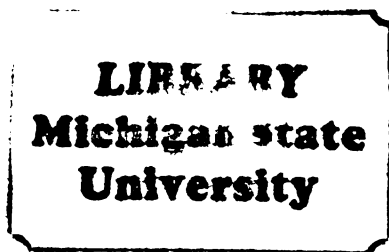


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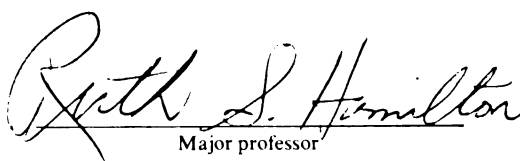
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**THE IRANIAN SOCIAL FORMATION:
PRE-CAPITALISM, DEPENDENT CAPITALISM, AND THE WORLD SYSTEM**

By

Ali-Akbar Mahdi

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

THE IRANIAN SOCIAL FORMATION: PRE-CAPITALISM, DEPENDENT CAPITALISM, AND THE WORLD SYSTEM

By

Ali-Akbar Mahdi

This is an historical comparative study of the nature of socio-economic formations in a Third World country. Basically, this research investigates two major related issues: (a) the nature of pre-capitalist relations and (b) the genesis of dependent capitalism in Iran within a "world-system" framework.

With regard to the first objective, after a critical examination of various classical approaches to the nature of pre-capitalism in Iran, the study utilizes the concept of "social formation" as an articulated entity containing various social relations. It is argued that the Iranian pre-capitalist social formation is characterized by a variety of social relations of production. This constellation of various socio-economic relationships is called the "Asian Social Formation." The latter is used as a construction describing a collection of historically specific modalities of productive relations. To characterize the political nature of this social formation, this research introduces the concept of "Patrimonial Despotism" as a synthesis of Max Weber's ideal type of "Patrimonial Authority" and Karl Marx's concept of

"Oriental Despotism."

With regard to the second objective, attempts are made to explore the dynamic interaction of the peripheral Iranian social formation and the metropolitan countries in the global division of labor during the period between the sixteenth to the early twentieth century. It is argued that the rivalry of European powers, beginning in the late sixteenth century, for the control of the Iranian market and silk production marked the beginning of the process of early incorporation of Iran into the emerging capitalist world system. By the late nineteenth century, the world capitalist system played a decisive role in the transformation of Iranian pre-capitalism into a dependent capitalism. This period is shown to be marked by increased intervention and penetration of European capital and goods into the Iranian economy --a process which distorted the course of Iranian economic development and helped the underdevelopment of Iranian industries.

Using a dialectical method, the research selects information from a variety of sources and put them into an historical framework chiefly by applying a comparative historical methodology. A variety of primary and secondary sources, both in English and Farsi, are consulted. This information is systematically used to develop evidence about the socio-politico-economic processes which have shaped the pre-capitalist Iranian social formation, contributed to the incorporation of the Iranian economy into the world capitalist system, and led to the formation of dependent capitalism in early twentieth century Iran.

For my parents
who have painfully lived with my involuntary absence.

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Akbar Mahdi
June, 1983, East Lansing.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE PROBLEM

This is a study in the historical nature of political and economic underdevelopment. Social scientists provide different understanding of the historical nature of socio-economic underdevelopment and see it as being caused by various factors according to each scientist's perspective. For instance, modernization theorists have identified some of the most critical issues of underdevelopment as the shortage of capital and the lack of adequate technological development. According to these social scientists, underdevelopment is caused by the institutional inadequacies, behavioral attributes, or traditional norms indigenous to the underdeveloped societies (Rostow, 1960; Levy, 1966; Lerner, 1966; McClelland, 1961). In contrast, dependency theorists perceive underdevelopment essentially in terms of the historically promoting and retarding forces from both within and without national context. To these social scientists, underdevelopment is the product of the same historical processes which created the development of the world capitalist system (Wallerstein, 1974; Frank, 1970, Amin, 1976).

This research is concerned with the analysis of the nature of

pre-capitalist Iran and its preceding social relations of production. Basically, the thesis will attempt to investigate two major related issues: (a) the nature of pre-capitalist relations and (b) the genesis of dependent capitalism in Iran. This introductory chapter will begin with a conceptualization of these problems by locating them within the theoretical framework of the study, followed by a discussion of the methodological aspects of the work.

1.1. The Iranian Pre-capitalist Mode of Production

The first objective of this study is to explore the nature of pre-capitalist Iran because the development of the capitalist social relations in any socio-economic formation is an historical process, and those relations do not suddenly appear on the scene by themselves. Their constituent elements develop within the pre-capitalist socio-economic structure of the society to the extent that their articulation within the older formation establishes preconditions for their emergence. The articulation of the dynamics of various modes existing within this pre-capitalist formation, and the particular historical conjunctures upon which the effects of these modes allow for separation of direct producers from their means of production, should be related to the origins of the capitalist mode of production. For instance, in the transition from European feudalism to capitalism, three or four elements allowing the accumulation of monetary wealth, i.e., usury, mercantile capital, and state deficit financy were developed within the feudal formation

(Marx, 1967,I). Of course, the fourth was hoarding by peasants and tenant farmers.

It therefore follows that the analysis of the emergence of capitalism must start, both historically and logically, with the examination and evaluation of pre-capitalist productive organization. This can be done by specifying as accurately as possible which mode or modes of production were present in pre-capitalist Iran. It is important to determine more clearly and precisely than previous works have done what the articulated characteristics of this society were.

The examination of social, economic, and historical writings reveals two approaches to the nature of pre-capitalist Iran. One is the approach usually taken by various Western social scientists and some Western-educated Iranian social scientists. This approach is usually guided by the functionalist perspective and is quite supportive of the socio-historical developments occurring in Iran within the last half a century. In contrast, the second approach is radical and presents various critical analyses of Iranian past and present.

The first approach has characterized pre-capitalist Iranian society basically as traditional. This traditionality, according to this modernizationist perspective, involves low degrees of industrialization, urbanization, and their concomitant functional specialization and structural differentiation. Such a society is said to have low degrees of educational development, individual and class mobility, achievement motivation and psychic mobility, and entrepreneurial personality (Lerner, 1966; Inkeles, 1969; McClelland,

1961; Smelser, 1966 & 1968; Hoselitz, 1960). These social scientists, despite their differing interpretations of the past history of these so-called "traditional societies," often characterize the pre-industrial period as an undifferentiated entity demonstrating long established forms of traditional organizations.

As opposed to this approach, there are varieties of critical analyses of Iranian society with both Marxist and non-Marxist orientations. Marxist theories usually develop their argument in terms of the mode of production. The pre-capitalist period in every society is marked by one or several modes of production. The major emphasis in various Marxist interpretations is on the concept of "mode of production" as the organizing principle of social relations of production.

However, the Marxist theorists, despite their theoretical commonalities, part from one another when it comes to specification of one mode or various modes of production in given societies. This controversy over the mode of production has been a long preoccupation of Marxist scholarship which has elicited much debate and much confusion. The debates between Sweezy and Dobb about the transition of Europe from feudalism to capitalism (Hilton, 1976), between Laclau and Frank (Frank, 1967; Laclau, 1971) about the characterization of the mode of production in Latin America, and contributions of Meillassoux (1972), Rey (1973), Coquery-Vidrovitch (1978), Anderson (1974), Banaji (1972 & 1973), Wallerstein (1979), Alavi (1975), Amin (1976), and Hindess and Hirst (1975) have been celebrated exchanges and developments in this complex and multifaceted issue.

These opposing views about the nature of the pre-capitalist social formations in the East raise serious questions in the context of the present study: What is the nature of the pre-capitalist mode(s) of production in Iran? Was this mode feudal? slavery? Asiatic? semi-Asiatic? semi-feudal? or tributary? Or was this mode just a hybrid formation having the facets of more than one of these modes? And finally, did this mode represent a society containing various contending modes of life and production?

Some scholars have characterized the pre-capitalist Iranian society as feudal (Plekhanov, 1926; Herzfeld, 1914 & 1935; Jazani, 1978) and some others have seen it as being marked by an Asiatic mode of production (Marx, 1967; Wittfogel, 1957; Ashraf, 1971). (1) And there are few other efforts which have variously described this pre-capitalist period as "traditional," "bureaucratic," and "nomadic." Some of these theories are reviewed in the first chapter of this work.

The search for clarity on this issue leads us to a critical review of European theories of the transition to capitalism and of the unilinear explanations of such a transition. It is the contention of this author that many of these characterizations are based on a simplistic interpretation of Marx's writings on the historical development of Western society. Many assume that every society should pass through slavery, feudalism (or the Asiatic form in case of Oriental societies), capitalism, and socialism to communism. This simplistic interpretation of Marxian texts reduces human history to a series of a priori categories of societal development. It is one of the tasks of this study to critically

review these assumptions and present an alternative approach to this problem in the context of the Middle Eastern region.

This study will provide an understanding of the nature of pre-capitalist societies by utilizing the concept of "social formation" as an articulated entity containing various modes of production. The articulation of different social relations in a given society and a given time can be seen as a social formation. The concept of "social formation" designates this comprehensive structure of the social relations existing within a society. (2) Different social formations have distinctive structural and historical characteristics which separate them from one another over time and space.

Every social formation is marked by a basic principle of organization which delineates the structural conditions of variability within that formation. As Habermas (1973: 7) put it, this principle determines the range of possible social-systemic changes and it "... limit[s] the capacity of a society to learn without losing its identity." This organizing principle of every social formation is the mode of production. The concept of "mode of production" is to be understood as a heuristic concept allowing the researcher to differentiate various social relations within a social formation on the basis of their productive characters. The notion of the mode of production is understood to be an "abstract-formal object which does not exist in the strong sense of reality" (Poulantzas, 1975: 15). The distinction between the two concepts of "social formation" and "mode of production" presupposes the transcendence of the theoretical rigidity inherent in unilinear

theories of progression of historical epochs. It is based on the assumption that there may exist variants of the primary modes yet to be identified through specific historical studies of unidentified cases which may mean that the historical transition of peripheral economies into capitalism might have involved "historical leaps" or other forms of discontinuity. Therefore, one can assume that "it is possible for more than one pre-capitalist mode of production to exist, and exist spatially and temporally conterminous with others, and not necessarily expect one pre-capitalist mode of production to evolve into predetermined mode." (Elliott, 1980: 4) Although more than one mode of production may exist in a given social formation at any point in time, it is the predominant mode of production which best characterizes that socio-politico-economic system.

In the absence of a systematic exposition by Marx, the issue of pre-capitalist mode(s) of production becomes a real concern for a study of this nature. Identification of the number and nature of the various modes of production, and of the various elements of political and ideological superstructures, is an important task of this study. To define the pre-capitalist social relations in Iran, this work will attempt to study and specify the role of state, the forms of land ownership, irrigation, town and city development, and judicial as well as political features characterizing the intra-group relationships of the Iranian society in the pre-capitalist period. We will develop a critical examination of the concepts "feudal," "Asian," and "tributary" modes of production, both theoretically and, in case of Iran, empirico-historically. Furthermore, attempts will be made to compare the pre-capitalist

socio-economic formations of the Western European countries with that of Iranian society.

The theoretical problematic of the pre-capitalist formation will also lead us to the problematic of the articulation between modes of production. Meillassoux (1972), Banaji (1972), and Wolpe (1972) have argued that the preservation of pre-capitalist modes of production is functionally related to the requirements for the reproduction of capitalism on a world scale. Rey (1973), on the other hand, has rejected this position and argues that the articulation of modes of production reduces to nothing more than the progressive extension of one mode of production to the detriment of another mode. For Rey, only the original transition from feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe required the reproduction of a pre-capitalist mode of production as a source of labour and of raw materials. While historically capitalism completely dissolved all pre-capitalist modes of production in the center countries, in the peripheries it overlay pre-capitalist modes. As for the effect of the world capitalist system on these peripheries, Banaji (1972) makes a distinction between the peripheral societies dominated by the world capitalist system and those populated by the European settlers. He argues that the European settlement in colonies usually destroyed the existing modes of production and substituted them with capitalism. Whereas in the countries which came under the domination of world capitalism the pre-capitalist forms of production were preserved, though their autonomy was diminished.

It is our contention that there is no universal theory of transition from the pre-capitalist mode to capitalism because the

world capitalist system does not entail homogeneity and unity. Because of the diversity of social formations in the periphery, and the contradictory impact of capitalism on these societies, peripheral capitalist development takes various forms. This means that the transition of peripheral pre-capitalist modes to capitalism does not mean the dissolution of those modes. While the penetration of the world capitalist system into the peripheral societies allows the distorted persistence of pre-capitalist modes, it destroys the potential indigenous forces capable of leading the development of a genuine national capitalism. It is our contention that in the past three and a half centuries, The Iranian social formation has experienced uneven tendencies and developments which progressively have subordinated its internal dynamics of the pre-capitalist social formation to the requirements of expanding Western capitalism. Socio-historically, this process was associated with a pervasive, but ultimately only partial, transformation of the productive base of the Iranian economy from one dominated by the production of goods for consumption to one dominated by the production of commodities for exchange. This transformation has had serious effects on the modes of surplus appropriation, the nature of ownership of the means of production, the class structure, and on forms of political behaviour within the Iranian social formation. These transformational tendencies and their effects on the Iranian social structure are discussed in the latter part of this work.

1.2. The Emergence and Development of Dependent Capitalism
and the Integration of the Iranian Economy into
the World Capitalist System

The second objective of this study is to investigate the emergence and genesis of what is called "dependent capitalism" in Iran within a "world-system" framework for interpreting Iranian developmental history. The study attempts to trace the historical roots of capitalist penetration in Iran and the subsequent incorporation of Iran into the world-wide capitalist system. Our aim is to explore the dynamic interaction of the peripheral Iranian economy and the metropolitan center in the global capitalist division of labor from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century.

The main assumption informing this attempt is that social change and politico-economic underdevelopment of Iranian society can be most adequately explained within a "world-historical" framework of analysis. Capitalism as a system emerges when capital, as an economic reflection of a class division in society, becomes relatively the most significant aspect of the economy. Economic productivity develops as if it is the productivity of capital (Takahashi, 1952). The world capitalist system, as we know it today, is but the specific manifestation of the world-wide expansion of the already developed capitalist mode of production. The European capitalist system which emerged as the most prominent economic institution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had its earliest beginning, according to Marx, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when an urban handicraft economy operating in a feudal manner gave way to a more complicated productive system.

(3) Capitalism came into existence in Europe somewhere between 1450 and 1550 as a distinct mode of production. (4) As capitalism matured in the West, factors evolved which encouraged its expansion into the peripheral countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Some of these factors were economic, such as the search for raw materials, export markets, and investment profits. Some others were politico-military, as the European powers engaged in strategic competition and in the construction of empires. And there were those which combined the political, economic, and social interests of the capitalist center.

From the beginning of the emergence of capitalism, expansion has constituted an immanent tendency of this system. Capitalism could not function as a closed system. As Rosa Luxemburg argued, it is compelled to gain control of "non-capitalist social organizations" in "primitive lands" in order to supply itself with new markets:

...capitalism in its full maturity also depends in all respects on noncapitalist strata and social organizations existing side by side with it. It is not merely a question of a market for the additional product.... The interrelations of accumulating capital and non-capitalist forms of production extend over values as well as over material conditions, for constant capital, variable capital and surplus value alike. The non-capitalist mode of production is the given historical setting for this process. Since the accumulation of capital becomes impossible in all points without non-capitalist surrounding, we cannot gain a true picture of it by assuming the exclusive and absolute domination of the capitalist mode of production.... Capital needs the means of production and the labour power of the whole globe for untrammelled accumulation; it cannot manage without the natural resources and the labour power of all territories. Seeing that the overwhelming majority of resources and labour power is in fact still in the orbit of pre-capitalist production--this being the historical milieu of

accumulation --capital must go all out to obtain ascendancy over these territories and social organizations. (Luxemburg, 1968: 365)

Capitalism, as a mode of production (or a social system), moved toward univiversalization of itself since the mercantilist period (roughly between 1500 and 1800), when the most immediate conditions for the development of new forms of economic production occurred. Two basic means through which the dynamics of capital accumulation developed were commercial penetration and the international flow of capital. The internationalization of capital has been an intrinsic tendency of capitalist accumulation since the sixteenth century (Wallerstein, 1974; Frank, 1978).

Socio-historical consequences of the development of capitalism on a world-scale are expressed as concrete class struggle between capitalists, wage-laborers, and the people of pre-capitalist societies whose natural economies are disrupted or, in some cases, even destroyed by the advance of capitalism (Marx, 1967, I). This integration of the economies of peripheral countries into the global capitalist system has been one of the most important factors which has conditioned the processes of socio-economic change in societies which have been part of the capitalist system. Any attempt at understanding the development of this process in peripheral countries, such as Iran, requires the student of peripheral development to look for the conditioning effects of the capitalist system on these societies. For this reason, the particular causes of any form of expansion could only be understood, according to Lenin, by "taking the facts of the development of capitalism in a particular country." (Lenin, 1974: 67)

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. The introduction of this capitalist system into a peripheral economy has distorted the latter's societal development in the direction of the interests of the former (Baran, 1957). The autonomous historical development of these societies have been subsumed to the interests of the dominant outside forces of imperial powers. Such an expansion has furthered the capitalist development at the center and at the same time it has undermined the historical capability and potentialities of the peripheral countries for any genuine development.

With respect to the productive forces of society, capitalist development is a progressive process and growth is undoubtedly one of its inherent characteristics. The underlying impulse that sets the capitalist mechanism in motion and keeps it moving comes from the increasing generation of new consumer goods, new methods of production, and new markets. That is, in essence, the interminable process of capital accumulation. According to this perspective, the process of capital accumulation is the starting point of the development of the capitalist mode of production because capitalist productive relations presuppose the existence of free labor as well as the accumulation of a substantial amount of capital (Marx, 1967, I: 713). Capital ownership in the underdeveloped countries falls into three categories: state-owned, privately owned by domestic business interests or the so-called "national bourgeoisie," and privately owned by foreign nationals or corporations. From a

political economic perspective, the latter is of the utmost importance because the socially produced surplus derived from the investment of this capital returns to the foreign owners, not to the indigenous economy, to be disposed of as that owner sees fit. The capital owned by the national bourgeoisie is also subordinated to the directions and interests of foreign capital since its economic function is structured around the material and service requirements of the foreign industrial interests. State control of economic development and the establishment of national priorities are also thwarted by foreign ownership of capital and the effective control and investment planning of the foreign corporations toward the maximization of their profits.

Capitalist development often has a positive relationship with the rate of exploitation of labor. (5) The two phenomena are dialectically related and, in many instances, form the dynamic process of capital accumulation. A positive rate of exploitation seems to be necessary for any positive rate of growth under capitalism. The essence of this exploitation lies in the element of control over the productive machinery of the society which has implications for the division of the society into social classes, based on their relationship to the means of production and on the appropriation of the social surplus. Since the process of capital accumulation involves the production, circulation, and consumption of values, then one has to look at the processes which lead to the creation of different types of classes who live off the surplus value produced by the laborers. This same chain of exploitative relationships that linked Western capitalist classes to dominant

classes of the peripheral societies extended from these classes to traders and producers located in provincial towns, right down to the peasant producer or the landless rural workers. An analysis of these processes and social classes is very important because they serve to mediate the struggle between capital and labor at all levels of society.

