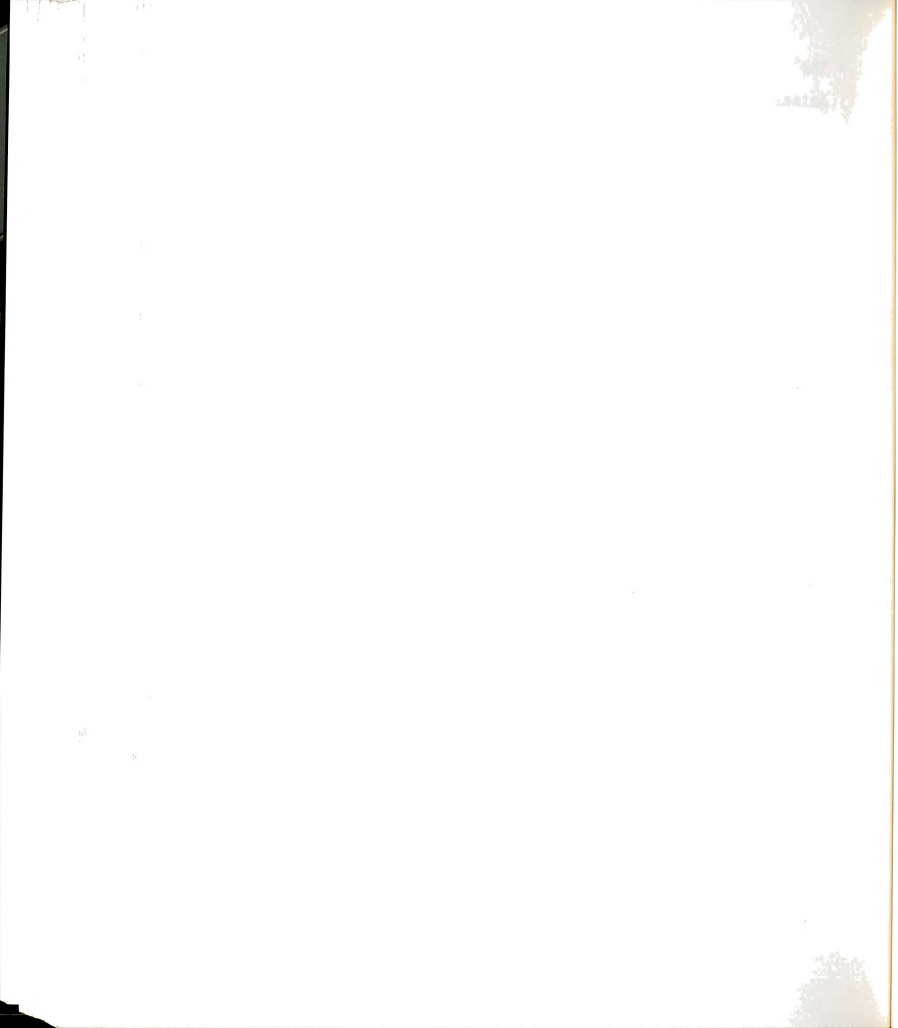
From ancient times wind power has been used in Iranian rural areas, both in direct agricultural production and in processing activities. The very important sub-process of winnowing was possible only through the use of the wind power. Winnowing was done by tossing the grain in the wind with a wooden-pronged fork, after which the heaps of grain thus separated from the straw were passed through a coarse sieve, by which meant the heads from which the grain was removed were separated from the grain. The whole process employed a considerable number of hands and took considerable time. Finally, the straw was placed in nets and grain in sacks and loaded on to pack animals and transferred from threshing floor to the barn. The transport of agricultural produce from the villages to the towns was also mainly by pack animal. This method was slow and wasteful.

The amount of produce which could be transported by pack animals was relatively small. A small two-wheels bullock cart was used in few parts of Iran.

Generally speaking, under the prevalence of the landlord-peasant relationship, the agricultural methods in Iran was mostly primitive. In relation to the tools in agricultural production in Iran, three main farming methods were recognized before the land reform. These methods were (1) bilkary (i.e., tilling only with spade), (2) govkary (i.e., ploughing with draft animal), and (3) mechanized agriculture. In rural areas one of these methods dominated or there were a combination of two or all three.

Bilkary means that most tillage was done by spade and hand. This system was labor intensive. The average area that a bilkar peasant could till during an agricultural year was only 0.568 hectare (Golabian, 1977:157). In this method, it was customary for several men to dig together. Three or more men usually worked together in union side by side. The reason for the use of the spade rather than the plough was probably three fold. In the first place the land was better dug. Secondly, in some areas grazing the draft animals was not possible. Thirdly, poor peasant with small size land could not afford draft animals.