To investigate the genesis of capitalism in Iran, this study starts with the initiation of primitive capital accumulation in that country. With the breakdown of the pre-capitalist mode of production, capital "emerges as a dominant social 'relationship' and determines the characteristic features and attributes of the new mode of production." This emphasis on capital as a relationship signifies an attempt to distinguish between the existence of capitalism as a mode of production and the existence of merchant's capital and interest-bearing capital. The former is a mode of production, which emerged in the sixteenth century in Europe and spread into the non-European lands later, distinct from the latter, which has existed in most societies long before the capitalist mode of production came into being.

In a study of the development of capitalism in the Islamic countries, including Iran, Rodinson (1973) views the existence of merchant and financial capital in pre-capitalist social formations as indicative of the development of a capitalism in those social formations. This seems to be a questionable position. As historical evidence indicates the existence of capital in the form of merchant capital is not a rare phenomenon in pre-capitalist social formations. The circulation of commodities and of money

cannot be regarded as sufficient conditions for the development of a capitalist mode of production. Such a development requires the conditions that bring about the sale of labor power as a commodity. These conditions are brought about by "the process which takes away from the laborer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other, the immediate producer into wage labourers." (Marx, 1967, I:714)

In the feudal societies of the West and pre-capitalist agrarian social formations of the East, this change takes the form of dispossessing laborers of their means of production and subsistence and of allowing them to sell their labor power in the market as a commodity. It is this process through which the pre-capitalist mode of production is either assimilated or destroyed. Hence, this study concerns itself with the productive relations which have determined the process of capitalist formation in Iran. These express themselves in the socio-politico-economic relations between the peasants, landlords, and the state in the early stages, and labor and capital in the later developmental stages. This research is concerned only with the early stages of capitalist development in Iran, i.e., the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

But the mechanisms and processes of capitalist development in Iran have not been unconnected with the larger processes of capitalist development on the world scale. This study is based on the assumption that during the past three centuries, the principal and most permanent conditioning of socio-economic processes in Iranian society has been its being part of the world capitalist

system. It is contended that the mechanisms and processes of capitalist development in Iran are dependent and conditioned by Iran's place in the world capitalist system.

The incorporation of Iran into the world capitalist system and its transformation from a pre-capitalist mode of production to a dependent capitalist productive system has involved the development of commercial farming, a marked increase in migration and forms of wage labor, the extension of a more intricate market and transport system linking villages directly to the large urban centers, and the increasing political and economic integration of the area into the international economic system. In the past hundred years, in particular, a major stimulus for this process, and for the direction it was to take, was provided by the establishment of large-scale capitalist enterprises and activities, often under foreign control or ownership --a subject which is beyond the scope of this research.

The integration of the Iranian economy into the global capitalist system has intensified the existing polarizations in the Iranian social structure and led the Iranian society to a peculiar form of political economic underdevelopment. In the last fifty years, Iran has experienced an economic transformation and limited growth as well as widespread poverty and stagnant economic conditions. The Iranian economy changed from an agrarian form to an urban-industrial economy. In some respects, Iran was a specialized production sector for the world capitalist market as early as the seventeenth century. Ever since, major portions of Iranian economy has been oriented toward Western markets. The economy became dependent upon international capital not only at the level of

productive relations, but also at the level of the "market." Thus, economic policies were directed towards adapting to the dictates of the international marketplace.

International capital designed and imposed economic and investment policies on Iran which gave priority to large-scale, capital intensive projects in the infrastructure (energy and industry), and import-substitution manufacturing with high import contents. This resulted in an unbalanced and a disarticulated economy. These economic and investment policies, combined with specific legislations and actions undertaken by the Iranian government, such as capitulatory rights and investment laws, have unleashed a series of complex forces creating structural blockage mechanisms and disincentives which have impeded the development of non-export, human related sectors.

But not only have the above-mentioned blockage mechanisms and disincentives produced economic and financial crises never before experienced in Iran, they have also reinforced the country's dependence on Western countries and their multinational oil and industrial corporations and banks. The core areas of economic activity in the country came under the domination of the forces and mechanisms of the world capitalist centers. In the same manner, the peripheral economic units of the country, such as village communities which were independent for their subsistence for a long time, lost their autonomous structure and became dependent on the structure of the center areas.

The overall consequence of dependence on the production and exportation of oil, and the articulation between the interests of

the monarchy and its affiliated ruling class in Iran and foreign economic and strategic interests, resulted not only in the commonly discussed budgetary and balance of payments deficits, but also, and most importantly, in underdevelopment manifested through malnutrition, low income, low health status, high illiteracy rate, high unemployment, high inflation, political departicipation, inequalities in resource allocation, and "peripheralization" with class and geographical dimensions.

The "peripheralization" of the petty-bourgeoisie, due to the displacement of small-scale handicraft industries, the expansion of capitalist monopoly activities, and the "proletarianization" of peasants through the commercialization of the agricultural economy and land reform (which resulted in rural unemployment and a rural exodus), led to the class dominance of the dependent bourgeoisie which has acted as a "bridgehead" or agent in channelling the local resources to the metropolis (Mahdi, 1980). To document all these changes during the early development of dependent capitalism in Iran, this study focuses on social classes, international trade, and the flow of foreign capital in and out of Iranian society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

To investigate the development of these processes in the Iranian context, this research is guided by premises of the political economy perspective. Specifically, the research is developed on the basis of the dependency framework by using the "world-system" model (Wallerstein, 1974). The reason for such a

choice is that this framework provides instruments for a global conceptualization of the subject under investigation. Such an analysis accounts for the economic, social, and political levels of capitalist development at the center as well as for its expansion into pre-capitalist peripheral societies. It encourages analyses of dependent capitalist development in the periphery as the historical-structural interaction of specific modes of capital accumulation, social classes, and the state.

This study attempts to put Iranian history into a broad framework of global interaction and to bring the socio-politico-economic relations of the past three centuries into a model of social relationships which attempts to unmask the dialectical nature of forces and processes underlying those societal relationships. This is done by specifying the historical variables which have shaped these relationships. But, it is imperative that the theory should be put into a dynamic and dialectical relationship with empirical data. The theory and evidence not only clarify one another, but they also shape one another in a dialectical relationship. Using a dialectical approach to social reality stresses, borrowing Heilbroner's words, "the production, rather than the passive receipt of knowledge --the involvement of the act of inquiry in shaping, as well as in discovering, knowledge" (1980:31). It is for this reason that this research sees one of its tasks to rigorously examine the assumptions underlying the theoretical model, and relevancy of its basic propositions. This is an important step toward the assessment of the applicability of the dependency paradigm, the theory of the articulation of modes of production, and

the world system model to the analysis of social change in Iranian society.

1.3. Patrimonialism and the Internal Dynamics of the Iranian Social Formation

Some dependency theorists like Frank (1967) have argued that universalization of capitalism and its penetration into and expansion in underdeveloped world has meant the universal homogenization of all underdeveloped countries. This argument has come under serious criticism by many social scientists. The view taken in this thesis is that this process of capitalist development, while universal, took different social, political, and economic forms in different societies and was conditioned by the historical specificity of each of these societies. As Dos Santos (1970) has attempted to show, underdevelopment is a dynamic phenomenon which may take many different forms and involve methods of exploitation that are relative to historical time and space.

Furthermore, it is wrong to look for the causes of peripheral underdevelopment in the outside world alone. If we are to understand the effects of the world capitalist system on pre-capitalist modes and their articulation, we should "take into account not only the dynamics of the expanded reproduction of capital, but also the internal structural characteristics of pre-capitalist modes, so as to be able to proceed to the concrete level of analysis of specific cases of articulation" (Bradby, 1975:128) To see the external forces as the only sources of

underdevelopment is to overlook indigenous forces contributing to the situation. This is a major problem in the views developed by some prominent dependency theorists such as Wallerstein (1974), Amin (1976), and Frank (1967). For instance, according to Amin (1976: 279) the internal social structure of peripheral social formations are overdetermined by the dynamics of the world capitalist system. These societies are viewed as having no "internal dynamics of their own." Similarly, Wallerstein argues that the emergence of the capitalist world system means the elimination of pre-capitalist productive forms. Once a pre-capitalist economy comes to be determined by the capitalist world system, according to Wallerstein (1979:53), the pre-capitalist productive character of that economy loses its "autonomous reality" and becomes "one of the many forms of bourgeois employment of proletarian labor to be found in a capitalist mode of production" (Ibid.) In my view, such an approach to the problem leads to the reification of historical concepts and ignores the internal superstructural and infrastructural dynamics of those societies. The historical failure of the underdeveloped countries to develop must be analyzed in terms of the internal structure, as much as of the external context. As Turner, in a study of pre-capitalist Iran, has argued:

In my view the analysis of Iran cannot start from either the view that external imperialism is the principal cause of economic retardation or from the argument that the internal structure of the prebendal state slowed down the autonomous emergence of an industrial bourgeoisie. The analysis of the Iranian economy and society must be premised on a view of the mutual, interpenetrating causality of the internal logic of Iranian feudalism and the external impact of colonial capitalism. (1980: 58)

This is an important emphasis for dependency theory if it intends to locate the historical origin and development of underdevelopment within the socio-historical totality out of which it has emerged. As Langdon has noted, one of the weaknesses of Frank's dependency model, for instance, is that it neglects the "internal dialectic (of peripheral economies which) can reshape the periphery's political economy and its commercial exchange relationships with the capitalist world" (Langdon, 1974: 125).

Consequently, it is erroneous to seek the causes of the underdevelopment of Iranian society in the external sources alone. Such an analysis not only does not help us to understand the historical specificity of different forms of capitalist penetration into non-capitalist social formations, but it also blinds us in understanding the cultural, historical, and political uniqueness of each of these countries.

Following Ashraf (1970 & 1971), who suggested that the patrimonial structure of Iranian polity has tended to block the development of a modern bourgeoisie in Iran, the position expressed in this study is that "patrimonial despotism," as a concept developed in this work by synthesizing Marx's idea of "Oriental Despotism" and Weber's discussion of "Patrimonial Authority," can be used profitably to describe and analyze the political structure of Iranian society. Patrimonial despotism is seen as being partially responsible for the underdevelopment of the Iranian social formation both in its pre-capitalist and capitalist periods. It is our contention that the concrete historical processes of socio-economic development in Iran have always been influenced and affected by this

patrimonial political structure of the country.

This study attempts to reaffirm the contention that the origin of the process of underdevelopment in Iran cannot be sought primarily in the foreign domination of the imperial powers because the internal class structure and patterns of surplus appropriation in Iran have also contributed to this process and have had determining effects on the curtailment of the capital formation process and the technical advancement for the improvement of the country. Based on the above assumptions, the study intends to demonstrate that the existence of patrimonial authority has been as detrimental to the historical development of Iranian society as the influence of foreign forces for the economy and polity of that society.

The political structure of Iranian society during the past twenty-five centuries conforms in some respects to Max Weber's ideal type of patrimonial rule (Ashraf, 1970 & 1971; Sheikholeslami, 1978) which has had a determining role in the underdevelopment of Iranian society. Patrimonial authority and its associated classes have always amassed wealth through various means. However, until the nineteenth century, they did not use their wealth to initiate improved production techniques, but rather to pursue their own class interests. As a consequence, economic development and technical innovations fell behind in Iran, and it became impossible for the majority of the people to achieve prosperity. In the Iranian context, this also meant a privileged position for patrimonial authority in the transition from pre-capitalism to capitalism. This privileged position of the political institutions was partly due to

hegemonic centralism of political domination through patrimonial-bureaucratic channels of control as well as surplus extraction.

The state and political administration of this country, both in the pre-capitalist and capitalist periods, have always been extensions of the patrimonial household. The social, economic, and political underdevelopment of Iran is not unaffected by this specific political structure. Both the arbitrary rule of the Shahs and foreign penetration into the economy have had inhibiting effects on the growth of an independent and genuine national bourgeoisie in Iran (Ashraf, 1970). The dependent bourgeoisie, created by Western capitalism in its own image to serve its interests, was not historically capable of promoting genuine development. The dynamics of the intervention of foreign capital used patrimonial authority as a leverage to create a dependent capitalist formation in Iran (Mahdi, 1980). The patrimonial state was used to hasten the process of transformation into the capitalist mode. Similar to any other capitalist formation, the state took over on behalf of individual capitalists the task of developing an infrastructure of roads, railways, ports, etc.

In analyzing the historical impact of internal and external factors which produced political, social, and economic processes that created a condition of underdevelopment in Iran, attention is given to the forms of articulation of patrimonial authority, foreign influence, and processes generated by the internal class structure. In particular, underdevelopment is analyzed as partially an internal structure of class relationships that inhibits the independent organization of each class, reinforcing its dependence on

patrimonial authority and, in the later periods, on the metropolitan centers. This is due, in part, to the prevalence of networks of particularistic relationships based on patrimonial as well as extended kinship, tribal, and ethnic ties that cross-cut socio-economic categories.

1.4. The Mode of Analysis

The facts themselves may be interesting, but hardly useful. It is the study of causes that makes history fruitful.
Polybius

It is not a question here of definitions, which things must be made to fit. We are dealing here with definite functions which must be expressed in definite categories.

Marx, Capital II.

1.4.1. The Dialectical Method:

This study utilizes the dialectical method. As Engels (n.d.: 159-60) has stated, this method is not a "mere proof-providing instrument" but primarily "a method of arriving at new results, of advancing from the known to the unknown." The application of this method entails the construction of the socio-historical reality of Iranian society. The forms of this reality would be shaped through the conscious utilization of the method and by the understanding of the centrality of the infrastructural processes and of the

significance of political and cultural factors in the determination of the character of the mode of production. This is done by the identification of internal mechanisms which relate economic production, social class, and state to one another, and by identification of the "laws of movement" of the Iranian economy both during pre-capitalist and early capitalist periods. (6)

The identification of these mechanisms and laws as historical phenomena in any society can only be understood within the historical totality of that society. "The category of totality," as Lukacs (1971) argued, "... is the essence of the method." In the context of this study, this totality is founded on the idea of the social formation often characterized by one dominant mode of production. Methodologically, concepts such as mode of production are not conceptual instruments that can be immediately translated in terms of a concrete situation. They are theoretical tools defining the parameters of a kind of analysis which conceive the social totality as a dynamic complex and articulated structure with a determining aspect. This, as mentioned above, is the productive relations of the society which is the nucleus for the structuring of a mode of production.

This research endeavors to trace the integrative penetration of the world capitalist system into the Iranian socio-economic formation since the sixteenth century. From this perspective, history is not used as a description of events, but as a process with evolution in its moments of progress, stagnation, and involution. The method attempts to portray the historical events inside a moving and dialectical totality. Capitalism is seen not as

a static structure, but "as a structure in process." (Therborn, 1980: 392) This means that the social structure of Iranian society should be seen as a changing totality which is endlessly moving and becoming. Since the sixteenth century, this has occurred within the larger historical process of capitalist development which is a world historical process.

To carry out this type of analysis, I utilize what Sartre (1963) called "the progressive-regressive method" of "dialectical totalization" by placing the historical events back into their historical setting. While retaining the idea of social reality as a totality, the researcher produces specific concepts which can be useful tools of analysis. These concepts need to be made historically specific, both in terms of the development of the world capitalist system and in terms of the way in which the articulation of the Iranian productive relations with that system has generated, over time, a specific class structure and set of political institutions with their own history.

By using this method, I attempt to bring in the concrete determinations of the pre-capitalist Iranian social formation and of the formation of a dependent capitalist totality and its interaction with the global system of capitalism. In a study of this nature, and of such a scope, the dialectical method requires the following: (a) Construction of the pre-capitalist and capitalist relations of production, (b) specification of these productive relations in their various forms of existence, and (c) verification of the nature of these relations by establishing the dialectic between these relations and the "historical nature" and "tendencies" of the

corresponding mode of production.(7)

As far as the Iranian pre-capitalist social formation is concerned, our emphasis is on the nature of land-holding, land-owning, irrigation, community structure, exchange relations, trade activities, and of the political determination of economic resources. In analyzing the dependent capitalist mode of production and its relation to the preceding mode in Iran, the emphasis is put on the social relations emerging out of the class structure of the society, while secondarily giving some indication of the development of the means of production. A mode of production comprises forces and relations of production, while the main criterion of differentiation between modes of production does not reside in the forces of production, but in the social relations of the agents undergoing the labor process. These labour relations in turn will affect other social relations.

Once these relations are defined and specified, then the method requires an important further step to be taken; that is, the specification of oppositional characteristics of the various social, political, and economic categories at different levels within the Iranian socio-economic formation. To avoid any mechanistic treatment of the social forces in a dialectical analysis, we should account for all social institutions of the society which could have a bearing on the processes of class struggle and social change: the productive forces and relations as well as the "non-economic" elements which might have a determining role in the creation of positive or negative processes in the historical formations. In the development of capitalism, the process of capital accumulation

occurs on more than a purely economic level. It occurs within a totality of social relations in which the political and ideological apparatus have particular effects on the process of accumulation. But in the dialectical interplay of all these structures, it is the class struggle which counts as a decisive factor. Thus at a superstructural level, we are concerned with the cultural and social changes occurring in Iranian society as a result of its increasing integration into the world capitalist system through trade and cultural exchanges.

1.4.2. The Historiography:

Having explained the theoretical frame of reference and the methodological orientation of the research, a word should be said about the "data base" of the research. Since this study is an exercise in comparative historical analysis, it becomes necessary to combine socio-historical analysis with empirical documentation. However, reliable and/or consistent information about pre-nineteenth century Iran is not available. Records of ancient and medieval Iranian economic matters have not survived, if, indeed, they ever existed. Information passed to us by historians, travellers, courtiers, monographers, and so on are often biased and even prepared for purposes other than presentation of facts. Most of the travellers' accounts are subjective descriptions of superficial events lacking any frame of reference within which we can arrange those accounts.

As for statistical information, there is little before the

Constitutional period; some exist for the first half of this century but that is inadequate and unreliable. Even post-1950's statistics are not reliable estimates and accurate indications. Where there are figures available, the definitions and the methods of achieving those figures are not clear, and one is not sure what is included or excluded. Ironically, where there are clear figures, they differ from one another in accordance to their issuing sources.

Since the information available about Iranian history is fragmentary and scattered and does not constitute a uniform body of facts, the researcher was faced with the task of systematically developing evidence about the socio-politico-economic processes which have shaped the pre-capitalist Iranian socio-economic formation, contributed to the incorporation of the Iranian economy into the world capitalist system, and led to the formation of dependent capitalism in the early twentieth century Iran. The task of the research, then, has not been the simple accumulation of facts: that is, an empiricism which relies solely on the facts as they appear to the researcher. Rather it has been to penetrate into the historical facts by concepts. To achieve an adequate historical understanding, the information was selected from a variety of sources and given a coherence chiefly by applying the comparative historical methodology --a method which helps us to understand the totality of a historical development.

The sources of information include a variety of primary and secondary sources both in English and Farsi such as the works of historians, geographers, foreign travellers and diplomats, and Iranian officials of different dynasties as well as specialized

studies of manuscripts, land tenure, tax system, and previous investigations in areas which were pertinent to the subject of this research. Where necessary, use have been made of descriptive statistical data concerning the socio-economic conditions and the international exchanges.

Finally, a few words about transliteration, chronology, and toponymy used in this work:

(i) The transliteration of names and non-English terms was a basic problem for the author. It was difficult to adopt a single method because the authors quoted or the works cited each had used a different method. Nevertheless, in coping with this problem, efforts were made to ensure the maximum possible consistency in transliterating Farsi or Arabic words. For the sake of simplicity, Farsi or Arabic terms are printed without any diacritical marks and vowel signs are eliminated so as to make the text easier to follow. Throughout this work, the term "Persia" is used only in quotes because most of the English sources refer to medieval Iran as "Persia." To the Western world, Iran is usually known as "Persia." In 1935, Iranian government officiated the term "Iran" (home of the Aryans) and ordered all government translating agencies to refer to the country as "Iran." Since the Iranian people have always called their country "Iran," the contemporary designation is used consistently.

(ii) With regard to chronology, Christian New Style dates (Gregorian calendar) are employed and in rare instances the Islamic lunar or the Iranian solar calendars are applied in the text. In the latter cases, the corresponding Gregorian date is given after an

oblique stroke. Concerning toponymy, the place names are treated as they appear in the sources.

(iii) In relation to currencies and weights no attempt has been made to estimate their present day values. They appear in the form presented in the sources and without changes to customary measures or values.

1.5. Endnotes

(1) Marx referred to Asiatic nature of Iranian society in a number of places: "Letter to Friedrich Engels," 2 June, 1853; New York Daily Tribune, 25 June, 1858, and 5 June, 1857; and Capital, Vol. I.

(2) The way this concept is used in this study is in sharp contrast with the reductionist application of this term in anthropological studies --an approach which uses the term for explaining various social units such as tribe, clan, kinship, state, and so on. In this work the concept is used in a more comprehensive manner entailing a macro-analysis of social relations of production.

(3) It should be mentioned that it is very difficult to locate precisely the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe. Social scientists, whether Marxists or non-Marxists, "have difficulty pinning the transition period down to anything less than two or three centuries, though they may argue that there existed certain pivotal conjunctures, only a few would argue that an abrupt and total transition actually occurred." (Roxborough, 1979:146)

(4) It should be made clear that by capitalism reference is not to some direct and free expression of a universal economic impulse, as the bourgeois economic theorists have it, but to a definitive and historically specific form of organizing productive relations. The contradictory aspect of capitalism derives from the way the production is organized, i.e., based on capital accumulation rather than on production for fulfillment of human needs.

(5) In the political economy perspective, exploitation is given three related meanings: a) the ratio of unpaid to paid labor, b) the ratio of surplus value to the value of the labor power, and c) the ratio of surplus to necessary labour. The three meanings were

proven by Marx to be identical (Marx, 1967,I).

(6) These "laws" are viewed as historical 'tendencies' "whose absolute action(s) (are) checked, retarded, and weakened, by counteracting circumstances." (Marx, 1967,III: 234-35) They exert their influence "under certain conditions and after long periods." (Ibid.) "To us," once Engels wrote, "so-called 'economic laws' are not eternal laws of nature but historical laws which arise and disappear...."(Engels to F.A. Lange, March 29, 1866, Selected Correspondence, Moscow, 1955, p. 172.) In another passage Marx (Capital, III: 175, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House) says:

In theory it is assumed that the laws of capitalist production operate in their pure form. In reality there exists only approximations; but this approximation is the greater, the more developed the capitalist mode of production, and the less is adulterated and amalgamated with survivals of former economic conditions.

(7) Cf. endnote No. 5.

CHAPTER II

PERSPECTIVES ON IRANIAN PRE-CAPITALIST SOCIETY

Basically, there are three specific theoretical approaches to the nature of productive relations in pre-capitalist Iran. Within each of these approaches, there are, in turn, various kinds of interpretations. The first approach, which is the most popularly accepted one, is that of scholars who have characterized the pre-capitalist formation of Iran as feudal (Morgan, 1924; Plekhanov, 1926; Herzfeld, 1914 & 1935; Keddie, 1960, 1968, & 1972; Frye, 1963; Coulborn, 1965; Khamsi, 1968; Nomani, 1972; Vardasbi, 1975; Tabari, 1975; Sodagar, 1977; Akbari, 1978; Critchley, 1978; Forouzin, 1978; Saleh, 1978; Jazani, 1978; Kuznetsova, 1979). When analyzing pre-capitalist Iran, some of these authors use phrases such as "semi-feudalism," or "pseudo-feudalism," and some others apply labels such as "city feudalism," "Oriental feudalism," and "tribal feudalism."

The second approach characterizes the socio-economic structure of pre-capitalist Iran as an Asiatic social structure. Among those who maintain this position are Marx (1964 & 1967), Wittfogel (1957), Khanji (1967), Varga (1968 & 1969), Ashraf (1970 & 1971), Abrahamian (1974 & 1975), Navidi (1977), Ashori (1979), Puyan (n.d.).

And finally there is the position taken by Lambton (1953, 1965, & 1967) which contains many empirical elements of both of the above approaches without having any allegiance to the theoretical assumptions of either perspectives. Lambton views the organization of land ownership in medieval Iranian society as an administrative or bureaucratic structure.

The purpose of this chapter is to review some of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature on both the feudal and Asiatic modes of production. What follows is an exposition of various studies representative of each of the above-mentioned perspectives as they have developed theoretically and historically. Additionally, there is a review of the works of two of the proponents of each perspective related to the Iranian case. The discussion of each perspective is followed by a critical assessment of its theoretical premises and, in the case of the feudal model, its historico-empirical relevance.

2.1. Feudalism in Europe

Feudalism is a term which bears many shades of meaning and has been used in many different ways by different social scientists. Lack of any agreement over the meaning of the term has produced a major anomaly in the studies of the historical development of feudalism. On the one hand, we have vulgar Marxists who view feudalism as a universal historical phase in human history through which all societies must pass prior to the emergence of capitalism; On the other hand, there are those historians who use the term

"feudalism" in order to "describe a system of military and political organization in which armed warriors of knights rally to leaders who give them grants of land in return for personal services." (Duss, 1969: 6) Then, there are social scientists whose views fall somewhere in between the two above-mentioned definitions, such as those of Marc Bloch.

In essence, all these approaches fall into two categories of "the Anglo-German approach," as Postan (1961: xiii) labels them, and what we may call the "Marxist approach." While the former pursues a descriptive and superstructural framework of analysis, defining feudalism in terms of legalistic and contractual principles underlying the ties of dependence in the military organization of the pre-capitalist agrarian society, the latter pursues an infrastructural framework of analysis, defining feudalism in terms of the politico-economic relations of production.

Among the most important works in the "Anglo-German approach" the efforts of Marc Bloch are worth mentioning. According to Bloch, instead of using the term "feudalism" for pre-industrial societies, it would be more accurate to speak of "feudal societies." A "feudal society," for Bloch, is a specific form of social organization with well-defined characteristics. This society is not a universal phenomenon fixed somewhere between capitalism and slavery; it is a society which could exist wherever and whenever certain features are present (Bloch, 1961). He summarizes these features as:

A subject peasantry; widespread use of service tenement (i.e. the fief) instead of salary; supremacy of a class of specialized warriors; ties of obedience and protection which bind man to man; fragmentation of authority; and, in

the midst of all this, survival of other forms of association, family and State (Bloch, 1961: 446)

While Bloch's broad and loose definition of the "feudal society" offers a good working description of the phenomenon, it lacks both conceptual and methodological rigors of a "historically specific" definition of feudalism.

In this study "feudalism" refers to a "mode of production." The key elements in defining a mode of production are the production and appropriation of surplus. The way surplus is produced and the manner in which it is appropriated determines the character of productive organization (Dobb, 1976: 35). Feudalism as a mode of production refers to a social relation established on the appropriation of landed income in the primitive form of tribute, or rent which is extracted from the peasantry, by the landed classes. Subsequently, a feudal society is a hierarchical society the principal contradiction of which is the conflict between lord and peasant as two distinct classes in the society. The economic basis of this agrarian class system is feudal landed property. Property is basically inalienable. The agricultural products, and industrial commodities produced by a scattered domestic handicraft industry, are consumed mainly in the localities. Economic activity does not lead to commodity production and there is no real incentive to accumulate wealth. Production, characterized by a low division of labour, is for immediate use and not for sale in the market. The village and manors are the basic economic units. As Furey has demonstrated:

The relationship between lord and peasant was not

conducted on an individual basis. The relationship was between groups, or rather between organizations. The lord's local organization was the manor. The manor had officials such as bailiffs and stewards, as well as a residence and usually some land. The peasant's local organization was the village community. This organization controlled the principal and characteristic form of production under feudalism. Thus the relations between lord and peasant was a relation between organizations. The manorial officials dealt and negotiated with the officials of the village.(Furey, 1967: 4-5)

In this society, production is carried out by the serfs, and the surplus is appropriated by the feudal hierarchy of lords, bishops, and kings under the nominal leadership of the Emperor and Pope, as was the case in Europe. The social structure is defined not only by underlying economic relations, but also by the religion and military institution of domination (Weber, 1978).

The differentia specifica of feudalism is the extra economic coercion by the feudal lords. An obligation is "laid on the producer by force and independently of his own volition to fulfill certain economic demands of an overlord, whether these demands take the form of services to be performed or of dues to be paid in kind." (Dobb, 1976: 35) This coercive force may be backed by the military authority possessed by the feudal superiors or by the authority of custom and tradition based juridically, or by the authority of law. In either case, "... the implied threat of force was never very far beneath the surface." (Furey, 1967: 118) It was through this coercion that the lord tied the peasant to the soil and deprived him and his family of freedom of movement.

Throughout the development of this type of economic organization, three possible forms of surplus extraction can be specified: a) The extraction of surplus in the form of work, i.e.,

labor rent, especially at the earliest stages of the Middle Ages in Western Europe; b) The extraction of surplus in the form of products, i.e., rent in kind, which was usually demanded of the peasantry along with the labor service; And c) The extraction of surplus in the form of money, i.e., money rent, which took place at the latter stages of development when the peasants had to sell their products in order to pay money to their lords as rent. This latter event set the stage for the transformation of feudal production to commodity production. Money became widespread and trade expanded (Nabudere, 1977: 1-7).

Two of the most important characteristics of European feudalism were the institutions of vassalage and the fiefs. The vassalage was "a personal bond of loyalty and obedience by which a warrior promised service to a lord or chieftain in return for military protection, security, and assistance" (Duss, 1969: 9). The vassal held benefices on condition of service, usually of a military kind, or rent. The strength of the authority of the rulers depended less on their theoretical sovereignty than on the fidelity of their personal retainers called vassals. Not only were the vassals granted estates and villages, but, sometimes, they were granted certain rights of government and political control (Strayer, 1965: 13). The landed rights were often linked to political and military authority, to legal authority, and in cases to religious authority. Feudal lords and their subordinate followers formed a warrior elite who were bound together by socio-political ties of vassalage and the fief.

The fief or feudum was "some type of income-producing property

that provided the vassal with the wealth and leisure he needed to maintain his status as a fighting man; it also served to reward his loyalty and guarantee his continued service" (Duss, 1969: 10).

Fiefs included organized manors worked by the peasantry. In return for the fief, the peasant became the vassal of the lord. So long as the vassal remained steadfast in his allegiance to the lord, he retained his title to the fief. Holding of a fief provided the vassal with the privilege of immunity. Within his own domain, the vassal "administered justice, collected fines and local taxes, raised military forces, and exacted services for the upkeep of roads, bridges, and fortifications" (Stephenson, 1942: 13).

A related social aspect of the vassalage was homage. Homage was a ritual act through which the vassalitic obligations were stipulated and established. Basically, it was a symbolic gesture in that the vassal took an oath of fealty to the lord. (1) By this act the peasants or serfs commended themselves to the protection of the lords of the manors. For peasants, this meant the loss of autonomy and control over their livelihood. For vassals, such a contract would bring them a fief with all the power it entails.

Feudalism, as it developed in Western Europe, was also characterized by the fragmentation of political power and decentralization of authority (Wolf, 1966: 50-57). The political unit of much of Western Europe consisted of the county. Even in some cases the county was divided into smaller units of autonomous lordships. There were still enclaves within a county or barony. The counts or barons did not have much public authority beyond their own "domains." What connected these lordships together were a

series of rights of jurisdiction and administration (Strayer, 1965: 12).

As a consequence of this fragmentation, feudal Europe lacked a strong centralized state institution. The older traditions of central authority could be found in such institutions as the papacy, the monarchies, and the Holy Roman Empire; but there was no center of power that could monopolize the right to collect taxes, issue laws, raise armies, and keep public order. The functions of the state were performed by feudal lords ruling in their own local domains, and their power was regarded as a private possession (Duss, 1969: 8-9). Judicial and administrative authorities used the private contacts and the rules of family laws. Private individuals exercised public powers and even transferred, mortgaged, bought and sold it (Strayer, 1965: 12). It was the custom of the manor which governed, not the central authority of the state. The ownership of the land entailed power and the two went together. On the manor, the feudal lord was the embodiment of the state. Thus, economic power was fused with political power. This fusion became especially prominent as feudalism became increasingly decentralized. In such a case

... the lord at least appears to be the king of the landed property.... The piece of real estate is individualized with its lord; it has his rank, it is baronial or ducal along with him, it has his privileges, his jurisdiction, his political position, and so on (Marx, Quoted in Draper, 1977, I: 471)

Historically, feudalism developed in Western Europe between 800 and 1200 A.D. In the early Carolingian period of the Frankish kingdom (eighth century) the two practices of granting fiefs and

establishing personal vassalistic bonds were linked together.

Although some remote forms of these types of social relationships may be found in certain institutions of the late Roman Empire and of the Germanic invaders, it is safe to say that the development of these relationships between the lords and vassals was the initial process of the development of the socio-economic system called feudalism. Between the ninth and the tenth century feudalism spread into most of the European territories. It was during the tenth to the twelfth century that feudalism reached its zenith, permeating and influencing almost all aspects of the society. (2)

From the twelfth century onward, the feudal institutions of Western Europe started to show signs of decline. The manorial system went through a deep economic crisis during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Technological changes, such as the replacement of the two-field system of crop rotation with the three-field system and the change from handicraft industry to the putting-out system, the growth of towns and cities, the development of and increase in long distance trade, and the enclosure movement --these factors, notably, contributed to the decline of feudalism and, consequently, the emergence of capitalism in Western Europe (Hunt, 1975: 12-24). From the late fourteenth century through the early sixteenth century, Europe experienced many peasant revolts. The decay of feudalism was followed by the rise of commerce and the formation of the nation states on European soil. The feudal nobility fought hard to retain the old traditions and socio-economic relations, but, due to the substructural changes already in effect, the system was doomed to annihilation.

2.2. Feudalism in Iran

Empirical accounts characterizing the land-holding system of pre-capitalist Iran as feudal are often scattered, eclectic, theoretically heterogeneous, spatially inconsistent, and temporally limited in scope. Some historians have put their emphasis on a specific period involving one or more of political dynasties while others emphasize one or more successive rules of a similar nature. There are scholars whose geographical unit of analysis covers the whole Iranian territory, and there also are those whose concern is limited to one or two provincial locations. There are also those researchers who have attempted to take into account the diverse entities of rural, tribal, and urban structures; and those whose concern is narrowed by one or two of these structural units. The discussion below entertains a brief review of John Critchley's remarks about the feudal institutions of pre-capitalist Iranian society, and Farhad Nomani's systematic work on the development of feudalism in medieval Iran.

2.2.1. John Critchley: A Western View:

John Critchley believes that the timars system of land assignment in the Ottoman Empire is similar and connected with an earlier practice of granting revenue in the Islamic world, that is, iqta. The iqta included various forms of grants, assignments, and methods of political commissioning. These assignments were based on

the revenues of the district governed. Critchley writes:

The introduction of iqta was credited by later Muslim writers to Omar Khayyam's friend Nizam al-Mulk, d. 1092, chief minister of the Saljuq Turkish rulers Alp Arslan (1063) and Malik Shah (1072-92) ... but the principle went back a good deal further, certainly before the arrival of the Saljuqs in the Near East (1978: 26).

By establishing a connection between the word "fief" and "property holding in return for service," Critchley calls the iqta a fief. He believes that some form of military service tenure can be found in Iran. For example, Mahmud Ghazan (1295-1304), the Mongol ruler, distributed Iranian lands to his army. The land divided among the chief military leaders was further divided among their subordinates, down to the individual soldier. The assignees had the right of cultivation as long as they were able to perform the required services. Those units of land subject to military service were later called qashtu ("bow") of land (Ibid.: 28-9).

According to Critchley, deeds of chivalry, when they are conducted in the service of the king or a lord, represent some kind of "feudal" relationships. Chivalry, in fact, represents an embodiment of values of which one is feudal loyalty. To demonstrate the "knighthood" character of Iranian feudalism and show the relations of loyalty between lords and vassals, Critchley cites some of the Iranian chivalric traditions mentioned in Iranian epics, such as Shahnama, and religious texts, such as Zand Avesta. In his view, these "heroic" values represent the relationship between lords and vassals which were very much like those of the European context.

Warrior aristocracies are described by Critchley as feudal, not because they held "fiefs," but because they were adjuncts to a

social and political role (Stand). Although theoretically the Shah could dismiss the members of the nobility at his wish, in practice this was not easy for him because the nobility actually dominated the state. If Sassanid kings like Khusrow and Bahram had not taken oaths on their succession, they would not have been accepted as the king by the nobility. The Parthian (250 B.C.-227 A.D.) were feudal warrior aristocrats of Iranian history. Some of them even resembled medieval knights. Gibon thought of them as "a 'lively image' of the feudal state in Europe." They were a military elite who imposed a loose suzerainty over an area touching the Chinese border at the other end. Under the Arsacid kings Mithradates I (c. 171-138 B.C.) and II (c. 124-87 B.C.), "they were much addicted to pomp and circumstance ... and ever ready to take arms" against the kings, if necessary, to defend their honour. Critchley, by citing all these examples, concludes that the feudalism of the Parthian represented a political anarchy which was brought into order by Artaxerxes (226-41 A.D.).

To demonstrate how granting an office or right to collect taxes leads to political fragmentation and disorder, Critchley argues that the provincial governors of the Saljuq period regarded their domain or rule as iqta's. Even in pre-Islamic Iran, there is an example in which Darius the Great grants the governorship of cities to satraps as a reward for their assistance in toppling Babylon. These grants were free of service and lasted for a lifetime. In both pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, granting the right to collect taxes meant the right to rule. Revenue payers had to obey the revenue collectors. The term *soyurghal* --a later term for *iqta* --referred to hereditary

grants in which "the grantee had jurisdiction over the inhabitants of the villages concerned" (Ibid.: 60).

The Iranian nobility, Critchley maintains, became its most feudal when it became insubordinate. One consequence of this insubordination is political decentralization and, at its extreme, independence. As mentioned by Ibn Battuta, the breakdown of the Mongol Il-Khanid in the middle of the fourteenth century followed the rule of Jalayirids (1336-1452) and the Muzaffarids (1314-93) who were "descended respectively from a governor of Anatolia and a 'commander of a thousand' under Mahmud Ghazan's land distribution" (Ibid.: 68). Another indication of this fact is the preoccupation of the Mongol emperor Jahangir (1605-27) in 1611 with the idea that "his amirs should not play the sovereign." (Ibid.) In pre-Islamic Iran, even satraps, derived from the old Iranian Khshathrapavan, were "protectors of a province" whose rulers were semi-independent. Each satrap exercised his authority in smaller courts in his own domain. Some had their offices for life and some even handed them to their sons. To further substantiate his position, Critchley argues that:

It was satrapal revolts which enabled Arsaces in third-century Parthia and his descendants in second-century Iran to come to power, so beginning the most feudal of all the feudal epochs of Persian history" (Ibid.: 71).

Darius II (423-404 B.C.) himself was a satrap and Darius the Great was the son of a satrap. Many of the provinces of the Parthian and even earlier empires were once independent states.