In gavkary method, draft animals were used for ploughing. In most parts of Iran, the average area that two peasants using two oxen could cultivated was 4 to 7 hectares (Golabian, 1977:158), therefor the ratios of labor factor to land factor





in gavkary areas were higher than those of bilkary areas. Except for some rural areas where modern machinery were introduced, the prevailing method all over Iran was gavkary.

In mechanized field, the introduction of modern machinery (e.g., tractor and combine) in Iranian agriculture, either in the whole production process (which in fact was very rare and limited to very few enterprise) or in some parts of production process (e.g., ploughing and harrowing by tractor) changed the labor intensive production to a capital intensive one. The average area tilled by one peasant driving an ordinary tractor was about 166 hectares (Ibid., p. 158).

The mechanization of agriculture did not only mean the replacement of traditional tools and power sources by modern ones; its real efforts went much deeper. This change before the land reform affected social and economic structures of some areas. A few landowners started to have tractors, but they were the exception rather than the rule. The expansion of mechanized farming activities in some areas brought about some changes. While the peasants engaged in inefficient and toilsome labor with oxen, the capitalist farmers carried out their activities promptly and efficiently with tractors and combines. Competition with the capitalist producers forced the peasants to give up the land right (nasdaq) and became laborers of the landlord.

To sum up, the arrangements of cultivation in Iran were rudimentary. Among many reasons, there were three main ones. First, rotation of crops and diversification were made

impractical by the narrowness of the market. Alternation between grains, grasses, and root crops would have exposed the peasant to the danger of starvation, for unless he was near a large settlement, he could not sell the grass and root crops to satisfy his subsistence needs. Second, the introduction of any crop whose requirements were unlike those of the staple crops tended to disrupt the routine organization of cultivation, and thus to undermine the unity of the village itself. Third, the great limiting factor in Iran's agriculture was water. This in itself explains why some crops which needed more water than the staple crops were not planted.

### 9.6. Endnotes

1. This study cannot be comprehensive since the available data is very scanty. For example, there is very little information on the seed production in Iran before the land reform.
2. These are based on my personal observation.
3. For a comprehensive explanation on qanat construction see Golabian, 1977: 128-130.
4. A comparison between the farmers' yields using regular seeds with the experimental plots yield using improved seed in the same condition has shown the low quality of the native seeds (USU, 1963:37).
5. Storage of seeds has been practiced for a long time. Since centuries ago, farmers used simple mud-made storage under ground or above the surface (Elboud Warej, 1981:15).
6. It is needless to say that today even in United States rural sociologists agree that Extension Service type of agricultural development was not suitable for the Third World countries.
7. On the average, every 1,000 kilograms of animal manure contains: nitrogen, 6 kg.; phosphoric acid, 4 kg., potassium, 6 kg.; lime, 5 kg. The quantity required per hectare depends largely on the quality of the manure as well as on the nature of the land and vegetation. At an average animal manure for cultivatable land is used at the rate of 20,000 kilos per hectare (Iran Almanac, 1968: 358).

8. Iran's first modern fertilizer factory, at Shiraz, commenced production in 1963; and the country entered a new phase of fertilizer production and use.
9. For the reasons why more fertilizer was used in rice see Jebraili, 1974:278.
10. Rice cultivation is carried on in two ways. In a few areas, as in parts of Khuzestan, it is sown broad cast, but in the important rice growing area of Mazandaran and Isfahan, the rice is first sown out and later transplanted. The process of transplantation is a laborious one.

## CHAPTER TEN

### THE RURAL SOCIAL CLASSES

#### 10.1. Introduction

So far, in part III, I have discussed, in relation to modes of production, the underlying relations of production and the level of the development of the productive forces in rural Iran before 1962. Although throughout the explanation I have analyzed the class relations and class position of the different groups in the rural areas, I would like to distinguish the line between various categories of the Iran's agrarian society before the land reform (this in fact is an abstraction of the agrarian class structure prior to the land reform).

As I argued previously, the village in Iran was more than a simple assemblage of peasant households. Rather, the village was a socio-economic complex. Its members were interwoven by social and economic relations with each other and with outsiders. This created a totality composed of various contradictions. Example, the peasantry in Iran, (as elsewhere) did not constitute a homogeneous social class; nor did its economic functions correspond to a single and definite social relation.

Prior to the land reform program, the Iranian villages

had clearly defined social classes and a hierarchy based on prevailing social relations of production. The entire agrarian structure of Iran included a number of social classes. They had definite positions in relations to the means of production. There was also a relatively high degree of economic differentiation within the rural classes. These classes consisted, in a broad sense, of a dominant class and the subordinate classes. The first class (the dominant one) consisted of three sub-categories: 1) absentee landlords; 2) landlords' agents (e.g., bailiffs and village headmen); and 3) the oxen-owners (gavbands). The second class (rai'yats) was formed of share-croppers (zar'in) and tenants (mostajeran) who did not own property but enjoyed the right to cultivate (nasaq) the landlord's property. The third class correspond to the independent petty producers (e.g., independent producer peasants (dehqans) and artisans (ahl-i hiraf)). The fourth class contained landless laborers, (both agricultural laborers (barzagarn) and servicemen). In the Iranian rural class structure, these last three classes were in the position of subordination.