In the next section of this chapter a critique is presented of

the feudal model. However, to reflect on some of the specifics of Critchley's argument, a few points are to be made here: A basic problem in Critchley's characterization of iqta as a fief is that while iqta is a social invention of Islamic era, most of the historical evidence Critchley cites in support of his thesis is pre-Islamic. Critchley does not really have a comprehensive picture of the evolution of land ownership and land-holding in Iran. His accounts are historically unsystematic and represent nothing more than presentation of various examples from socio-economically different historical contexts.

Critchley's claim about political decentralization can not be substantiated because, as he himself acknowledges, the so-called "vassal kings" usually submitted their will to the "great king, the King of Knigs" (Ibid.: 92). These independent states, as Critchley calls them, were actually peripheral provinces of the central government under the absolute rule of patrimonial despots. Furthermore, as will be discussed later, most of what are referred to as examples of political decentralization in Iranian history, are nothing more than short-lived political fluctuations and distractions which often occurred at the time of the political degeneration and disintegration of the political apparatus. When the central government was strong, the autonomous attitudes of the governors, local magnates, and land-holders were very much subdued.

2.2.2. Farhad Nomani: An Iranian View:

Nomani defines feudalism as a mode of production based on two

complementary aspects of the relations and forces of production. The characterization of the feudal mode of production included: (a) a low level of technical development, (b) the dominance of natural economy, (c) allotment of the land and other means of production to the peasants and, (d) the peasant's personal dependence on the landlord (Nomani, 1972: 13-16).

Nomani attempts to show the feudal character of Iranian pre-capitalist society by tracing the changes of landownership in Iran from the Sassanids (227-651 A.D.) up to the time of the Safavids (1502-1736 A.D.). According to Nomani, the productive relations of Iranian society from the early Sassanid to the end of the Mongol period in the fifteenth century A.D. should be characterized as feudal.

During this period, the basic form of exploitation of the peasants in Iran had been "muzara'a." Muzara'a was a contract 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. Since the landlord did not have any demesne farming, as opposed to European feudalism in which compulsory labor was necessary for farming of the lord's estate, labor rent was not an important form of rent in Iran. The only form of labor rent that existed was the auxiliary labor of the peasants in constructing the roads, digging and cleaning water canals, working in the lord's garden, and building palaces and fortress walls. Money rent was usually paid as a proportion of the rent and never became the only payable rent. This was often practiced in the localities around or near the cities.

With the development of the iqta system in the tenth century A.D., the rent received by the state was distributed among the soldiers or officials (muqta's). At the beginning, this income was subject to tithe, but due to difficulties, the practice was later stopped and the iqta became free of any financial obligation. This led to the strengthening of the power of muqta's in dealing with their peasants. Rent in the form of kharaj, either in money or in kind, was received by the muqta's. The obligation of the peasants did not end with the payment of kharaj or rent. They were subject to many other dues and levies to cover military expenses or the construction of public facilities. The amount of the rents paid, either in kind or money, and the kinds of dues and levies exacted varied according to the time and the conditions. This variation also depended on the number of production elements, such as seeds, water, etc., contributed by the landlord and the peasants.

The process which led to the disappearance of free communes from the second to the fourth centuries A.D., due to their breakup by landlords or their abandonment by the peasants pressed under exorbitant taxes or under the peasants' act of commending, resulted in the enserfment of the peasants by the kings or big landlords. The dissolution of slavery in this period was followed by the rise of feudalism. Peasants became the base of the Iranian economy. Societal surplus was produced by these peasants and appropriated by the ruling classes. Peasants were merely tenants of the landlords.

With the abandonment of the slave-holding system, more and more peasants became tenants and eventually depended on the lords. Under the Sassanids, peasants had to do labor service and "to serve as

foot-soldiers" (Nomani, 1972: 67). The dependence of peasants on their lords came to its height in the tenth century A.D. "The population was forced to seek the 'protection' of the local rulers and lords who eventually turned the former owners into their dependent tenants" (Ibid.: 68). When these lords achieved a certain level of political power, they exercised public and private power over the peasants. Since most of these lords were the holders of military iqta, they were entitled to carry the administrative and military functions of the state. The muqta's were granted judicial and political immunities, especially during the Mongol rule. The peasants were under their authority and could be bought and sold with the land. To account for the fact that in the Islamic law the peasants were regarded as free men, Nomani argues that "due to the fact that land was owned by landlords and the feudal state, peasants were dependent on both as tenants, mostly as hereditary tenants" (Ibid.: 118).

The iqta was a form of conditional feudal ownership of the land which was developed during the tenth century A.D. It was the granting of land in return for military or administrative services. "The muqta' was to provide for the retainers" (Ibid.: 39). The emergence and development of the iqta system of land ownership led to the feudalization of the relations of production in Iran. The iqta underwent many changes in the course of time and became hereditary tenure by the end of the eleventh century A.D. Provincial military commander who received iqta from the caliph or the king had the right to collect the taxes and rents from the peasants. Although "theoretically, muqta's did not have any

juridical rights over the peasants, ... in practice the possession of an iqta clearly contributed to the increase of patronage" (Ibid.: 39). The exercise of political and legal powers by governors, who were at the same time muqta's, gave them an independent status very much similar to those of European feudal lords. The feudal lords became "the personification of all forms of exploitation". They fulfilled most of the functions of the central government and had fiscal, administrative, and quasi-judicial immunities.

While the feudal nature of medieval Iran resembled European feudalism in many ways, there are also some differences between the two. Nomani specifies three peculiarities of the feudal relations of production in Iran: (a) the non-existence of demesne farming which reduced the role of landlords "in the organization of agricultural production," (b) "the combination of large-scale feudal landownership with small-scale peasant agriculture," and (c) the non-existence of labor rent (Ibid.: 119).

To demonstrate the feudal character of categories of landownership in Iran, Nomani tries to document the development of different forms of the social organization of land-holding between 300 A.D. and 1600 A.D. The nature of Nomani's historical research is summarized below for a more accurate understanding of his argument, and of conceptualization of various forms of land ownership in pre-capitalist Iran.

Peasant's Communal Land: Based on the works of I.M. Diakanov, the Soviet Iranologist, Nomani attempts to document the existence of free peasant communes in early Iranian history. These self-

governing communes existed in the central and eastern parts of the Iranian empire. Under the military administrative unions of the Achaemenids (550-330 B.C.) and the Seleucid dynasties (312-250 B.C.), these communes gradually turned into village communes to which peasants were bound. By the end of the Parthian period, these communes were enserfed because the peasants failed to meet their obligations and, thus, either they sold themselves as slaves to the landed magnates or became their dependent tenants. This process of decommunization aided the rise of big landlords and diminished the taxes paid to the central government. These developments, according to Nomani, were very similar to the developments in Gaul toward the end of the Roman empire. The predominant existence of communal lands disappeared after the Arab invasion in the early decades of the seventh century, while its remnants continued to exist afterwards (Ibid.: 19-21).

State Lands: After the Arab conquest the state lands became a distinct feature of landownership in Iran. All the conquered lands were considered as the property of the ummah, i.e., the Moslem community. The lands owned by the landlords or possessed by the dehqans (local landowners) and by the clergy remained unchanged. The state lands were controlled by the state and their management was left to the state officials. While the peasants working on the land had to pay tribute, the landowners were only required to pay kharaj (the land tax) to the state. In subsequent periods, the Caliph assumed full ownership of these lands "in the name of the state" and disposed of them at his own pleasure. The state officials in charge of collecting kharaj often overtaxed the

peasants and appropriated the additional dues for themselves. These practices led to the increased dependence of peasants on the state officials, especially during the Mongol period.

Under the Il-Khans (1256-1336) some of these lands were granted to the private owners or local magnates as military iqta. The remaining portion of these lands were given to bidders as muqata'eh. Muqata'eh was a form of contract involving "... the farming of the revenue of a district in exchange for a fixed sum for several years" (Ibid.: 24). With these developments, the state lands lost their significance. "As a rule," writes Nomani, "it seems that the state was not the dominant recipient of the surplus product" (Ibid.: 119).

Crown Lands: These are the private estates of kings, Caliphs, or khans, which were administered by special divans (bureau) set up by the ruler himself. The income received from these lands was used to maintain the court and the ruler's family. Theoretically, this income was different from the income received from state lands; but, practically, both were controlled by the ruler and used for supporting the royal family. It was under the Umayyads (661-750 A.D.) that the distinction between the two became important. The tax and rent on these lands coincided and, in many cases, both were paid to the king.

Except for a short period after the Arab invasion, the crown lands often constituted an important phenomenon of Iranian society. They have often existed in Iran as a distinct category from the Achaemenid (550-33 B.C.) to the Il-Khanid (1256-1336 A.D.) period. Newly conquered territories or confiscated lands were attached en masse to the crown lands and became the inalienable and hereditary

property of the ruling families. The confiscation of lands and their attachment to the crown lands became an extensive practice during the Abbassids (749-1258 A.D.). One of the methods of increasing the crown lands in this period was the practice of commendation. This, called *ilja*, was a way for small land-holders and peasant farmers to acquire the protection of a powerful lord by ceding their lands to them. Through these practices they were able to protect themselves against the confiscation of their land by foreign troops and bandits and/or exorbitant taxes imposed by government officials. *Ilja* was very much similar to its corresponding institution of commendation in Western Europe.

During the rule of the Mongols, the crown lands were called *inju*. *Inju* referred not only to the land, "but also to the people living on the land". *Inju* lands were extremely large and similar to allodial property; that is, their ownership did not entail any obligation. Not subject to tax, they could be transferred, bought, and sold at the wish of the owner. They were hereditary lands which covered vast areas all over the country.

Private Landed Estates: Private landed estates, called *ziya'*, *mulk*, *melk*, or *arbabi*, are estates of small peasant farmers, the *dehqans*, and big lords. These lands were rented to the peasants because it was uncommon for the landlords to cultivate their own lands. The surplus from these lands was divided between the lord and the state because these lands were usually subject to a small tax called *usher* (tithe). Beyond this, the owners of these estates had no obligation to the state. The ownership of these lands was unconditional: they could be "disposed of, transmitted by

inheritance, or transformed into waqf" (religious endowment) (Ibid.: 30).

The small lords, the dehqans, were a distinct category of landlords during the Sassanid period (227-651 A.D.) who had a very important role in the society. After the Arab conquest, they maintained their estates by paying tribute to bait ul-mal, the public Moslem treasury. During the Abbassid period (749-1258 A.D.) they continued to spread out over the country. But due to the later change from unconditional to conditional land tenure system during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, many of these private lands, at the time called mulk, were confiscated. The increase in conditional grant of land as iqta "reduced the extent and number of mulk lands which became subject to confiscation or commendation by powerful muqta's" (Ibid.: 33)

Vaqf Lands: Vaqf is an Islamic institution developed after the invasion of the Arabs. Vaqf lands were those lands immobilized for some religious purposes. They were not to be sold or transferred. The person holding vaqf land had the right of usufruct (manfaah) but did not own the land. The incomes from these lands went to the beneficiaries. The curators also had the right to receive a tithe from this income. These lands were exempt from taxation and the income received from them was distributed among the theologians and the ulama (clergy). The latter received the surplus created on the muqufeh as pensions in the form of money or products.

According to Nomani, the institution of vaqf may be regarded as a conditional form of feudal landownership which is very similar to the Church estates in the Middle Ages, with the only difference

being that in the vaqf the legator could stipulate some conditions in the use of the income and also appoint the curator.

Despite the religious character of vaqf lands, they were not immune from confiscation by the state or foreign invaders. The Caliphs usually attempted to bring the management of these lands under their own control, and were more or less successful. Some of the reasons the landlords turned their estates into vaqf include protection of their property against confiscation by the state or big landlords, tax exemption, and prevention of further division of their estates into smaller units upon their death.

Pasture Lands of the Nomads: The last category of land discussed by Nomani is pasture lands controlled by nomads. These are the lands used by the nomads according to their seasonal movements. These lands, called yurt, were usually granted as iqta or inju. During the Saljuqs, the granting of these lands was practiced widely --a practice which even increased during the Mongol period. However, this category of land, according to Nomani, was not an important form of ownership even during the Mongol rule.

Finally, having demonstrated the validity of the feudal nature of the social relations of production in medieval Iran, Nomani then develops a critique of the "Asiatic mode of production" argument. He maintains that the Asiatic mode of production is characterized by the absence of private property in land, by centrally controlled irrigation works, and by the subordination of the towns to the central authority. Nomani rejects the validity of this model and argues (a) that neither the communal ownership of land nor the

ownership of land by the state have been the dominant forms of landownership throughout Iranian history, (b) that centralized control of large-scale irrigation works has not been a predominant character of productive relations organized by the state, and (c) that although the landlords have usually lived in towns, their presence in their estates can be documented for at least the period of the fifth to the eighth centuries A.D. Even when these lords lived in the cities, they did so not because of the absence of private ownership of land or the importance of large-scale hydraulic system, but because they were not the organizers of agricultural production.

2.3. Critique: The Argument Against Feudalism

There is a widespread and healthy scepticism with regard to the broad generalization about the existence of feudalism in pre-capitalist Iran. This scepticism, of course, is a natural consequence of an increased awareness of the endless complexity of historical situations. The examination of historical facts and theoretical models suggests that the characterization of pre-capitalist Iran as purely "feudal" is quite inadequate. It is the conviction of this author that the pre-capitalist Iranian social structure manifests socio-economic characteristics which cannot be fitted into categories based on Western European experience without doing a great deal of violence to Iranian history. As Anderson put this:

Asian development cannot in any way be reduced to a uniform residual category, left over after the canons of European evolution have been established. Any serious theoretical exploration of the historical field outside feudal Europe will have to supersede traditional and generic contrasts with it, and proceed to a concrete and accurate typology of social formations and State systems in their own right, which respects their very great differences of structure and development. It is merely in the night of our ignorance that all alien shapes take on the same hue (Anderson, 1974: 548-49).

After all, every social science remains in structure a science of history. Therefore, to operate with models which are not rooted in time represents a reification of dynamic structures. As C.W. Mills (1959: 149) has argued, one cannot expect to have a real understanding of any single society until one considers the "principle of historical specificity" —a principle for the understanding of which we owe a great deal to Marx. It is for this reason that Marx designed a different term for Oriental societies in order to explain the peculiarities of these societies as compared with the socio-historical development of Europe.

This does not mean that the phenomenon of "feudalism," for instance, has been peculiar to the European experience and has practically little or no applicability outside of its original context. On the contrary, it is believed that similar social organizations of labor can be found across all three continents. Many Middle Eastern scholars have identified the systems of land-holding in their respective countries as feudalism and have compared the iqta with European fiefs (Cf. Polak, 1977). However, in applying this or other sociological concepts to the non-European context, care should be given to both the context-specific meanings of these terms, because they usually signify some peculiar features

of the realities for which they are originally constructed, and the way in which they are conceptualized.

There is a marked tendency amongst Iranian Marxist activists (Jazani, 1978; O.I.P.F.G., n.d.; C.I.S., 1973), and to a lesser extent among historians and sociologists (Khamisi, 1968; Nomani, 1972; Vardasbi, 1975; Tabari, 1975; Saleh, 1978), to view the pre-capitalist structure of Iran as a feudal structure. The views of these authors, especially the former, are heavily based on the official Soviet Orientalist's interpretation of Marx's scheme of the historical development of Western society (Cf. Petrushevsky, et. al., 1967). Soviet Marxism has labeled the pre-capitalist societies of the Middle East as "feudal" (I.E.A.S. of the U.S.S.R., 1957: 42-3). The theoretical basis of this view is that the "five main aspects of the relations of production ... known to history [are] primitive commune, slave, feudal, capitalist and socialist" (Stalin, 1941: 24). Accordingly, Iran, like every other society, should pass through the stages of slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and finally socialism. Of course, there are some qualifications made that each society may possess some special features different from those of the Western society. Thus, some of these authors speak of Iranian "semi-feudalism," or "pseudo-feudalism" and so on.

A careful reading of Marx's writings renders this view to be inadequate. As Huberman and Sweezy (1969: 16) have mentioned, it is absurd to treat the theoretical schema laid down in the Manifesto as a universal formula. Reducing the history of humankind to five successive stages of development means to leave behind the scientific method of historical analysis and, as Roger Garaudy has

pointed out, to "return to a speculative and dogmatic philosophy of history" (Quoted in Melotti, 1977: 19).

A mode of production is a theoretical construct which defines a coherent and historically specific set of social relationships of production and appropriation. This theoretical construct helps us to "... lay bare the implicit 'logic' of historical developments by stripping away the fortuitous accretion that blur [its] outline" (Melotti, 1977: 5). As Marx put it:

Viewed apart from real history, these abstractions have in themselves no value whatsoever. They can only serve to facilitate the arrangement of historical material, to indicate the sequence of its strata. But they by no means afford a recipe or schema, as does philosophy, for neatly trimming the epochs of history. On the contrary, our difficulties begin only when we set about the observation and the arrangement --the real depiction of our historical material, whether of a past epoch or of the present. The removal of these difficulties is governed by premises which it is quite impossible to state here, but which only the study of the actual life-process and the activity of the individuals of each epoch will make evident. (Marx & Engels, 1976: 48)

This emphasis on "the study of the actual life-process and activity of the individuals of each epoch" demonstrates clearly that the specification of each historical epoch for a society is only possible by the empirical study of that society. In response to Vera Zasulich's letter, where Marx discusses the "land commune" as "the most recent type of archaic social formation," he argues that:

In the history of Western Europe, both ancient and modern, the period of the land commune is a period of transition from communal ownership to private ownership, from the primary to the secondary formation. But does this mean that the development of the land commune must necessarily follow the same lines under all circumstances? Certainly not. Its constitutive form allows the following alternative: either the element of private property

implied in it gain the upper hand over the collective element, or vice versa. Everything depends upon the historical background in which it finds itself Both these solutions are possible a priori, both obviously require entirely different historical environments. (Marx & Engels, 1973, III: 156)

Following this dictum, we find that the existing historico-empirical evidence about pre-capitalist Iran does not support the argument for feudalism. In a feudal economy much of the farmland is owned by the landlords, while the majority of the rural population lack any means of production and live by tenancy and/or hired labor on extremely unfavourable terms. However, the Iranian landlords of the pre-capitalist era did not strictly own their lands. The pre-Islamic Iranian satraps were not feudal vassals but "top-ranking territorial agents" who acted as the central government's agents (Wittfogel, 1957: 308). The lands were the exclusive property of the State. The landlords enjoyed the right to collect and keep the land-taxes in return for military service. During the Sassanids, *dehqans* or the small landed proprietors were given the rights of tenure and the authority to collect taxes in their domains, in return for a pre-determined annual payment to the state. True, these *dehqans*, in some cases, became virtual owners of the land and delivered little revenue to the government treasury. But this only happened when the state became politically weak or was in the process of political disintegration. In these cases, what then would occur was the likely confiscation of *dehqans'* lands by the new ruler of a foreign conqueror.

The grant of *iqta* was really a case of delegation of authority and, as Lambton has demonstrated, it did not "contain any

implication of vassalage or permanent rights, though they were sometimes usurped" (1968: 235). Speaking of Islamic Iran, Spuler has argued:

This granting of assignments (sing.) iqta has only a remote resemblance to the feudal system of the Western world. Islam knew nothing of the principles of ethnically-based obligation to mutual loyalty and the hereditary cession of defined territories which characterize the Western system. Certainly the officers were often sufficiently interested in the land granted to them ... to take good care of it and to increase, or at least maintain, its productivity. Subordinate commanders and soldiers, on the other hand, merely sought to squeeze out everything possible; therefore gave back their exhausted land, and demanded other more productive estates in exchange. (1970b: 154-5)

The holder of iqta owed the obligation of service and obedience to the Shah or sultan. There was no contract involving mutual fealty because the Shah or sultan had no obligation to the grantee. In Europe, political transactions were based on the feudal contract, while in Iran "political alliances were a function of force, co-optation, ingratiation, marriage ties, dependency relationships, and the demonstration to the other of one's own political assets" (Loeffler, 1978: 168). For the Iranian patrimonial despot, it would have contradicted his sovereignty to bind himself to a contract. Although military and civil officials were beneficed, their tenure remained precarious and the state always had the right to take back what it gave. As Lambton has put it:

The crucial difference between the holder of a land assignment in Persia and the European feudatory was that the former held his assignment solely at the will of the ruler and as a matter of grace. Those features of the Persian land system which are often loosely described as feudal derived not from feudalism but from the arbitrary

nature of power. It is important, I think, to remember that all power in medieval Persia was essentially arbitrary. (1965: 5)

In many cases the muqta's could transfer their iqta's to their children or even sell them. However, they could do so only with regard to the right of possession and not the property right. They could transfer their right of usufruct, but not the ownership right which they did not have. The lands were not theirs. They were the property of the Shah and he could demand their return anytime he wished so. When the land-holders provided the Shahs with some service, "it was not because they held a fief and had taken an oath of fealty that would have obliged them to do so," (Ibid.: 169) but because the Shahs had absolute authority to ask them to do so. Therefore, here it is the usufruct right that determines the relations of the land-holders to the land, not the ownership rights. Here, land is valued as a means of production the ownership of which is not so much a matter of concern for the land-holders, but the usufruct rights over the land (Goodell, 1980: 302). The iqta holders did have the right to possess the land but they neither had the ultimate ownership of that land nor the control over the subject population on that land. Hence, these land-holders, as a stratum of ruling class, neither could develop any sort of meaningful autonomy, nor were they able to detach themselves from the control of patrimonial despot. Their rights to property and their claims to power remained always dependent on, and subject to, the arbitrary will of the patrimonial authority.

Another important difference between Western feudal society and

the pre-capitalist structure of Iran is the role of the state and its economic functions. The Iranian state was not feudal with respect to any of relevant spheres of economy, political organization, or the social divisions of labor. The Iranian state, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV, was a patrimonial institution which often had a standing army, a strong centralized administration, and a centralized traditional authority. Here, public armies were recruited from subjects rather than from citizens or contractual vassals. Within the Iranian social formation² the Shah reflected the importance of the state; whereas in feudal Europe, economic and political functions were discharged by the feudal aristocracy and the state did not possess an economic significance of the magnitude it had in Iran. Discussing the importance of this state, Stauth (1980: 125) argues that:

The task of securing access to the sources of revenue, to the agricultural surplus product, becomes a main function of the central state. The forms of securing the access to surplus products is variably organized. Hence, in the first stages of nomadic superimposition, for example, an irregular military extortion prevails. This irregularity develops in a later phase as the central state stabilizes into extorting the crop on a cyclic, periodical and regular basis.

Due to its politico-economic contributions to the process of production, the state possessed a patrimonial bureaucracy which deprived the land-holding class of autonomy. As Varga has stated:

... the state is the only primary owner of the surplus product created by the direct producer --of the ground rent in the form of taxes. All the exploiting layers receive their unearned incomes through the state. (1968: 345)

The Iranian landed aristocracy was never secure from the arbitrary wishes of the patrimonial household because the power of the latter was absolute. As Sykes writes about the Qajar period:

There was no great council of the nobles to control the monarch ...; nor was there an Ecclesiastical Council.
(1951, II: 381)

The politico-economic position of these so-called nobles was very much dependent on the whims and will of this patrimonial authority rather than on their own economic power. Furthermore, as Ashraf has argued:

... the inherent insecurity and precariousness of the landholding, coupled with the rise and fall of dynasties, constant redistribution of land, and changes in the proportion of different types of land-holding in turn prevented the emergence of a stable land aristocracy in Iran. Hence, the subordination of landholders to the patrimonial authority. (1971: 11-12)

Except for the mass of peasants living at the bottom of the social order, class membership was fluid over time. As a contemporary observer has noted:

... in Iran there is no class of hereditary nobles based upon large landed property or monopoly of high offices
.... [In Iran] the lack of a clearly defined secular hereditary nobility deprived class distinctions of their chief characteristics. (Hass, 1946: 109)

As a consequence, the structure of the Iranian aristocracy was never stable. Political offices to which members of ruling class were assigned were not always hereditary or venal. While the sons of nobles enjoyed the respect of their father's positions, their chance of succeeding them was not often great. Such a procedure

militated against the establishment of an entrenched nobility. For instance, in the Safavid period, as Savory has discussed, the power of the landed aristocracy frequently shifted and no noble held the same land for any considerable period of time:

There was no continuity of power in the hands of one tribe or group of tribes; those tribes which were predominant during the later Safavid period are hardly mentioned earlier There is no parallel, therefore, with the position of the French aristocracy in the eighteenth century, or with that of the Russian aristocracy in the nineteenth century, when each could point to several centuries of uninterrupted enjoyment of their estates. (Savory, 1980: 184)

Also, the status of the Iranian nobility was constantly disturbed by different patrimonial powers who periodically came to power.

Since the system of iqta was not generally a hereditary institution working independently of the political institutions of the state, the economic and political privileges of the land-holding class was by and large derived from their political service to the state rather than from the ownership of private property (Plekhanov, 1946: 21). These privileges were derived from their relationship to the state and were revocable by royal fiat. While local governors or muqta's had almost total control over their local domains, they were not powerful enough to consolidate their political power without the support of the patrimonial authority or to dissociate themselves from the central government entirely. They always needed a source of support against the political and economic alliances from both inside and outside of their domains.

Feudal societies are also characterized by the institution of

vassalage. The vassalage is a voluntary personal association which is conditioned by the terms set between a lord and his vassal. The grant of iqta did not imply any form of mutual obligation of the type existing between the lord and vassal. All the rights of the assignee were derived from the absolute power of the patrimonial despot (Hodgson, 1974,II: 49). The political loyalty that bound the pre-Islamic Iranian kings and their dehqans is not totally voluntary. As Wittfogel has argued:

the relations between a satrap or curaca and their sovereign were definitely noncontractual; in substance, as well as in form, the ruler demanded total submission (1957: 310).

In Iranian pre-capitalist society, the agricultural producers were regarded as subjects of the monarch. Pre-Islamic Iranian kings always regarded their subjects, even the nobles, as "slaves" (bandaka). During the Islamic period, the Shahs always regarded their subjects as ra'yyat (peasant or subject of a ruler), including the members of those classes who were close to them both economically and politically. It is this notion which is conveyed by Nizam ul-Mulk when he stated:

Let the muqta's know that country and the subjects (ra'yyat) all belong to the sultan. The muqta's, who are set over them, and the governors (valian) are like Shabnas in relation to the subjects, as the king is to others (Quoted in Lambton, 1968: 234).

A sociological implication of this structural pattern for the political economy of pre-capitalist Iran is that political interaction between the king and his subjects was bound by the personalistic terms of status as well as economic status. The

assignment of land or political offices did not have a strong contractual basis and most of the time it was determined by status links (Goodell, 1980). These statuses were usually defined ideologically because while the pre-capitalist structure of Iranian society was based on the unequal distribution of wealth and power, the distribution between economic categories were often blurred by factors such as the polity and religion. The social structure of the society was divided vertically along status lines corresponding to socio-economic categories. These socio-economic categories were expressed in different ideological forms. Two important ideological conceptions in this regard were Zoroastrian and Islamic views of the universal order in the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras, respectively. According to both ideologies, as they were formed structurally, the society was universally divided into the four categories of (a) the religious classes, (b) the bureaucracy, including biographers, doctors, poets, and astronomers, (c) the warriors, and (d) peasants, artisans, and merchants (Cf. Lambton, 1970: 74-6).

The hierarchical status of individuals was regarded as the basis of the social order and political rule. Nizam ul-Mulk (1960), as the grand vizier of the great Saljuq sultan Malak Shah, argued that God has ranked individuals according to their merits and has bestowed upon each a prestige in accordance with his/her merit. In pre-capitalist Iran, the terms *martabat*, *mahali*, and *paygah* (all meaning rank or standing) were used to refer to the social status occupied by individual members of the society. Each rank had an *andaza* (measure) upon which the individual was offered the socio-economic opportunities for enhancing his/her fortune. This social

hierarchy is also depicted in two Safavid historical works of Tarikh-e Alam Aray-e Abbasi by Iskandar Beg Munshi (1971: 377) and Tadhkirat al-Muluk, by an unknown writer (1943: 43-4 & 100-5). The same social structure is also presented in Nasir ud-Din Tusi's Akhlaq-e Nasiri.

Another characteristic of the feudal relationship is the dependency of peasants on the lords. In feudal societies, "the peasant are individually dependent on their lord who owns their land as own estate." (Godelier, 1978: 229) However, in the Iranian context, since the state was often the sole owner of the land, the exploitation of the peasants remained collective. In situations like this, "the dependence of the individual in relation to a State official is indirect and is mediated by the relationship of dependence of his community of origin to the State which the official represents." (Ibid.: 229) Here, there is a marked lack of a reciprocal relationship between the landholders and the peasants. The relationship between the two is cemented by coercion, poverty, ideology, and ignorance. The Iranian landlords were bound to their peasants only by ideologically-constructed elements such as conscience, benevolence, altruism, and non-ideological factors of expediency. The dependency of the peasant on the lord, as found in Europe, did not exist in Iran because, except in rare instances when the muqta's surpassed their legal authority and exercised police power over the peasants or when the Shah ordered the peasants to stay on their land, the peasant cultivators could simply quit the land whenever they wished so. However, there were cases in which the peasants had already left their lots and were ordered by the

state to return to them (Arasteh, 1964: 18-9; Morgan, 1914: 587).

(3)

The only thing that could bind the Iranian cultivators to the land was the soil. While as ra'yyat, they were bound to pay the taxes, they were legally regarded as free Moslems or ahl al-dhimma (Petrushevsky, 1968: 522). As Nizam ul-Mulk has stated, the Iranian muqta, theoretically, "had no rights over the persons of the peasant, nor over the members of his family, nor over his plot of land, nor over his household; he had only the right to collect the rent" (Quoted in Petrushevsky, Ibid.). He further specifies that:

Let those who hold iqta, know that they have no authority over the peasants beyond this, that they should take the due amount which has been assigned to them from the peasants in a good way, and that when they have done so the peasants shall to be secure in their persons, and their money, wives, children, goods, and farms shall be secure and the muqta's have no claim over them.... (Quoted in Lambton, 1968: 234)

It is interesting to note that Petrushevsky, himself a proponent of the feudal model, attests to the fact that:

Before the thirteenth century we have no information that the feudal dependence of the peasants had taken the form of serfdom, with prohibition of travel. The binding of the peasants to the soil occurs apparently only after the Mongol conquest. It was provoked primarily by the general economic decline of the country and by the catastrophic curtailment of the country in the number of its inhabitants with the concomitant lack of workers and taxpayers on the land. There was now too much uncultivated and empty land and too few hands (1968: 523).

The structure of the Iranian social formation did not allow the kind of dependency found in feudal relationship. As Hodgson has reasoned:

In such circumstances, serfdom was almost impossible to impose in most of the Fertile Crescent and the Iranian highlands, however much the gentry might wish it. The peasants, however much they naturally loved their homes, could always go somewhere else and be welcomed. The danger of this was the recurrent theme of all essays on land management and government. This is not to say that sometimes peasant families did not live in one village for many generations, and that peasants were not badly oppressed, especially when they lived near towns. Sometimes, indeed, life even as a tenant cultivator might have its compensations; thus if turning over half of one's produce meant, in effect, working twice as much land as otherwise, the extra land might be crucially helpful for livestock and fuel. But in case of extreme provocation, or of disaster, or of any other critical circumstance, peasants could and often did find ways of asserting their independence (1974, II: 81).

As mentioned before, Iranian peasants have always had a common devotion to the land. The community of the village was bound together by a network of social and ethical obligations. This collective bonding enabled the village community to act as a whole when it came into contact with the outside world. However, this dependency on the soil is different than dependency on the landlords. Frequently, the individual cultivators even played the landlords or government representatives against one another in order to create opportunities and alternatives for themselves (Gunderson, 1968: 55-6). In contrast, European lords exercised much greater control over their serfs. The latter were tightly tied to, and dependent on the former (Dobb, 1976). In the Iranian context, the lack of this dependence can also be explained by the fact that the medieval Iranian landholders were absentee landlords who did not keep a close eye over their subjects, though they had their *mubashers* (representatives and agents) present in the rural area. It is for this reason that many European observers have noted that the

Iranian ra'yyat could leave his lot, whenever he wished so. Of course, this worked to the benefit of the peasants only when there was a high demand for agricultural labor.

Sociologically, this lack of dependence on the landlords means that the pre-capitalist relations of production in Iran were not "welded together by a mutual accountability between the social components, lord and village. Rather, the factors of production [were] linked by mechanisms for avoiding any firm and permanent bonding" (Goodell, 1980: 313). It was the state which imposed itself from above and always determined the relations of production. This was, of course, due to the economic position of the state in this society. The control and development of productive forces, such as agricultural technology, were always in the hands of the state. The absentee landholders did not have any contribution to this development because these muqta's preferred to leave this undertaking to the state. The haphazard nature of land-ownership and the land assignment system partially led to the neglect of improvements and investment in land, thus creating, in some instances, a decline in agricultural production. As stated by Ghirshman (1978: 343), in the Sassanid period the nobility showed no interest in the improvement of the agricultural technology and left this task to the state; it was in the state lands that improvements were introduced. The landed nobility saw no advantage in doing so. The muqta's concern for technological development could be observed only during the intervening periods when the central government was weak and the muqta's were virtually in control of the iqta's.

In pre-capitalist Iran, the peasants rarely received any

services from their lords. They received little protection and almost no capital outlays from them. This socio-economic characteristic of the relations of production in pre-capitalist Iran is in sharp contrast to that of European lords who often invested in the agricultural infrastructure and in technology (Cf. Boserup, 1956). Since the bulk of the agricultural surplus was consumed by the government for administration, defense, opulent living by the rulers and their officials, and for the construction of public works, the peasants were left with neither the means nor the incentives for improving their productive forces. Lack of exchange and transport usually left Iranian villages sealed off from external contact for long periods (Cf. Marx, 1964: 143 & 1973: 525).

2.4. The Iranian Administrative Land-Holding System: Ann Lambton's View

Ann Lambton, one of the premiere scholars of Iranian history, believes that the structure of Iranian landownership should be characterized as an administrative or bureaucratic organization. According to Lambton, iqta has been the most important system of land assignment; "in its essentials," it has existed in Iran from the invasion of the Arabs to "the beginning of the twentieth century" (1969: 21). As Lambton suggests, the iqta simply refers to "a grant of land or its revenue, or both, with or without immunities, made by the government to its officers and others" (Ibid.) This view is shared by many other European historians, among whom Hodgson's view is worth mentioning. Hodgson (1974, II: 49) does not believe that the iqta system represents a feudal

institution. For Hodgson, iqta "grew out of an essentially bureaucratic approach, city-oriented and rooted in the conception of monarchical absolutism, from which were derived whatever rights the assignee of an iqta might have, and it never shook its urban ties."

Lambton seems in general to agree with the view that characterizes pre-Islamic Iran as feudal. But she argues that "the iqta was not a continuation of Sassanian feudalism in Islamic dress," because when the Sassanid empire (227-651 A.D.) was conquered by the Arabs, its great nobles became a court nobility and "lost the character of a true feudal nobility" (1967: 41). This nobility declined, and its lands "either became state lands or were left in the hands of their occupiers. The *dihqans* on the other hand retained their importance and continued to act as a link between the government and the people. Their functions, however, were bureaucratic and not feudal. Similarly, when the Abbasid caliphs later began to imitate Sassanian practice in some respects, it was not the feudal tendencies of the Sassanian empire which they imitated but its bureaucratic centralization" (Ibid.: 42). The land tenure system was connected with the land assignment and the levy of troops, and it could not be regarded as feudal: "... basically the system was bureaucratic, not feudal" (Lambton, 1969: 21).

The reasons for the emergence of such a system of land ownership have to do with the administrative exigencies related to the specific conditions of Iranian society. The emergence of the administrative system of iqta resulted from the importunate need of the state for money to finance its public activities. The main problem facing the state in medieval Iran was "the payment of its

civil and military officials." This was not the case in feudal Europe. As Lambton argues:

From this stems a fundamental difference between the feudal institutions of Western Europe and the land assignment of the Persia, namely that a contractual relationship was an essential characteristic of the former, but the element of contract never became a feature of the latter. The holder of the land assignment, although he often succeeded in transforming it into private property, which he transmitted by inheritance, held his assignment solely at the will of the ruler and as a matter of grace (Ibid.).

Therefore, the element of mutual obligation, which was an essential feature of Western European feudalism, does not exist in the iqta system because "in Islam all authority is delegated authority and excludes ... the question of contract" (Ibid., 1967: 44).

Originally, the iqta land-holding system required no military duties. Under the Buyids (945-1055 A.D.) the military iqta was the paramount system. But under the great Saljuqs (eleventh century A.D.) this kind of iqta was transformed into the governorate or "administrative iqta." In this type of land assignment system, "the holder, known as the muqta or vali, was granted complete control, and was able to make sub-assignments" (1967: 47). The relationship between the sultan and vali or muqta was similar to the relationship between lord and vassal.

Lambton acknowledges that throughout Iranian history there has been some relationship between military functions and the possession of land, but she maintains that this "was not based on a feudal contract involving mutual fealty between sovereign and vassal" (Ibid.: 49-50). She concludes that:

There was nothing in the relationship between the muqta and the sultan or tuyuldar and the shah like the 'foi' which bound together lord and vassal in Western Empire and to which the high importance attached in Western Europe to fidelity in part goes back. Nor did the iqta system give rise, as feudalism did in Western Europe, to a belief in the binding force of engagements freely entered into or to the idea that one is not bound to obey an order incompatible with one's dignity as a free man (Ibid.: 50).

Furthermore, from the ninth century A.D. onwards, the dominant military class consisted mainly of slaves and freedmen. Also, this class lived in towns, whereas in Western Europe it was mainly dispersed throughout the country, living in castles. And finally, in the Abbasid empire (749-1258 A.D.), the commercial activities were relatively highly developed (Ibid., 1967: 41).

Despite all these differences between European feudalism and the Iranian iqta system, Lambton observes some similarities between the two. These include: a) "the fragmentation of authority in the tenth century A.D. and again on the break-up of the empires which were subsequently established in Persia," b) "the grant of land in return for the performance of military service," c) "the grant of land to certain officials of the bureaucracy in lieu of peasantry," d) the existence of private armies, and e) the existence of private courts (1967: 41). However, these "superficial resemblances," according to Lambton, do not provide any basis for viewing the social structure of medieval Iran as feudal.