Before I start to draw the picture of these classes and fractions, I should mention that, the Persian terms for each class have been used carefully, since it was found that common terms such as gavband, rai'yat, dehqan, and barzagar are often used in a different sense by different scholars.

Furthermore, I avoided the use of vague native terms such as khushneshin (happy squatter)--which has been used by many scholars studying Iranian peasantry to described part of the rural population. It describes both the destitute landless laborers and the comparatively well-off nonfarming villages, such as the oxen renter (gavband).

#### 10.2. The Dominant Class

The pre-land reform villages were socially, economically and politically structured in a rigid and formalized manner. This maximized exploitation by the landlord. The dominant class was composed of three major sub-categories: landlord (arbab); landlord's agents, e.g., bailiffs (mubashir), village headman (kadkhuda); and oxen-owners (gavbands). The landowner's authority arose from his ownership of land and water; while both the bailiff and the village headman derived their power from their roles as local agents for the land-owners. The gavbands controled enough productive resources to rent to the peasants and consequently exploit them.

In the villages in which landlords provided seeds and oxen (in addition to land and water) the control and management of the production teams were the duties of the bailiffs and village headman. As a result, there was a low possibility of an emergence of the gavbands.

In the villages that landowners were unable--for different reasons-- to provide seeds and oxen, and did not will to watch over the production process; the gavbands emerged as a second arbab of the village. This

often actually happened in a majority of arbabi villages and almost in all of the state-owned and moquofeh village (Safinezhad, 1974:95).

#### 10.2.1. The Landlords (arbabs)

A common characteristic of the Iranian landowning class was that they were usually absentee. Seldom, did the landlord live on his estate. Even the few who lived in villages resided in only one of several which were owned. As a result, the political, social, and economic interests of landowners was in the town where they lived, rather than the villages which they owned.

The composition of the large landlord group changed significantly after World War II. The Crown and the state lands were sold gradually (Keddie, 1972:378) and new groups of merchants, contractors, bureaucrats, army officers, and village officials began to buy up land. Therefore, the Iranian landowning class was not homogenous. Some of them relied only on revenue from their lands, while others, had an additional source of income. This distinction between the two fractions of the Iranian landowning class was not an arbitrary one. It was conceived in terms of the structure of Iranian feudalism which they represented.

In relation to the size of the holding, the landholding class was divided into three distinct categories. First the owners of shesh dangi (whole of one village ownership) (these large landlords (1.2%) owned between 9 and 215 villages each). The medium landlords (98.8%) owned between one and



8 each (SMDK, 1978: 74). The third category was the owners of dangi (1/6 to 5/6 share of a village) estates. This category contained the majority of the landlords in Iran.

The membership of the landowning class was an agglomeration of different components that had been assembled over the previous century. It included members of the court who had been given land by the Shah, i.e., traditional landowners, tribal leaders, ulama (high status clergies), bureaucrats, army officers, and merchants. The attitude toward land among landowners varied according to the group from which they came. Among the majority of the landowners the tendency to prefer extent to quality was widespread. The average landowner would rather own several villages in bad condition than one or a few in good condition. Evidence indicates that only a minority of the landlords were concerned about the quality of their lands (Lambton, 1953:262).

Before the land reform, it was estimated that a few hundred landowning families owned an estimated 80-85 per cent of all cultivated land in Iran (Bill, 1963: 401). The most powerful group consisted of 400-450 families, some of whom were reputed to have owned as many as 300 villages. According to one estimate, 37 families alone owned 19,000 villages (Holliday, 1979:106-7). For example, making a random selection of some important landowning families to indicate areas of the country where large holdings occurred, one could cite the Ardalan family of Sanandaj,

the Afshar in Azarbayjan, the Alam in Birjand, the Amini family in Gilan, the Bayat and Beyklik families in Arak, the Khalatbari in Mazanderan, the Qavam in Fars, and the Qaraqozlu at Hamadan (Wilber, 1958:172).

Between the landowner as a class (no matter what his origin) and the peasant as a class, there was a wide gulf. There was no spirit of cooperation, or feeling of being engaged in a mutual enterprise. The landlords severely exploited the rai-yats. They, formed a nonproductive hierarchy over the peasants and took over most of the agricultural surplus, without doing anything to increase productivity. Obviously, the most direct beneficiaries of the exploitation of the peasants were large landlords. The landlords drained the entire agricultural surplus to the cities and left only the barest minimum for agricultural investment.