A basic criticism launched against Lambton's characterization of Islamic Iran is that while her accounts of the historico-factual reality of land-holding system in Iran are accurate, her model lacks adequate theoretical considerations. The "administrative" or the

"bureaucratic" aspect of any social system refers to the manner in which that system carries out its tasks and achieves its goals. This is a matter of social form and not social substance. Social forms, while dialectically related to their substructures, are not to be confused with the foundations upon which those forms rest. Bureaucratic organizations can be developed in every complex socio-economic system. Bureaucratic rule and the administrative handling of politico-economic matters are phenomena which could be found in various socio-economic systems of feudalism, capitalism, and even socialism. The Chinese utilized bureaucratic rule as readily as the Romans did and bureaucratic state developed in both of these societies, despite their structural differences. A similar bureaucratic structure exists in most of the existing socialist countries today. However, we cannot use the same label for social formations existing in all societies. The mere existence of certain bureaucratic social relationships does not reveal the nature of those relationships.

While the politico-legal characteristics of Islamic Iran have had determining effects on the social relationships between different social, political, and economic classes, they do not necessarily specify the underlying structure upon which those relationships were established (Sodagar, 1977: 80-1). One implication of such an approach by Lambton is that she views the legal and administrative relationship as the basis of economic system. Rather than looking for structural factors which gave rise to such a huge administration, she has looked into the superstructural elements to explain the socio-economic system.

In a nut shell, Lambton's approach to the problem is totally lacking in any historico-theoretical perspective, and is purely superstructural in orientation. It denies by default the infrastructure, the real basis on which the whole superstructure is constructed. Administrative and politico-legal systems are important, but they immanate from the broader base of the productive relations of the society.

2.5. The Asian Mode of Production

2.5.1. A Theoretical Exposition:

Marx held that many non-European societies were characterized by qualitatively different socio-economic system of production from those which had marked the development of European societies. In 1853, he wrote:

Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of desert, extending from the Sahara, through Arabia, Persia, India, and Tartary, to the most elevated Asiatic highlands, constituted artificial irrigation by canals and waterworks the basis of Oriental agriculture. As in Egypt and India, inundations are used for fertilizing the soil of Mesopotamia, Persia, etc.; advantage is taken of a high level for feeding irrigative canals. This prime necessity of an economical and common use of water, which, in the Occident, drove private enterprise to voluntary association, as in Flanders and Italy, necessitated, in the Orient where civilization was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of Government. Hence an economical function developed upon all Asiatic Governments, the function of providing public works. (Marx & Engels, 1972: 37)

These conditions require a large-scale system of irrigation which,

in turn, creates a condition for the emergence of a strong centralized state (Marx, in Avineri, 1969: 135). In every non-primitive mode of production, the relationship between men/women and nature is mediated by a given social institution, be that family, community, church, or state. Here, in the Asiatic mode of production, this relationship is mediated by the State. The state controls the means of production and , thus, through its institutional representatives, regulates the appropriation of these means. The "principal role" of the state in this type of society is, if we borrow from Poulantzas (1974: 25), "to maintain the unity and cohesion of a social formation." The Asiatic state plays this role by defining, organizing, and sanctioning the social relations of domination. The state in these societies has a social function forced on it by the geographical conditions mentioned above. As Engels wrote in Anti-Duhring:

However great the number of despotisms which rose and fell in Persia and India, each was fully aware that above all it was the entrepreneur responsible for the collective maintenance of irrigation throughout the river valleys, without which no agriculture was possible there. (Quoted in Draper, 1977, I: 550)

Therefore, the state owes its economic position to this enforced role. This social function of the state, according to Engels, enables it to be the real landlord in the Eastern countries. This results in the absence of private ownership of the land in the Orient. In Engels' words:

In the whole East, where the commune or the state owns the land, the very term landed proprietor is not to be found in the various languages (1963: 198).

This absence of privately owned land is regarded as the real key to the pre-capitalist Oriental society. The reason for this, according to Engels, was the climatic conditions in these countries which made artificial irrigation necessary, a collective enterprise achievable only by a central government with enormous amount of resources. He wrote to Marx:

The absence of property in land is indeed the key to the whole of the East but how does it come about that the Orientals do not arrive at landed property, even in its feudal form? I think it is mainly due to the climate, together with the nature of the soil, especially with the great stretches of desert which extended up from Sahara straight across Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary up to the highest Asiatic plateau. (Marx & Engels, 1934: 66-7)

Writing back to Engels, Marx added another important item to the characteristics of the Asian societies. While these communities are dependent on their government for the water supply, they are economically self-sufficient units of production. He wrote:

The stationary character of this part of Asia [India] — despite all the aimless movements on the political surface --is fully explained by two circumstances which supplement each other: 1) the public works were the business of the central government; 2) besides this the whole empire, not counting the few larger towns, was divided into villages, each of which possessed a completely separate organization and formed a little world in itself. (Marx & Engels, 1972: 315)

This dispersion and isolation of the Asiatic villages was the result of the simplicity of the social organization of production in these "self-sufficing communities that constantly reproduce themselves in the same form" (Marx, 1967, I: 358). For Marx, this simplicity is the key that unlocks the secret of the Asian changelessness.

Despite the existence of these small and separate communities,

there existed an overarching Unity. To describe the all-encompassing character of Asian communities, Marx used Hegel's Einbeit, or Unifying Entity. This overall unity is embodied in the person of a despot who "... appear[s] as the father of all the numerous lesser communities, thus realizing the common unity of all" (Marx, 1964: 69). Oriental despotism is the product of the social conditions existing in Asian societies.

Within these communities, agricultural activities existed side by side with handicraft industry. The division of labour between the artisans and the peasants was rudimentary and many artisan-type activities were performed in the countryside. This fusion of agriculture and industry made these villages self-sustaining and self-reproducing. The community "contained within itself all conditions of production and surplus production" (Marx, 1964: 70). As Marx put it:

The Asiatic form necessarily survives longest and the most stubbornly. This is due to the fundamental principle on which it is based, that is, that the individual does not become independent of the community; that the circle of production is self-sustaining, unity of agriculture and craft manufacture, etc. (Ibid.: 83)

Not only were manufacture and agriculture said to be united, but the town and country as well. In contrast to European feudal cities, here there was no opposition between the town and country (Ibid.: 77-8). Not based on landownership and agriculture, the Asiatic cities were basically travelling camps geared to the consumption of the agricultural surplus which flowed to the Oriental despot:

In Asiatic societies, where the monarch appears as the exclusive proprietor of the agricultural surplus, whole

cities arise, which are at bottom nothing more than wandering encampments, from the exchange of his revenue with the 'free land,' as Steuart calls them (Marx, 1973: 467).

These cities were appendages to the sovereign and his officials:

Cities in the proper sense arise by the side of these villages only where the location is particularly favourable to external trade, or where the head of the state and his satraps exchange their revenue (the surplus product) against labour, which they expend as labour-funds (Marx, 1964: 71).

The surplus product of these communities belonged to the above-mentioned Unity. The lands were owned by this Unity, but the individual tillers were regarded as the possessors of the land. The land was granted to them from above, via the local communities by the representatives of this overall Unity.

The Asiatic mode is marked by an antithetical situation in which there are, on the one hand, a local community entitled to the appropriation of communal property, and a higher community appropriating part of the surplus of local communities, on the other. Neither of these communities can be treated as an isolated given. They are both part and parcel of a totality called Asiatic mode of production. Since the social surplus has historically been extracted from lower local communities in the form of tribute, some social scientists (Amin, 1976) have characterized the relationship between the two forms of community as tributary relations.

Tribute in the Asiatic community represented a fusion of rent and tax. As the rent and tax were fused in this mode, so also was economic exploitation fused with political domination (Marx, 1967, III: 791). The relationship of exploitation occurred

between direct producers and the state or its representatives. But here, like in the feudal economy of Western Europe, the exploitation of the direct producers is conditioned by the circumstances of a natural economy. As Marx put it:

It is, however, clear that in any given economic formation of society, where not the exchange-value but the use-value of the product predominates, surplus-labour will be limited by a given set of wants which may be greater or less, and that here no boundless thirst for surplus-labour arises from the nature of the production itself.
(Ibid., I: 235)

2.5.2. A Critical Assessment:

Neither Marx nor Engels ever presented a systematic analysis of the Asiatic mode of production. Most of their writings on this question were fragmented, presented in the form of scattered notes and references in letters and articles published in the New York Tribune. These writings were more in the vein of journalism than a systematic scholarly survey. They were also written over a long period spanning the years 1853-62.

The fragmented and journalistic character of these writings have provoked a great deal of criticism. Some critics have pointed to the shortcomings and inadequacies of the "Asiatic mode of production thesis" and have suggested further modification in the thesis and some reservations in its application. Some other critics have rejected this thesis all together and have viewed Marx and Engels' preoccupation with the issue as an aberration from the Marxian principles. For instance, Hindess and Hirst (1975: 213-15)

have come to an Althusserian conclusion that the concept of the Asian mode of production is theoretically pre-scientific and , thus, invalid. They conclude that since the concept of the Asian mode of production does not satisfy the general conditions which a concept of a determinate mode of production should have, it is not a coherent theoretical construct and it should be abandoned. Caldwell (1977: vii) also describes the concept as an "awkward appendage to the corpus of Marxism"; and Anderson (1974: 548), after tracing the evolution of the concept and discussing the historical background to its development, goes even further to suggest that the notion of the Asian mode of production "be given the decent burial it deserves." This same conclusion was arrived at by the Soviet officials earlier in the Leningrad Conference of 1931. In this Conference, E. Ick concluded that:

The concept of a special 'Asiatic' mode of production ... is theoretically unfounded, because it contradicts the foundations of the Marxist-Leninist teaching on class and the State. (Quoted in Sawyer, 1977: 52)

The question then arises: How does the idea of an Asiatic mode of production contradict the principles of the Marxism-Leninism? It does so because according to official Marxism-Leninism, as articulated by S. Ol'denburg, then Secretary of the Soviet Academy of Science,

... there exists no division of peoples and countries into an Orient and an Occident, which are opposed to one another and which it would be appropriate to study in a different manner. In our Union, the Orient has the same rights as the Occident, and we study it with the same Marxist Methodology as the Occident. There has been, and there is, class struggle in the East, just as much as in

the West. The history of the Orient knows the same formations as those of the West. Such are the fundamental principles which govern our study of the Orient. (Quoted in Sawyer, 1977: 76)

Intimidated by the idea that the existence of a state bureaucracy is possible in a society without a class of private owners of the means of production, as Wittfogel (1957) argues, the Conference rejected the idea of the Asian mode of production and outlawed the idea of a state bureaucracy functioning as a ruling class in any conceivable society.

Aside from this outright rejection of the concept, it is important to discuss some of the difficulties which accompany any serious discussion and constructive application of the concept of the Asian mode of production. To begin with, some of the information received by Marx and Engels on the Asian societies was derived from secondary sources that were not totally reliable and valid. Some of their information, as a matter of fact, proved only partially accurate and, in some cases, just wrong. Many of the historical accounts on these societies were "simply colonial misinterpretation." (Cf. Anderson, 1974: 488) Because of this misinformation, Marx and Engels changed their views on these societies as they encountered new facts. Some of the characteristics attributed to these societies are emphasized in one place and deemphasized in another. For instance, at one point Marx regarded the absence of private ownership of land as the most crucial element of non-European societies and one of the foundations of what he termed Oriental Despotism. Later, however, when he

learned about the existence of some kind of private ownership of land in China, he did not change his view but still regarded China and India as "Asiatic" societies. This indicates that he had not really regarded the absence of private property in land as an absolutely indispensable characteristic of the Asian mode of production.

In Capital, while expanding his exposition of the themes of Asiatic mode of production, Marx attaches less importance to the person of the Oriental Despot as the appropriator of the surplus product. Here, the regulation of water supply as a material basis of the State is not given a priority in economic explanation of despotism in the East. Instead, the emphasis is put on the State which stood over the direct producers "as their landlord and simultaneously as sovereign" (Marx, 1967, III: 791), and "into whose hands from time immemorial a certain quantity of ...[surplus] products has found its way in the shape of rent in kind" (Ibid., I: 357).

In his famous Preface, Marx makes a general outline of historical development which has led to a great deal of controversy and speculation. He says:

In broad outlines, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society (1971: 21).

This statement has led some scholars, like Draper (1977, I: 537-42), Suret-Canale (1965), Chesneaux (1969), and Godelier (1965), to believe that the Asian mode of production is a universal feature of

the historical development of humanity. According to this perspective, the Asiatic mode of production is a transitional mode appearing at the point of transition from classless formations to class societies. In a letter to Engels, Marx gives credence to this interpretation when he implies that the Asian mode is one of the precursors of European capitalism:

Though M[aurer] knows nothing of the view I have put forward, namely that the Asian Indian forms of property constitute the initial ones everywhere in Europe, he provides further proof of it (Marx, 1964: 139).

However, By considering the Asiatic mode of production as a universal stage between clan communism and slaveowning or feudal society, the proponents of this view are going back to the old unilinear view of history critiqued earlier in this work. Taking only these few quotes as evidence for attributing this view to Marx and Engels, is to ignore Marx's emphasis on "the hyper-trophied and despotic character" of the Asian states (Mandel, 1971: 126).

In contrast to this view, Hobsbawm (1964: 32) argues that although historical epochs are successive, the Oriental and ancient epochs do not represent successive stages, but rather "alternative routes of the primitive communal system." Lichtheim (1967: 85) also agrees with this view. Although he argues against the unilinear interpretation of these historical epochs, he puts them on a sort of "economic continuum." He maintains that the successive development of these epochs "mirrors the general dissolution of the 'primitive unity,' and the evolution of private ownership properly so-called."

Marx and Engels's not always consistent views on the Asian

societies raise a number of other problems too. For one thing, their view of these societies as having no history of their own derived from the Hegelian philosophy of history with its ethnocentric biases. Hegel believed that the history of Oriental rule "is, for the most part, really unhistorical, for it is only the repetition of the same majestic ruin" (Hegel, 1956: 106). It was this assumption that shaped Marx and Engels' opinion, when they spoke of India as a society which had "... no history at all, at least no known history. (1972: 81)

Statements like this are usually used by some of the proponents of the Asiatic mode to support the "stagnation thesis" —that the Asiatic societies are relatively stagnant societies lacking historical dynamisms for historical development. It is not at all clear when the proponents of this thesis speak of stagnation what specific aspect of production they have in mind. On the one hand, it seems the stagnation thesis is concerned only with the subsistence sector of the economic life where production is in the main for use or, at most, for limited exchange. Here, of course, there is no accumulation of capital. On the other hand, it is not at all clear to what extent this stagnation existed or varied from region to region and period to period. Furthermore, as far as Iran can serve as an example of an Asian society, it can be easily shown that it experienced historical epochs the societal development of which far surpassed the developments in European lands (Cf. Durant, 1950).

That aspect of Marx and Engels' views of Oriental society which conceives of Asian societies as stagnant, as Turner (1978: 5) has

correctly argued, is based on two major inaccurate assumptions. First, they do not conceive of these societies as having any internal dynamics of their own, but as being stagnant formations without having any historical role to play. Second, it is assumed that these societies were not able to break out of the pre-capitalist form within which they were locked. Moreover, if left to themselves, these societies could not have the means or the institutional urge to develop. In this regard, the historical contact of these societies with the West is seen as a positive historical event for these societies. It follows that colonialism is regarded as a dialectical necessity in the historical development of capitalism on the world scale (Cf. Mahdi, 1979). This kind of vulgar Marxist interpretation of Western penetration into the Third World countries as a positive process is, in fact, a setback from which Marxism has not been able to fully recover.

It is these ambiguities and contradictory statements, found in Marxian texts, that have compelled some Marxist scholars to discard the whole idea of the "Asian mode of production." However, rather than skirting these contradictions, efforts must be made to try and locate them in their proper context relative to the unresolved theoretical problems in Marx and Engels' studies. The task of comparative historical studies is not to discard one view against another but rather further the scope of each theory to the point of enhancing our understanding of the depth and complexity of the subject under investigation. The historical model developed in the next chapter is an attempt in this direction.

2.6. Iranian Asiatic Society: A Review

The views of the proponents of Asiatic theory are very fragmented and disorganized. Many of those who have committed themselves to this position on Iranian pre-capitalist society offer theoretical arguments in support of their position and do not provide any empirical evidence in order to make their case. It is not far from the truth to argue that the research in this area and in the application of this model to the Iranian case is still immature. There are only two works in this area worth mentioning. These are the researches conducted by Ahmad Ashraf (1971 & 1972) and by Ervand Abrahamian (1974 & 1975). What follows is a brief exposition of their respective research on Iran.

2.6.1. Ahmad Ashraf: Safavid Asiatic Society:

Ashraf criticizes the unilinear theories of the historical development of Iranian society, developed by the Soviet Iranologists. He maintains that these theories are unable to substantiate their claims as to "the existence of slavery and the ensuing stage of feudalism" (1972: 2). He argues for the construction of an historically specific analysis of Iranian society because "each historical epoch has its own gradual social changes and its laws possess historically specific traits" (1976).

According to Marx, says Ashraf, "the early tribal communities of the Orient by-passed the stages of slavery and developed into

'Asiatic societies'." These societies are characterized by the undifferentiated unity of town and country, the unity of agriculture and craft manufacture, the central organization of water works, and the lack of private ownership of the means of production. It is important to note here that Ashraf chooses the above characteristics of the Asiatic society from Marxian literature and disregards some of the other characteristics emphasized by Marx, such as the fragmentation and isolation of village communities.

Then, after referring to the works of Wittfogel and rejecting it for its "geographic determinism," Ashraf argues that there are many differences between the institutions of Iranian society and those found in the Western feudal societies. Some of the historically specific characteristics of Iran include the expansion of trade and the growth of a money economy, the specific nature of Persian cities, the persistence of bureaucracy and the bureaucratic character of the land tenure system.

By using Max Weber's ideal type of Oriental patrimonialism, Marx's concept of the Asiatic mode of production, and Wittfogel's concept of Oriental despotism, Ashraf attempts to prove that the periodic decentralized rules and tribal tendencies toward feudalism in the Mongol period do not provide any approximation to the pure type of feudalism in Europe. The strengthening of centralized patrimonialism in the cities always led to the rise of capital cities, the spread of trade and industrial activities, the construction of roads and artificial channels for irrigation, and the enlargement of the state lands. Since the Shah was theoretically the owner of all arable lands and water supplies, he

had the power to redistribute the land continually. The arbitrary confiscation and concession of land by the Shah, coupled with the frequent rise and fall of dynasties, prevented the emergence of a strong and sustained class of landed aristocracy. Both politically and economically, the land-holders were subordinated to the patrimonial authority of the Shah.

The Persian cities were the strongholds of patrimonial authority and did not resemble the autonomous associations of independent burghers in Western Europe. The existence of traders and artisans in the cities and their subordination to patrimonial authority provided the opportunity for the latter to acquire liquid capital necessary for "the maintenance of the salaried armed forces and bureaucratic agents" (1972: 13). The merchants usually found themselves to be the Shah's semi-bureaucratic agents.

Ashraf concludes that these historical characteristics obstructed the emergence of an independent Western type of bourgeoisie in Iran. While the centralized patrimonialism and the existence of the powerful tribal groups did not allow the development of an independent class of capitalists, the later penetration of imperialist powers provided the conditions for the development of a dependent bourgeoisie (1970).

2.6.2. Ervand Abrahamian: Qajar's Oriental Despotism

While Ashraf bases his attempt on the bureaucratic aspect of Asian society, Abrahamian emphasizes the fragmentation thesis and ignores some of the other aspects of Asian societies referred to by

Marx and Engels. According to Abrahamian (1975: 129-130), there are many similarities between the feudal society of Europe and the pre-capitalist structure of Iran. In both kinds of social structure there existed a) a ruling elite who extracted the surplus in different forms from the masses, b) a hierarchical order with each social strata having a specific social function, c) ties of personal dependence between the lord and the peasant, patron and client, guild master and journeyman, and d) an all-embracing religion shaping the individual's outlook towards private and public affairs.

However, despite all those similarities, the Asian society of the Middle East differed from feudal Europe in one important aspect: while the political structure of the Middle Eastern societies is characterized invariably as despotic, the feudal monarchies of Europe were limited monarchies restricted by a hereditary and independent class of aristocrats. In the East, despots ruled through patrimonial bureaucracies in contention with estate institutions (Ibid.).

While acknowledging different traits attributed to Asiatic societies by Marx and Engels, Abrahamian contends that Marx tended to emphasize the fragmented aspect of the communities in these societies rather than their bureaucratic aspect in the management of the public works. The solid foundation of these societies, according to Marx, was "the small stereotype of social organism known as clans, tribes, and villages" isolated from one another by "vast extent of territory" like "idyllic republics." The Oriental despot is a higher unity standing above all these small self-sustained communities. Since the surplus product of the society belongs,

theoretically, to this authority, the legal right to private property does not emerge in the social relations of the producers and those who appropriate the surplus.

Using the model of Oriental despotism with an emphasis on the fragmented nature of the social organization upon which it existed, Abrahamian attempts to substantiate his claim about the Asiatic nature of the social structure of Qajar Iran. He asserts that the bureaucratic theory of Oriental despotism can be more usefully applied to the Achaemenid (550-330 B.C.) and the Sassanid (227-651 A.D.) dynasties, within which the public works were bureaucratically administered and political rules were despotic. The same theory can be applied to the Safavid era less usefully because of the existence of the despotic rule with no large-scale irrigation works. But the same theory is useless in analyzing the Qajar rule which neither had a bureaucratic character nor was it involved in any large-scale public works (1974).

The Qajar rulers were despots without the instrument of despotism. They ruled over a society with 15,000 villages, 12⁺ cities, and at least 250 independent tribal units dispersed throughout the country. These cities, towns, villages, and tribes were separated from one another by "geography, language, religion, blood ties, and the competition for vital offices and scarce economic resources." While there existed a strong sense of "togetherness" in each of these communities, there was no clear cut class formation to "transcend regional boundaries and coalesce members of the same socio-economic rank" (1974: 31). To bring these communities under the authority of the central government, the King

of the Kings had to use the policy of "divide and rule." The Qajar rulers did not have strong armies and never attempted to transform "the haphazard collection of hereditary mustawfis (accountants) and mirza's (secretaries) in the central and provincial capitals" into a viable bureaucratic organization of wide scope.

The country was a mosaic of diverse languages, ethnicities, and religious affiliations. While Persian was the predominant language spoken in the central plateau, the populations of other areas spoke different languages and dialects: Azari, Kurdish, Armenian, Assyrian, Arabic, Gilaki, Mazandrani, Turkamani, Baluchi, and so on. The population was divided into six national groups: the Persians, Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Zoroastrians, and Jews. In addition to the split between Moslem and non-Moslem, there were many other types of religious affiliations and factionalism. Moslems were divided into Shi'is and Sunnis. Non-Moslems included Bah'is, Armenians, Assyrians, Jews and Zoroastrians. The Shi'is were split into diverse opposing factions of Heydari and Ne'mati. Shi'i theologists were separated into Mutashari, Shaykhis, and Karimkhanis schools of thought. Factional strifes between Moslems and non-Moslems, the nomadic life and the settled life, and the linguistic differences were among the most important characteristics of Iranian society in this period.

The scarcity of resources, especially of water, pasture and agricultural lands, and the competition for filling the regional offices of the government are two factors which transformed the communal diversity into communal rivalry. "It often seemed as if the country was torn apart by multiple conflicts: village against

village, village against town, town against town, quarter against quarter, sect against sect, town against tribe, tribe against peasant, and tribe against tribe" (1974: 17). These communal conflicts generated parallel hierarchical social divisions in the social structure of the society. At the top of each unit there were ilkhans, the large landlords and the mujtahids in the cities. At the bottom, there were the peasants, tribemen, and urban masses. In between were different layers of intermediaries. Each successive lower level asked for protection from the next upper level, up to the King. For peasants and other producers, exploitation by their superiors was a grievous burden, "but a necessary burden preferable to wholesale plunder by rival villagers or even physical extermination at the hands of warring tribesmen" (1974: 23). The whole population of Iranian society was "... fragmented into [these] small units, each with its own separate social organization, each living within its own district and customs, speaking diverse tongues, and often in conflict with its neighbors. At the head of each community was invariably an important magnate. Above all these lesser communities was the Shah." (Ibid.: 24)

Abrahamian concludes that the fragmentation thesis is the key to understanding the Oriental despotism of the Qajars in nineteenth century Iran. However, he is quick to warn his readers against historical generalizations which are commonly seen in the works of some proponents of Asiatic mode of production. He points out that "the findings for Qajar Iran are not necessarily applicable either to the study of the political systems of other Oriental countries, especially where the bureaucratic element was stronger and the

tribal element weaker, or even for Iran in other periods of history, especially by the beginning of the twentieth century when Oriental despotism was replaced by a form of feudalism." (Ibid.: 9)

2.7. Endnotes

(1) Cf. The Encyclopedia of Britanica, 1968, IX: 219.

(2) Cf. Ibid.

(3) This does not imply that the peasants could always break out of their intolerable situations and move away from the land. By and large, these peasants seldom moved out of their villages because of the lack of economic opportunity elsewhere, government restriction on their movements, lack of transportation, and of strong ideological legitimation provided by the religious forces.

CHAPTER III

COEXISTENCE OF MODES OF PRODUCTION: IRAN AS AN ASIAN SOCIAL FORMATION

This research is based on the contention that the fundamental tendencies and characteristics underlying any social formation and its development have got to be clearly defined in order to delimit scientifically the subject and conceptual area of that social formation. These characteristics and tendencies can be studied only by specification of the historical trajectory of the organization of social relations around labor and the nature of the distributive patterns of the surplus produce.

Specification of such an historical trajectory requires the conceptualization of the actual social relationships. However, conceptualization of these relationships is an intellectual enterprise which involves reconstruction of historical facts. Such a reconstruction is possible only through abstractions. Abstractions such as "Asiatic" and "feudal" modes of production are ex post facto. They come after the fact. Ancient history knew nothing of them. Peasants living in the medieval Iran did not realize that they were living in the grip of, say, a feudal or Asiatic form of social organization. They certainly knew of the Shah, the khan, and the kadhuda, and of what was expected of them,

but not of any theoretical form by which we analyze their social relationships. The terms "feudal" and "Asiatic" modes of production, words coined in the last three centuries, are theoretical devices enabling us to theorize the social reality of relations of production. They are not to be taken as the reality itself, rather its theoretical expression.

Therefore, the very notion of the "mode of production" should be understood as a theoretical abstraction which defines and explains the structural character of various social relations within a social formation. A social formation, while positing a definite combination of modes of production, is organized into three dialectically interrelated structural levels --economy, politics, and culture-ideology.(1) It is the combination of different social relations at these structural levels which makes a social formation a coherent social whole, i.e., a society.

A mode of production refers to a "logically and mutually coordinated articulation of (i) a determinate type of ownership of the means of production, (ii) a determinate form of appropriation of the economic surplus, (iii) a determinate degree of development of the division of labor, and (iv) a determinate level of development of the productive forces." (Laclau, 1971: 33) In other words, it refers to a historically specific structure --a structure characterized by two essential components of forces and relations of production. In a concrete social formation, there may exist more than one mode of production (Marx, 1973: 106-7; Althusser and Balibar, 1977; Alavi, 1975: 1253). There may even exist variants of the primary modes yet to be identified through specific historical

studies of unidentified cases. Since a social formation constitutes a dialectical entity, a contradictory phenomenon, with life and movement proceeding in a contradictory manner, it is possible to have different modes of production coexisting in this movement in a contradictory, but articulated manner. As Elliot put it:

It is possible for more than one pre-capitalist mode of production to exist, and exist spatially and temporally conterminous with others, and not necessarily expect one pre-capitalist mode of production to evolve into any pre-determined mode (1980: 4).

It was a reference to this reality of multiform evolution of pre-capitalist social formations when Marx said:

The relationship of labour to capital presupposes an historic process which dissolves the different forms, in which the labourer is an owner and the owner labourers. (1964: 97)

However, when more than one mode of production coexist, it is the predominant mode of production which best characterizes that specific social formation (Althusser and Balibar, 1977). This implies that although no real social formation can be reduced to a single mode of production, it is one dominant mode which has a determining influence over subordinated modes. The dominant mode usually subjects the other modes to "... the needs and logic of its own mode of functioning, and integrates them, more or less, in the mechanism of its own." (Godelier, 1974: 63). As Marx maintained:

In every social formation there is a specific kind of production that predominates over all the others, and whose relations, therefore, determine their rank and influence. It is a general inlluminant tingeing all other

colours and modifying their specific features. (Quoted in Brewer, 1980: 33)

These various relations of production are dialectically interrelated through a complex set of economic, political, and ideological-cultural determinants. However, it should be noted that the articulation between various modes of production implies that different sets of social relations existing within a social formation may not be coterminous because, for instance, direct control of the means of production does not necessarily entail the right of appropriation of surplus. Realization of this fact is very important for the understanding of the relations of production within Asiatic social formations, as will be discussed later.

3.1. The Iranian Pre-Capitalist Social Formation

Iranian pre-capitalist history has experienced various socio-economic systems in different periods and regions. Only in a few historical periods has the country demonstrated an entirely uniform system of land tenure, land-ownership, and productive control. It is the contention of this author that while most of the time this system has manifested an historically specific character resembling what is known as the "Asiatic mode of production," in some periods and some localities one can find certain socio-economic relationships which resemble the feudal relations of production. Some of the rights and rules which characterized the appropriation of surplus by the state or individuals under the name of iqta resemble those rights and rules existing in European feudalism. But

these were only some of the aspects of the social relations of production in pre-capitalist Iran; these relationships constituted only a minor portion of the constellation of socio-economic relationships which existed throughout a spacially extensive social formation during a vast historical span.

To refer to the land-holding and land tenure system of pre-capitalist Iran, different scholars have used different terms. Muzare'a, meaning crop-sharing between the landed class and peasants (Cf. Khamsi, 1968), and "arbab-o ra'iiyyati," meaning landlord-vassal relationship (Cf. Sodagar, 1977), are two terms used for the land tenure system in Iran. Iqta, meaning the assignment of the land to the government agents and tribal leaders, is used for characterizing the relationship between the land-holders and the Shah (Cf. Lambton, 1953). Each of these terms actually came into use in different places and different times in the history of Iran. None of these terms could actually cover all forms of social relationships of land-holding, land assignment, landownership, and land tenure system throughout the whole pre-capitalist period in Iran.

Although throughout the long history of pre-capitalist Iran the productive forces have relatively remained unchanged, the social relations of production have been multifarious (Khusravi, 1978: 5). The instance of one form of productive relation can be found in one place, while others can be found in another time and/or in a different location. The complexity of the issue and variety of these social relationships can be realized when we take into account territorial enlargement and contraction of the country during various invasions, integrations, disintegrations, and

reintegrations.

The review of historical accounts about Iranian pre-capitalist countryside reveals the existence of a variety of social relations of production. For instance, on the one hand, we find the existence of communities exploited from the outside by individual landlords or religious institutions of ouqaf or the state --a situation very similar to the Indian communities discussed by Marx as examples of his model of Asiatic mode of production. On the other hand, we find many communities in which the ownership of small agricultural lands or usufruct of a small plot of land by the individual peasants was a common practice. As Bosworth has shown, during the Saljuq rule, despite the structural homogeneity of the socio-economic system, the land system of the eastern part of the country differed from that of the western part of the country (1968: 84). This heterogeneity of structural forms of production and distribution of economic surplus becomes more prevalent during the Qajar period. In this period, there were as many forms of agricultural production as there were different forms of extracting the surplus product from the direct producers.

These different forms of social production indicate the existence of various forms of productive relations existing in Iranian pre-capitalist social formation simultaneously. For this reason, we find it not only inadequate, but also wrong to overlook this structural heterogeneity and characterize Iranian pre-capitalist society by a single mode of production. The determination of the mode of production is not based on the simple presence of certain features of one mode of production or another,

but on the overdetermination and prevalence of one mode over the others. Agricultural wage-labor, to use another example, has always been present in the Iranian social formation during the Islamic era (Cf. Rodinson, 1973: 66). Despite its long presence, however, wage-labor cannot be regarded as a constitutive feature of the Iranian pre-capitalist social formation and the economy, as well as the agricultural enterprises in which it was practiced. The existence of wage-labor in this context could by no means be seen as capitalistic.

Following the theoretical discussion of the Asiatic mode of production developed by Rodinson (1973), to understand the nature of pre-capitalist Iranian society, and to account for both structural similarities and dissimilarities within this society, I call this constellation of socio-economic relationships in pre-capitalist Iran an "Asian social formation." This "Asian social formation," as a collection of historically specific modalities of production, contained a variety of modes of economic appropriation of surplus, ranging from communal organization of labor to even wage-labor. All these various modes of surplus production and appropriation had certain characteristics in common --characteristics resembling those depicted by Marx and Engels as features of the Asian mode of production. These dominant features, which will be discussed thoroughly in the rest of this work, can be characterized as the Asian mode of production. (2) Since theoretically it is very possible for elements of one form of societal organization to exist in another form (Cf. Mandel, 1971), while we generally characterize Iranian pre-capitalist formation as Asiatic, we can have certain

elements of feudal, pastoral, and independent modes of production present in this social structure. (3) As one type of structure, feudalism coexisted with other structural forms within the Iranian social formation. However, as a subordinate mode, it existed on the structural margins of this social formation.

It is important here to note that many critics of the Asiatic model have argued that in pre-capitalist Iran there has always been two visible classes: producers and non-producers (Nomani, 1972; Tabari, 1975). This polarization is taken as an important indicator of feudal social relations. In response to this argument one can say that there definitely existed a class division in the Asiatic social formation because the Asiatic mode of production, like the feudal mode, involves the production of use value for subsistence by the peasants, and of surplus as well. A considerable portion of agricultural and handicraft manufactured goods produced by these peasants is extracted by the ruling class using "extra-economic coercion." Whenever and wherever one particular group controls the circulation of surplus product in such a way that this control ensures the reproduction of dominant exploitative relations of production, classes are present and one can even speak of class conflict in that situation. Within an Asiatic social formation class relations refers to a dynamic process of appropriation and not to static groups with a fixed character. The principal class division in the Iranian Asiatic social formation was that between the ruling patrimonial authorities and the peasants, with an embryonic division within the former between the members of patrimonial household (often military and tribal aristocracy) and

the merchants and high ruling civil servants. However, this division was by no means clear-cut because of the persistence of the tension between pastoral nomadism, feudal tendencies, commercial interest, petty-production, and Asiatic centripetal forces.

Furthermore, this means that since all modes of production -- except primitive communism, independent (petty-commodity) production, and (in theory) socialist modes -- comprise classes, the mere existence of class relations is not therefore a useful way of distinguishing between Asiatic and feudal modes. As far as the Iranian peasants were concerned, they objectively constituted a social class for the simple reason of their common exploitation; however, once the conditions under which this exploitation takes place are taken into account, one finds it difficult to speak of a clear-cut class distinction. Here, the conditions of production, the prevailing forms of ownership, the persistence of pastoral nomadic relations, and the existence of all-encompassing state inhibit the development of class organization and class consciousness in a distinctive fashion.

In the Asiatic mode, unlike the feudal mode, the non-producing individuals appropriated the surplus on behalf of the state, even when they were entitled to collect the revenues for themselves. Here, borrowing Lefebvre's phrase, "the state is but a fragment of society that sets itself above society" (1969: 124). Here, exploitation by representatives of the larger community takes the place of exploitation by the private landed individuals who in the West were in control of the means of production (Sawer, 1977: 49). The Iranian muqta's, for example, were given the right to intervene

in the determination of the conditions of production because their intervention in this process would ensure the reproduction of the Asiatic relations of production, guaranteeing the power and wealth of the ruling state bureaucracy. The state channeled its control and exploitation through the local chiefs and village heads without losing its own economic control and infrastructural basis. The state put itself at the receiving end. The peasants paid their tribute as usual to their higher-ups, who in turn were variously controlled or milked by the state. There were two levels of surplus extraction. At one level the surplus was extracted by the landed aristocracy of chiefs and village heads; and at the other level it was the state which allowed part of the surplus to stay with the chiefs. While the composition of the class who received surplus was often changing, due to political changes, the mode of production did not alter. As Marx put it:

... the Oriental empires always show an unchanging infrastructure coupled with unceasing change in the persons and tribes who manage to ascribe to themselves the political superstructure. (Quoted in Avineri, 1969: 442)

One basic reason for the relative stability of the Asiatic social formation is the role and the nature of the state. Here, the state is not simply a repressive organ functioning in the realm of the superstructure; rather, by regulating the economy and organizing production, the state becomes an important aspect of the class formation.

3.2. The Tension Between Asiatic Mode and Feudal Relations

While the dominant mode of production characterizing the Iranian Asian social formation is Asiatic, the rival modes coexisting with this mode are feudalism, pastoral nomadism, and small independent production in both agriculture and handicraft manufacturing. Less importantly, there existed both slave relations and a primitive mercantile relationship in the form of trade. All these different forms of productive relationship coexisted within a social formation which was marked by various political, economic, social, and cultural tensions and conflicts. As Banani (1978a: 4) has noted, Iranian social history is marked by various forms of tensions: tensions between central and local powers, autocracy and autonomy, imperial administration and tribal custom, sedentary and semi-settled elements, agriculturalists and pastoralists, military and administrative elites, the Persian ethnic population and the non-Persian elements, the forces of stratification and mobility, change and stability, and protest and reform. These tensions are intensified by "variations in organization and ruling of core provinces and borderlands," variations in land-tenure system, in land-based economy, and in forms of surplus extraction.

As Samir Amin (1976: 13) has argued, the Asian mode of production, which he sees as one variant of "tribute-paying mode," consists of an early form (which Marx and others have termed the "Asiatic mode") and a more developed form, i.e., the feudal mode. For Amin, when the tribute-paying mode assumes an advanced form, "it

almost always tends to become feudal" (Ibid: 15). Likewise, it is my contention that the pre-capitalist Iranian social formation is marked by a constant tension between the Asiatic, pastoral, and feudal modes of production. The very practice of iqta testifies to the existence of this tension and contradictory tendency toward centralization and decentralization. While the grant of power and property to local or tribal leaders could practically lead to the development of feudal landownership, by virtual assumption of ownership by the grantees, it did actually bring the power of these centrifugal forces under the central control of the state.

The dialectical outcome of this socio-politico-economic tension was the dominance of the Asiatic mode until the end of the Safavid rule when the process of early incorporation of the Iranian economy into the world capitalist system had well started. At this time, while the Iranian Asiatic social formation gradually came under the subordination of European capitalism, the internal crises of the Asiatic mode gave way to a feudal form which was articulated within a larger unity of the capitalist world system. The historical dominance of the Asiatic mode began eroding when the capitalist sector of Iranian society of the Safavid era (1502-1736 A.D.) came into contact with the nascent (yet expanding) European mercantile economy. This change in productive character was logically connected with the macro-structural changes taking place at the international level: the world empires, including Iran, which were integrated through tribute extraction, now were transforming into sub-units of an emerging world system integrated through market relations (Wallerstein, 1979: 71). Logically, the emerging system

required a certain form of economic transaction controlled through impersonal market relationships. The expansion of the European market into Iran and the spread of commercial relations in the region served exactly this purpose.