The attitude toward exploiting the peasants, however, varied in different strata of landowners. While the merchant-landowner look upon his land as a means of business enterprise and tended to exploit the peasant as much possible, the traditional landowners have shown a more kindly attitude toward their rai-yats. However, "the evidence indicates that only a 'minority' of the traditional landlords took a paternal attitude toward their peasants" (Lambton, 1953:262). As Gundersen (1963:31) has indicated, the landlord protected his rai-yats from total disaster but not from continual difficulty and poverty. By being protector, though not savior, he made his existence seem necessary thus insuring

the peasants' dependence upon him.

The landlords did their very best to perpetuate their exploitative power by conserving insularity of the rural communities. They discourage geographical mobility by denying cultivation rights (nasaq) to absentee rai'yats.<sup>1</sup> They restricted rai'yat contact with the market by controlling the rai'yats' sales in the local towns. Safinezhad found that before the land reform some bunehs could not trade their surplus without the special permission of the bailiff (1974: 87). They also narrowed rai'yats relations with the outside world by making the kadkhuda the official intermediary between the village and neighboring communities.

As Loffler has argued, the landlords hindered horizontal mediation among peasants and instead channeled all relations vertically through themselves or their representatives. "In order to secure the peasant from all contact which could potentially give them influence or access to other forms of mediators" (Loffler, 1971:1084-85).

The landlords, in their own villages, were the sole and unchallenged authority. In addition, they exercised considerable political power in the regions where their properties were located. With the emergence of Reza Shah, as an agent of the colonial interests, the disobedient landlords which were obstacles to the expansion of the colonial interest in Iran, were crushed (SMDK, 1978:57). In contrast, those feudals which had a powerful influence in their regions and accepted the centralization of the government were strengthened

by the government (Ibid.). Since then, an alliance was established between the government and the landlords. This alliance was dependent upon colonial powers (Hömayoun, 1963: 21). As a result, the large landowners held an extremely important position at the national level and exerted great political influence.

The colonial powers maintained the above mentioned alliance and exploited it for their own benefits. This alliance had short term benefits for both the colonial power and the landlords. The exercise of the colonial power over the economy had no contradiction with the existence of the feudal relations. The colonial interest was, upon the control over the mineral sector of the economy. Furthermore, the feudal landlords received financial help from the colonial powers directly or through their agents (Cf. Jazani, 1975, 1976). On the other hand, this alliance paved the road for the expansion of the dependent bourgeoisie--since the influential representatives of the feudals in the government supported the activities of the colonial powers.

The landowning class had an effective representation at the level of the state apparatus. The Majlis and Senate were instrumental in maintaining the political power of the landowning class by exercising influence over government officials, as well as controlling the enactment of laws in accord with the vested interest of the landowning class. Their local powers and their connections in the capital granted them the opportunity of dominating both the Majlis

and the Senate. According to a survey, during the 1941-1961 period of Majles, 57 per cent of the Majlis deputies were landowners. Furthermore, 35.1 per cent of the landowning Majles deputies were respectively registered as governmental officials.

In the Senate, between 1950-1960, almost 80 per cent of the Senators were either large landowners or came from landowning families (Zonis, 1968: 265-67).

There was a close relationship between Iranian feudals and the merchants in the bazaar. Some of the feudals invested part of their wealth in trade and there were a lot of merchants who became the 'landlord' of the countryside. This closeness between the landlords and big merchants was unique to Iranian society. As a result, there was no contradiction between the feudals and merchants (Vardasbi, 1976:77).

During the 1950's, many landowners actively participated in the real estate business. It was only during the economic boom of the mid and late fifties, that they began to divert their activities from land to other branches of bourgeois activities. This glimpse into the class composition of the emerging dependent bourgeoisie illustrates that the landowners constituted 30 per cent of the farm capitalists in the Gorgan region, 25 per cent of the bankers, and 24 per cent of the leading contractors.<sup>2</sup>

In short, the landowning class in Iran was politically dominant in the country. Economically, they were the most wealthy strata of the society. Socially, they constituted

the most prestigious group of the Iranian people. They had a tie with external forces; and they controlled the internal apparatus. They were also connected with the traditional bazaar, and they started to become involve in bourgeois activities outside of agriculture (except for the Gorgan region).

#### 10.2.2. The Agents of the Landlords

The absentee landlord had two village level agents to safe-guard his interests. These were his bailiff (mubashir) and village headman (kadkhuda). Neither of these positions were clear cut. Their jurisdictions and duties seemed to overlap and there was much confusion in the literature over their identities. This in itself was an indication of one of the landlord's power resources. The lack of distinct channels of authority permitted him to manipulate all his underlings, perpetuate insecurity and promote rivalry.

The majority of large landowners in Iran were neither willing nor, in many cases able, even with the best intentions, to play a personal role in the running of their estates. Thus, they depended upon agents to oversee their interests in the villages. These bailiffs were entrusted with the affairs of the landlord; particularly those relating directly to agricultural production. They were to become the "guardian of the landlord's profits" (Safinezhad, 1966:115). Their own rewards depended upon the success of the crops, and their salaries, in cash and/or kind, were generous by village standards.

The mubashirs were authorized representatives of the landlords. If they were upright and incorruptible in their duties, their strict supervisions would arouse resentment. If they were corrupt, the raiylats often became the victims of exaction against which they had no reparation. The mubashirs were also the intermediary through whom grumbles to the landlord were relayed (Lambton, 1953:271). The bailiffs acted as the landlord's paymaster and supervised the production of the crops as well as the division of shares and marketing. They usually only stayed in the village during harvest time; as they often held a similar post in other villages. All these multiple activities were controlled by the same landlords. (Salmanzadeh, 1980:116).

The mubashir's relations with the peasants were rarely uncomplicated. The majority of mubashirs were trained under the adversity of the landlords and obtained a sudden dominant position. As a result, they usually felt disposed to act inhumanly to the peasants (SMDK, 1978:81). They took advantage of absentee landowners and in due course accumulated their own property through cheating the landowners and exploiting the peasants. The bailiffs were worse than the landlords. They knew their was temporary position, felt little obligation, identity, or even patronage interest towards their villagers. They were eagerly prepared to exact high return from both land and peasants.

Each village had a headman (kadkhuda), whose position

and responsibilities exceeded those of the mubashir. He was customarily 'employed' by the landlord from amongst the villagers. He was given land rights to head the village, to manage minor civil affairs and to serve as an intermediary between peasants and landlords. "Since 1930, the kadkhuda has also acted as a medium of communication between government and the villagers" (Salmanzadeh, 1980:117). Hypothetically, they were usually inclined to cooperate with, rather than to harass, the peasant. In reality, they were beneficial to both the landlords and the government. As Hooglund has indicated:

Since a kadkhuda was recognized by both the landlord and the government as the resident authority of the village upon the basis of his service to them rather than to the villagers, he was relatively free to be have arbitrarily with the peasants (1982:16).

In his dual capacity, the kadkhuda could call upon the villagers for the performance of only public works.

Arrangements for the kadkhuda's salary varied, he might receive a monthly salary from the landlord, or he would receive a portion of the peasant's or landlord's share of the harvest (Gunderson, 1968:35). His compensation often included the right to keep the entire harvest from a part or entire ploughland which he cultivated. Often, he was entitled to a certain number of days of free labor service (bigary) from each peasant (Hooglund, 1982:15). As a result, the income of the kadkhuda usually exceeded the amount necessary for the



reproduction of their household and themselves. The extra income was use either to obtain marketable surplus or to acquire non-production (service) functions. The latter was more prevalent. He usually hired landless laborers to work on his land.

To sum up this section, the landlord's agents would seldom allow any conflict to develop in the village which could hinder the raiyat's production. Thus, nothing indirectly affected the landlord's harvest share, or jeopardized any of the agents' positions.

### 10.2.3. The Gavbands<sup>3</sup>

A gavband was a person who was not necessarily an agricultural holder. In the absence of the landlord, he obtained a right to provide some means of production. Particularly, he controled the use of draft animals. Most of the oxen were the possession of a few prosperous villagers. These villagers hired out their oxen and plow to the peasant in return for a share of the crop. The landlord provided land and water, and the gavband furnished the draft animals and seed (the later was the buneh's responsiblity during cultivation and the division of the crops). As a result of providing some means of production, the gavbands were in the position to exploit the peasants.

The gavbands were able to play a prominent role in the rural economy, because the landowners were disinterested in the buying, selling, and lending of goods, services, and

means of production. They did very little beyond supporting land and water to the villages. This limited involvement provided gavbands with the opportunity to gain an important degree of control over village economic transactions. Gavbands especially benefited from their monopoly ownership of oxen. If a gavband had sufficient oxen for the total ploughland of the village, he could easily accumulate a grain surplus (Azkia, 1980:33). Sometimes the extra grain was used for seed in the next cultivation. Contributing seed as well as oxen to the production process enabled a gavband to demand as much as two thirds of the total harvest. This was before its division between landlord and peasant. Furthermore, the gavbands who controlled more bunehs were richer than who controlled less. From an economic point of view, they were located between the landlords and the peasants, and were considered a rich strata of the rural society. Their conduct was very similar to that of the landlord's (Safinezhad, 1974:95).

Usually, the relationships between the landlords and the gavbands were based on agreement (while the peasants were dependent upon the gavbands for their means of production). However, the nature of this relationship (between the gavbands and the landlords, and between the gavband and the peasants) was contradictory. The gavbands wanted to give the landlords less shares, while at the same time, they wanted to extract more shares from the peasants.

Sometimes, the solidarity between the gavbands of one

village would frighten the landlords. As a result, the landlords used force to canceled the gavbandi right and transferred the rights to new gavbands (Safinezhad, 1974:95). In most villages, the gavbands became so rich and powerful that they were considered the actual landlords of the villages. When they reached this level of power, they started to hire out their oxen to the neighboring villages. Eventually, in some parts of the country, they started to substitute a tractor for the draft animals.

### 10.3. The Subordinate Classes

The pre-land reform Iranian villages contained an assemblage of subordinated classes. The members of these classes were involved in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. These classes were under the control of the landowning class through the assistance of mubashir and kadkhuda. In addition, they were exploited by the gavbands. Besides being in a position of the subordination, there were some internal conflicts. For instance, the existence of two conflicting classes of raiyyats granted an opportunity to the landowners to play them off against each other and inhibit the type of social solidarity necessary for action against the landlords.

The large mass of the villagers were incapable of accumulating. Although they were economically differentiated, poverty was their common characteristic. The overwhelming majority of the villagers consisted of raiyyats (in relation

to muzara-eh and muqasa-meh systems of production and division). The independent petty producers (both dehqan and ahl-i hiraf) corresponded to a minority proportion of the rural society. The rest of the rural population constituted of landless village laborers who were employed either in agricultural production, service, or crafts activities.

#### 10.3.1. Raiyats

The term raiyyat is being used here to denote any peasants who possessed a cultivation right (nasaq), provided labor and also contributed some means of production-such as seeds and plough animals in either share-cropping or tenancy manners. According to governmental statistics, 60 per cent (1,934,160 out of 3,218,460 households) of the rural households were nasaq holders (Research Group, 1964: 144).

The raiyyat rarely had the good fortune to be able to maintain his family in security and comfort. In many cases he could manage only the barest subsistence (Hanessian, 1963d:8). He often had to borrow in order to meet the reproduction of the household, i.e., acquire consumption loans. The non-oxen-owning raiyyats, who often made up the majority within a village, had the lowest incomes and were in the most precarious position (Keddie, 1972:380).

In pre-land reform years, an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion characterized the relationship between the landlord and raiyyat. The raiyyat used any means at its disposal to retain as large a share of the harvest as

possible; while the landowner attempted to frustrate this and to maximize his share. Based on this mistrust, the landlord used the raiylats as informants and played them off one against the other. Usually, the raiylate, unaware of his class interest, took the advantage of this situation against his fellows. One of the raiylat's most important tools in his false struggle to improve his position vis-à-vis the other raiylats was the 'bribe'. The peasant could bribe the landlord's agent to give him a choice plot when the land was redistributed or to tip the scale for him when the crop was divided (Gundersen, 1968:49).

The landlords usually encouraged in each village the existence of a group which had a stake in the tenure system and which had the power to grant or withhold favors from the poorer raiylats and laborers; thus keeping the latter under control. This relatively privileged raiylats were the so-called sarbunehs who typically controlled a work-team. In a better economic situation, a role as the supervisor of agricultural production and a close relation with the landlord enabled the sarbunehs to enjoy some socio-political influence within their villages (Hooglund, 1982:26). In fact, the sarbuneh was in an ambivalent position. He was tied to the buneh members by common interests, but his position of authority tended to ally him with the landlord and his agents. He seemed to have two options: (1) he could have been a valuable power resource for the peasants if he had sincerely

represented their interests. (2) He might have secretly entered the employment of the landlord or his agents and become another instrument for their attempted domination of the peasants.

The raiylats who depended on a landlord for the largest part of their livelihoods, or the totality of it, had no tactical power. Using the Eric Wolf notion, they were completely within the power domain of their employer without having sufficient resources of their own to serve as tools in a power struggle (1969:290). The strength of the raiylats is reflected in a survey carried out by Tehran University on the eve of the 1963 land reform. When asked why they endured the landlord's power, 64% of the 1,418 respondents cited fear, 19% respect, 8% attachment, and 9% respect for the law. Of the respondents who cited fear, almost all mentioned with dread that the landlord would take away their right of cultivation; deny them irrigation water, fabricate criminal charges, or sow dissension between themselves and their neighbors (Research Group, 1963:60-63).

Generally speaking, all raiylats were victims of extortion and oppression against which they had little, if any, protection. The consequences of being without nasag was very real to them. This class of peasantry could have been the physical force of any uprising against their landlord; yet they couldn't be mobilized because of their minimal degree of economic security and social independence. The

conflict between the landlords and the rai-yats in the pre-land reform period was the main contradiction in the rural areas, but they were not organized enough to exert noticeable political power. "The absence of peasant rebellion does not mean that the peasants willingly accepted the established order" (Kazemi, 1978:260-61). Moreover, the absence of main uprisings did not mean the existence of social harmony. Invariably during the annual division of the crop, rai-yats tried to fraud landlords by hiding as much of the harvest as possible. This can be viewed as a form of "passive resistance." Occasionally, rai-yats frightened local landlords and state officials. This type of reaction can be described as a mode of "primitive rebellion." Finally, I should mention that, sometimes in periods of severe landlord harshness in Iran some rai-yats in a given village might simply moved elsewhere.

#### 10.3.2. Independent Petty Producers

Prior to the land reform, the independent petty producers in Iranian rural society contained two separate groups, the "independent producer peasants" (de-qans) and the artisans (ahl-i hira-f). The dehqans constituted a small insignificant minority in comparison with the huge mass of the rai-yats and landless laborers. Numerically, the dehqans formed approximately 5 per cent (130,000) of the households in the countryside (GOPF, 1976:22).

The average dehqan proprietorship functioned as a household enterprise. However, this did not apply to the poorer areas where the holdings were often too small to

to allow for reproduction to the household, (unless supplemented by some outside source of income such as casual labor). It was only where the dehqan grew cash-crops and had recourse, however limited, to the outside market, that he was relatively better off.

The dehqan who owned a small plot of land was definitely better off than his counterpart who lived as a tenant or sharecropper. The former, although living in poverty, was not subject to the exploiting whims of the landlord and did enjoy a greater material prosperity than either the raiyat or the agricultural laborer. For instance, they did not need to borrow for the reproduction of the household (consumption loans) or for the reproduction of the means of production.

Comparing the villages which contained both dehqans and raiyats, Ono (1967:459) has found that, the income level of the villages where dehqans represented a sizeable portion of the population was, **of course**, higher than that of villages where this was not the case. In such a case, the dehqans occupied the upper level of village society, both in terms of economic prosperity and social respect--free from landlord control. In the case where they were minority in the village, they "were under the thumb of the local landlord, and their economic position... was quite similar to those of tenants" (Keddie, 1972:373).

Generally speaking, the dehqans usually made no effort to increase the land under production or to provide themselves



with anything beyond their minimum needs. This was mainly due to the insecurity that the independent producer peasants of Iran faced before the land reform. This was one of the main reasons that they expanded very slowly in Iran.

A second group of independent petty producers in the rural areas was the craftsmen. The craftsmen manufactured virtually all the nonfood products utilized by villagers. They worked individually. According to official statistics, there were 168,900 independent craftsmen in the rural areas before the land reform (Ministry of Interior, 1962:269). Some of these craftsmen operated independently of agricultural production (e.g., carpet weaver); others were indirectly related to the agricultural production process.

Two groups, the blacksmiths and the carpenters, had important, albeit indirect, roles in agriculture. Since blacksmiths and carpenters produced and repaired the necessary equipment for successful agriculture, their relationship with the peasants tended to be more complicated than that of other village craftsmen. Generally speaking, carpenters and blacksmith were better off economically than other craftsmen. Although, their living standards rarely were higher than the subsistence levels of the peasants (Hooglund, 1982:30). Craftsmen such as coppersmiths, shoemakers, and potters were less advantageously situated. They did not have arrangements with bunehs.

To be bunehs blacksmiths or carpenters needed a 'right' that particular craftsmans obtained only through heritage.

usually, one blacksmith and one carpenter took care of bunehs of one village and did not allow any others from outside to penetrate their territories (Safinezhad, 1974:83-84). Their share of the products varied from village to village. However, the share of a carpenter and a blacksmith within a village were almost the same.

As in other countries, Iranian rural craftsmen (except carpet weavers) suffered a decline in real incomes because of machine competition (de Gobineau, 1971:42). In view of the penetration of urban made goods into the countryside, rural crafts could not escape the destructive influence exerted by the dominance of town and foreign goods in the country. Thus, the production of various rural goods were unable to compete with town or foreign goods. Only carpet making in which foreign capital was interested, did not face the dangerous competition. "For the village carpet weavers the process of miserization was not swift" (Abdullaev, 1971: 49). On the other hand, the independent carpet weavers went under another type of attack from outside the community. The merchant capital enlisted the independent craftsmen (particularly carpet weavers) in remote regions as piece workers. They supplied them with all the necessary mean of production. They continued their powerful influence through the purchase of their products (Khamsi, 1968:129). It was in the central villages around the desert where the majority of the villagers became wage carpet weavers.



### 10.3.3. Village Laborers

The village laborers, before the land reform were those who neither owned any means of production, nor enjoyed the right of cultivation (nasaq). They were wage earners--either in kind or in cash. It should be noted, that the existence of such a class of poor and dispossessed villagers was not a sufficient, although necessary, condition for capitalist development in Iranian agriculture. It could have happened, if other factors of production--unencumbered land, capital--would have been in sufficient quantities. If these were available then possibly there were entrepreneurs who were willing to start capitalist production.

There were village laborers involved in three sectors of the village activities. A high proportion of them were agricultural laborers (barzagan); a few of them were public servicemen, and the remainder worked in handicrafts for wages.

The barzagan owned no land, signed no contracts and had no rights to use the land. They had no means other than their labors and could be dismissed at will. The barzagan could, therefore, subsist only by working for either rich peasants or landlords. They survived as seasonal agricultural laborers, grazing cattle, weeding fields, threshing grain, picking cotton, digging ditches, and at peak periods helping the share-croppers with the harvest. Thus, their only contribution to production was through their labor. They were

totally separated from the means of production and had to work for others.

Since the barzagan had no means of production possessed no cultivation rights, economic insecurity was a constant feature of their lives. Agriculture was virtually the only activity in which the barzagan could find employment. These opportunities, however, were limited, since agriculture in most of the country was seasonal and the raiylats and dehqans did most of the work themselves.

According to the official statistics, 1,983,000 barzagans were in rural Iran before the land reform (Ministry of Interior, 1962:269). They were economically and socially dominated by the landlord and his representatives. They could not obtain any employment on the landlord's estates without the goodwill of his agents. Those who were fortunate in obtaining permission to work in the community, only "...succeeded in obtaining some work for 100 or more days each year..." (Hooglund, 1982:33). The best barzagan could earn up to eight tumans (\$1.05), or the rough equivalent in kind, each day. In addition to wages, it was customary for laborers to receive free lunches from the employers during the harvest (Ibid.).

The attendance of large number of barzagan had an effect on relations between landlords and raiylats. From the landlord point of view, barzagan constituted a source of cheap surplus labor to draw upon at harvest time and for whatever necessary (i.e., Jobs which needed to be undertaken on the land). More importantly, owners could utilize them

against raiylats in order to increase their own benefits. From the raiylats point of view, a large number of bazagarans weakened their bargaining position with the landlords.

Under extraordinary circumstances, the barzagan could be mobilized by outsiders into radical movements. Normally, they were too dependent upon the landowners to be able to initiate their own political action. Based on the internal structure of the communities, most agricultural laborers tended to be resigned to their conditions. Although, some still hoped for improvement. A few migrated seasonally or permanently to other villages and towns. Others dreamed of acquiring nasaq and becoming raiylats.

The villages which were allocated to non-irrigated grain production supplied migrant laborers. They needed only extra help during harvest time. These agricultural laborers usually were employed in the villages with multi-seasonal cultivations; or moved to the cities for inferior works; and sometimes were shipped to the Persian Gulf countries for construction work. This migration was predominantly seasonal.

According to one document; in the villages around Isfahan a large percentage of peasants were landless. It was these villages which supplied over fifteen hundred unskilled workers to the oil industry in the south (Abdullaev, 1971:49). Other villages with overpopulated agricultural laborers contributed approximately the same.

The second group of the village laborers were the

handicraft workers. When merchant capital penetrated rural handicraft production, it gathered some workers in workshops as part-time or full-time producers of handicraft articles. They were paid a daily wage (Khamisi, 1968:128). These workers gradually lost their connection with the soil, and a result became dependent upon a subsistence wage for their labor (English, 1966:92).

According to the official statistics, 331,912 workers in rural areas belonged to handicraft. About 13 per cent of all handicraft workers (44,678) were carpet weaving workers (Ministry of Interior, 1962: table 36). These workers had a single function: they supplied the urban market with carpets and other crafts. The larger the expansion of such workshops with urban capitals, the larger the threat for independent carpet weavers.

The third group of village laborers were public servicemen such as dashtban (field watchmen), hammami (bath-keeper), salmani (barber), chupan (shepherd), and so on. They provided various necessity service to the villagers. Some of these servicemen (e.g., dashtban) had higher social status than others (e.g., hammami and salmani). Although bath-keepers and barbers were among the lowest-status individuals of all non-agricultural workers, they did not rank at the bottom of rural society. They had definite occupations, so their social and economic position was superior to that of the villagers without regular jobs.

According to the statistics provided by the government, 202,900 servicemen existed in rural Iran prior to the land reform (Ministry of Interior, 1962:267). The livelihood of these servicemen were based upon their share of the crop as a wage.

To sum up, the village laborers were in a sad predicament. Their plight was recapitulated by James Bill in eight words: sickness, poverty, ignorance, exploitation, dependence, indebtedness, hardship, and squalor (1963:403). This might not be the case for all the village laborers, but research on rural Iran commonly has shown that the socio-economic positions of the rural villagers before the land reform were pitiable. Since the laborers allways wished to obtain a plot of land or at least a cultivation right (nasag), they believed the land reform was the time for their wishes to become a reality.



#### 10.4. Endnotes

1. The landlord could often circumvent and undermine the raiyyat's cultivating rights since these rights were usually unwritten and therefore precarious. Undesirable raiyyat could easily be expelled from the village and involved the landlord in no further obligation.
2. For a comprehensive analysis of the emergence and expansion of the dependent bourgeoisie in Iran see Seyfollahi's Ph.D. dissertation, Development of Dependent Bourgeoisie in Iran, 1962-1978, Michigan State University, 1982.
3. The gavbands as a separate group in Iranian rural society have not yet been the subject of detailed research.





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