It should be remembered, however, that the breakdown of the Asiatic infrasturcture in Iran did not result only from the penetration of world capitalist system into the Iranian social formation. In addition to this external element, there were many internal critical factors that contributed to this historical change. The discussion of these internal crises is the task of Chapter VII which deals with the crises that helped the transformation from the Asiatic mode to a feudal one.

To understand the articulation of the feudal mode of production with an archaic form of political relations, with both being under the domination of the world capitalist system, we should see the historical structure of Iranian society as one growing out of uneven tendencies which have characterized its historical development (Cf. Trotsky, 1967, I: 22-23). With the penetration of the world capitalist system into Iran, the contradictory productive relations existing in the Asiatic social formation were further intensified by new elements of the capitalist relations introduced into it. The history of this society became a contradictory totality combining different forms of social relations of production, all under the domination of the world economy. As Marx argues, this intrusion can have different effects on the peripheral society in terms of the prevailing mode of production:

In all conquests there are three possibilities. The conquering nation subjects the conquered nation to its own mode of production ...; or it allows the old mode to remain and is content with tribute ...; or interaction takes place, which gives rise to a new system, a synthesis In all cases the mode of production --whether that of the conqueror or of the conquered nation or the one resulting from the fusion of the two --is the determinant of the new distribution that occurs. (Quoted in Brewer, 1980: 13)

This expansion into the pre-capitalist modes of production by capitalism has both conservation and dissolution effects (Cf. Poulantzas, 1974). That is, while capitalism liquidates the archaic institutions of pre-capitalist modes and revolutionizes the forces of production, it has also the tendency to preserve some of the pre-capitalist relations of production (Banaji, 1973). Typically, in colonies, capitalism extends and intensifies the pre-capitalist forms of labor organization and the relations of exploitation because it can benefit from the lower-cost of the reproduction of labor-power which, in turn, increases the rate of surplus value (Wolpe, 1972: 252). Preservation of these pre-capitalist relations is functional to the development of capitalist relations. Discussing the nature of commodity relations in pre-capitalist social formations under the capitalist domination, Marx mentions that:

Commodities ... enter into the circuit of industrial capital as well as into the circulation of the surplus value incorporated into it ... To replace them they must be reproduced and to this extent the capitalist mode of production is conditional on modes of production lying outside of its own stage of development. (Marx, 1967, I: 714)

As Meillassoux has demonstrated, the pre-capitalist agrarian sector

Provides a complementary function to capitalism by allowing for a reserve of cheap labor. The feudal agrarian economy with its low constant capital also serves as an organic component of the capitalist sector by feeding the temporarily unproductive workers of that sector and supplying them with the resources necessary to their survival (Meillassoux, 1972: 103).

In Iran, after the collapse of the Safavid dynasty, while the political structure of the Iranian Asiatic social formation remained the same, i.e., "patrimonial despotism" (See Chapter IV), its economic base began to become integrated into the world capitalist system in such a way that the existing feudal relations at the base of the society were reinforced and made predominant. From this time on, the state lost its previous importance, as a higher unity, except for a short period under the Qajars, and it became unable to discharge its public duties as it did before. These public rights were surrendered to powerful individuals who occupied military positions and/or held political offices or controlled lands. Having secured these rights, the land-holders assumed a stronger political and economic power over the peasantry. As Lambton (1970: 80) argues:

Under the Safavid and Qajar, the autonomy of the village communities was further reduced by the pressure exerted on them by the tuyulldars. The increased tendency toward absolutism which ran through society and the changed position of the religious class also exerted an adverse affect on the position of the village communities.

The forces that ruled Iran from the eleventh century up to eighteenth century were primarily tribal. When the Safavid power

declined, there was no strong tribal force to bring other tribal elements under its control. Political decentralization and socio-cultural fragmentation reinforced the autonomy of many groups, especially the tribal forces. The detribalization of the qezelbash power initiated by Shah Abbas I, coupled with many other factors (to be discussed in a later chapter) created a badly disorganized and extremely divided tribal system which, despite its vast size, could not establish a unified political system until at least about 150 years later when it became powerful again and established the Qajar dynasty. But even Qajar rulers were not able to effectively expand their patrimonial control over the outer regions of what had traditionally been regarded part of Iran. Harat and Qandehar in the north, Sistan and Baluchestan in the southwest, Bandar Abbas in the south, and parts of the southwestern Iran remained outside of the Qajar control.

The interregnum between the fall of the Safavids in the first quarter of the eighteenth century and the rise of the Qajars in the last quarter of that century was a period of political contraction and economic decline for the country. The long period of socio-political instability following the Safavid collapse led to a substantial growth in the proportion of the tribal population and a high economic fragmentation and commercial decline (Cf. Lambton, 1968, I: 433-34 & 1977: 108). The collapse of the central government and tribal resurgence led to the expansion of feudal control over the peasantry. The reports of travellers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indicate the spread of political insecurity and harsh exploitation of the peasants in the governors' private domains

(Cf. Lambton, 1953: 135-37). The Afsharid (1736-1747), Zand (1751-1795), Qajar (1796-1925), and early Pahlavi (1925-1941) periods were characterized by specific feudal social relations called *muluk ul-tavayefi* (government of socio-economic communal/tribal rulers). Under this socio-economic system the regional tribal and non-tribal governors and *muqta's* enjoyed a measure of autonomy. They were granted security of tenure as long as they met the financial requirements of the *iqta* they held.

Within the pre-capitalist period, the tension between the feudal and Asiatic modes usually heightened whenever the patrimonial state faced peripheral crisis and the central control of the despotic authority became loose or was lost. Therefore, the feudalization of social relationships occurred as an anomaly within the Asiatic formation of Iran. The prominence of feudal relations usually signaled the disintegration of the patrimonial state. In the periods of the political disintegration of the state, we observe a common tendency of breaking away from the central authority of the Shahs among the *muqta's* and governors. It is within these periods that the assigned lords established their rigid control over the peasants and assumed political independence from the center of political rule. For example, at the end of Abbasid rule, the central government became so corrupt and weak that Moqtader, who was the absolute Sultan of the entire empire, lost his power and controlled only Iraq, Khuzestan, Fars, Syria, and Basra. In Oman, Azarbaijan, Armanestan, and some other areas, he was not regarded as the Sultan of the empire. It is at this time that Obeydollah, Fatami Caliph in North Africa, and Abdulrahman III, Ummayad Caliph

in Spain, became independent rulers and claimed caliphship (Mirfetrus, n.d.: 136). When the Abbasid caliphate began to break up in the ninth and tenth centuries, a number of semi-independent rules were established in Iran such as the Taherids in Khurasan (820-72), the Saffarids (867-903) in the area covering major parts of Khurasan including parts of today's Afghanistan, modern Pakistan, and Central Asia, the Samanid (900-999), the Buyids (945-1055), the Ziyarids (828-1077), and the Ghaznavids (994-1040).

The rise of these independent states usually weakened the Asiatic character of productive relations and resulted in : a) the economic development of the localities within which they emerged because the local revenue ceased to be sent to Damascus, largely staying within those localities and, b) further political oppression because the numbers of local tyrants increased and a closely feudal relationship between the rulers and their subjects was established. The local landowners, who were previously interested only in getting as much as they could out of the land in the form of taxes, now became concerned about maintaining the land in good productive condition, since it was substantially under their own control.

In periods of political disintegration, which sometimes were protracted, strong feudal relationships were established between the lords and peasants. The peasant communities lost most of the autonomy they had had in the Asiatic period and became very dependent on the lords. The muqta's would re-claim the hereditary right over their assigned lands. Writing about the satrapy system of pre-Islamic Iran, Critchely, himself a proponent of the feudal thesis, mentions that:

Both the satrapies themselves and the political systems they were part of were continually changing. At one time their adherence to the great king was safeguarded by controlling from the centre the head of the satrapal chancery, the financial organization of the satrapy and the commander of the garrison of its capital city. At other times rebellious and successful bids for independence occurred whenever the ruling king was weak or occupied elsewhere. It was satrapal revolts which enabled Arsaces in third-century Parthia to come to power, so beginning the most feudal of all the feudal epochs of Persian history (1978: 71)

Another example of this trend can be found in the Saljuq period.

Toward the end of the Saljuq rule, with the decrease of the power of the central government, some of the main offices such as *divan al-kharaj* (the central tax office) lost their importance and the task of collecting taxes fell into the hands of the *atabegs*. The *muqta's* or *iqta-dars* started to claim the rights of hereditary ownership and transfer their lands to their successors. Especially in the twelfth century, with the weakening of the central power, we see an extended practice of privatizing the ownership of the *iqta's* and of transforming them into private land (*melk*) (Cf. Bosworth, 1968: 199). As Lambton (1968: 239) argues:

The *iqta* system did not in itself involve decentralization or even a relaxation of the authority of the central government. Under a strong ruler it contributed to the strength and cohesion of the state, but under a weaker ruler it led to political disintegration.... Thus, by abuse the system contributed to the political disintegration of the empire.

With the collapse of the Saljuq empire and the arrival of the Mongols, thirteenth century Iran experienced again a heightened tension between the forces of centralization and decentralization so

much so that land ownership in this period tended toward the feudal type. However, the rise of Safavid rulers put an end to this trend and consolidated the Asiatic forces.

3.3. The Pastoral Nomadic Mode of Production

Pastoralism and tribalism (4) have been an important factor in the socio-economic life of Iranian society. The Aryans who moved into the Iranian plateau were pastoralists searching for steppes (Maenchen-Helfen, 1970: 75ff). The Parthian tribes were also pastoralists at the beginning too (Colledge, 1967: 25ff). The Saljuqs, the Mongols, the Safavids, and the Qajars were all tribal forces who shaped the political and economic history of this country. Pastoral nomadism has had such great importance that its structure and social patterns have always affected not only the economic life of the country, but also the socio-political structures developed in the Iranian Asiatic social formation.

The role of tribalism in Iranian history, as Helfgott (1977: 36) has mentioned, has been one of the factors which has suffered considerable neglect in terms of sociological and historical research. Since tribalism and pastoral nomadism have received little attention in literature dealing with the Iranian social formation, and since it is our contention that pastoral nomadism constituted an important mode of production in the Iranian Asiatic social formation, a closer look at the social organization of nomadic life and its relation to the larger social structure of pre-capitalist Iran, including those periods in which feudalism became

dominant, is necessary.

3.3.1. Tribalism and Iranian Socio-Political History

The extensive pasture lands, existing in the plains and at the foot of mountains, have provided Iran with ample natural conditions for the development of animal husbandry and, thus, nomadic life. These ecological factors have had a determining role in the emergence, growth, and survival of migratory pastoral and tribal life in this country. They have also provided the nomads with an opportunity to have an upper hand in the control over the life of the desert, steppes, and mountain ranges of the country. The wandering nomads live most of their life in the hills and invariably occupied the same pasture-lands one year after another.

Iranian tribal groups of the pre-capitalist era were basically divided into six major ethnic groups: Turkoman, Iranian, Kurdish, Arab, Baluchi, and Lur. Each of these groups formed several tribal sub-units. Some of the present tribal groups living through pastoralism included the Kurds in the Zagros mountains and the Lurs in the west, the Bakhtiyari people near Esfahan, the Qashqai and Khamseh confederations in the province of Fars, the Turkoman in the northeast, and the Baluchi, Hazara, and Brahuis living in the eastern frontier of the country.

As far as the size of these tribal groups in pre-capitalist Iran is concerned, we have no accurate statistical information. The ratio between the nomadic and the settled population has so often changed according to natural as well as social, political, and

economic changes in Iranian formation. Based on the information provided by Sir A. Houtum-Schindler, Zolotoliv, Curzon, and Medvedev, the percentage of nomadic population as compared to the whole population in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century has been thirty-three, i.e., one third of the total (See Table 1).

Table 1

Nomadic Population
(in thousand)

Year	Total	Percentage of Total
1884	1910	33
1888	1500	33
1891	2250	33
1913	2500	33

Source: Issawi, 1971: 33.

Based on "several estimates of varying degrees of accuracy," Issawi (1971: 20) estimates that in the early nineteenth century nomadic people made up about half the Iranian population. This figure reduced to a quarter of the total at the end of the century (Hass, 1964: 62). Based on the census of 1956, the total nomadic population was about 5,711,856 or 30.1 percent of the whole population. The latest figures indicate that the nomadic population was reduced to one-fourth of the total population in 1970 (Vadiei, 1970). According to a survey conducted by Field (1939: 3-7), the nomadic population of Iran in the forth decade of this century consisted of one hundred and sixty-two distinct tribal groups.

From the eleventh century to the nineteenth century, tribalism

constituted an important factor of the military life of the country. Tribal and nomadic forces organized and fought most of the wars during this period: they were strong warriors whose mobile character allowed them to furnish a logistical support in fighting the enemy. Hence, it can be said that nomadism provided the infrastructure which made the cavalry possible: extensive pastoral activities allowed nomads to raise horses with little cost or labor; The grass and water were always available and there was no need for shelter. Furthermore, horses were the most important means of hunting and warfare, two essential aspects of the nomadic/tribal knighthood. Warfare, which is usually connected with the ceremonial requirements of adulthood and many other social statuses, has been an important ingredient of the nomadic social structure. Achievement of certain social statuses in the structure of tribal/nomadic life required heroic deeds in campaigns of war. Many of the nomadic raids were organized on a large scale and within the framework of the tribal system. Since many of Iranian dynasties were established upon tribal ascendancy, a class of tribal warriors have usually been present who wielded great influence by assuming military functions. In many cases, their function supplanted existing judicial, administrative, and fiscal functions.

These tribal forces became an important element of political competition and conflict in Iranian history. They always sought political leadership and viewed chieftancy as an institution which had dynastic potentialities (Smith, 1978: 64). Various Iranian dynasties have come to power on tribal support, either directly or indirectly (Cf. Lambton, 1970: 77). While the Safavid, Afshar,

Zand, and Qajar rulers were all Iranian tribesmen who established dynastic rule in Iran, the Arabs, Saljuq Turks, Kharazmshahids, and the Mongols were all foreign tribesmen who came to rule the Iranian people.

A basic problem facing nomadic forces who seize state power is the denomadization of their life. The mobile and unstable structure of nomadic activities cannot be translated to a stable, centralized, and strong state. As Anderson (1978: 224) has put it: "Nomadic rulers either cease to be nomads or to rule." This maxim clearly expresses one of the basic problems facing Iranian dynasties which came to power through their nomadic/tribal support. These dynasties, despite their tribal/nomadic support for rising to power, always faced the problem of incorporating their nomadic elements into the political structure of the government. For instance, in 1153 A.D. the Saljuqs, who were the leaders of a tribal/nomadic migration, were faced with this problem and their inability to successfully deal with this led to their fall by the same people who brought them into power, i.e., Oghuz Turkish nomads (Lambton, Ibid.). Later, the Safavid and Qajar rulers also faced the same problem and were threatened by tribal jealousies and ambitions for control of the state.

Once in power, the nomadic/tribal leaders usually tried to transform their nomadic followers from a nomadic militia to a regular, salaried army. For example, in order to stabilize his power, the Safavid Shah Isma'il I and his successor, Shah Tahmasp I, developed "the qizilbash institution which was staffed by descendants of the Turkish and Mongol chieftains" who had come to

Iran in earlier centuries. These people were usually poor soldiers who possessed no patrimony (Reid, 1978a: 133). By appointing them as tribal chieftains, the Safavid ruler brought these tribal/nomadic forces into his political fold and integrated them into the political system. With the development of the qezelbash uymaq system (5), tribal control of village and tribal/nomadic economies were formalized. Tribal power also became integrated into the urban social structure.

The advantage of this assimilation of the tribal forces to the political establishment is explained by the Saljuq vizier, Nizam ul-Mulk:

Although there has arisen a certain amount of aversion to the Turkmans, and they are very numerous, still they have a longstanding claim upon this dynasty, because at its inception they served well and suffered much, and also they are attached by ties of kinship. So it is fitting that about a thousand of their sons should be enrolled and maintained in the same way as [ghulams] of the palace. When they are in continuous employment they will learn the use of arms and become trained in service. Then they will settle down with other people with growing devotion serve as [ghulams], and the dislike which is generally felt for them on account of their nature will disappear; and whenever the need arises 5,000 or 10,000 of them, organized and equipped like [ghulams], will mount to perform the task for which they are detailed. In this way the empire will not leave them portionless, the king will acquire glory, and they will be contented. (Nizam ul-Mulk, 1960: 105)

It was for these reasons that the Mongols granted iqta to their nomad tumens, the military units of 10,000 men with their families. They also assigned revenues derived from regular agricultural taxes to nomads to supplement their pastoral incomes. One temporary solution which was used during the Saljuq to reduce the threat from

nomadic forces was to organize Holy Wars (jihad) and send them to fight infidel armies of Byzantine and Georgia (Cf. Barthold, 1928: 301).

Tribal/nomadic forces were seen not only as a challenging force to the centralized authority of patrimonialism, but they were also an unruly population who, because they were on the move for several months of the year, could not be easily subjected to taxes and levies. Therefore, sedentarization of nomads had both political and economic advantages for the centralized governments. When the central government was strong, the nomads' mobility helped them avoid government taxes and conscription. Whereas the weakened central governments put the nomads in an offensive, rather than defensive, position. In the latter case, the nomads had a hegemonic position over the sedentary settlements, and demanded regional and political autonomy by placing pressure on the central state. For example, under the Qajars, when the central government was strong, the Ilkhani (appointed tribal leaders) were content with their titular rank, but when the government became weak, the Ilkhani and the Ilbegi showed the tendency to make their offices hereditary and exerted pressure on the central government for political concessions (Lambton, 1970: 78).

While many of the Iranian Shahs during the Asiatic period have attempted to sedentarize the Iranian nomads, it was during the early twentieth century feudal period that Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1941) was successfully able to force nomads into sedentary life. Reza Shah regarded the tribal/nomadic population as a potential threat to his rule as well as to his socio-economic programs of

westernization. The sedentarization of the Iranian nomads was a forced sedentarization which required state intervention and use of force for settling this population. Since this form of sedentarization is usually politically motivated, it does not lead to the prosperity of the nomads because the settlement does not follow a prior process of land and economic development (Barth, 1961).

To establish an omnipotent secular state, Reza Shah dealt with the nomadic tribes severely and demanded their settlement through coercive means. He arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and executed many of the tribal/nomadic leaders. These leaders were brought to the capital and kept under surveillance as hostages in order to exact cooperation from their tribes. The seasonal migratory movements were forbidden and many tribal lands were confiscated. Once moved into new locations, these nomads had to build their own houses without help from the government. They were forced to settle on unsuitable land and prohibited from moving to the old pastures. In the course of time, these settled nomads were converted into seasonal wage-laborers of the agrarian economy. They became rural refugees who were forced to contribute surplus value via employment in seasonal or occasional occupations in agriculture, petty commodity production, and construction industries around the major cities. Smith (1978: 60) has summarized the status of these nomads as follows:

Sedentarized nomads in modern Iran are among the most miserable of all the peasantry partly because they have consumed their animal capital while trying to avoid

settling, but in larger part because the available agricultural lands and jobs are already taken by members of the long-established sedentary society, which relegates the former nomad to casual labor.

Not only was Reza Shah's policy of sedentarization "ill-conceived and badly executed" (Lambton, 1953: 286), but also it was "an inadequate solution which left many outstanding problems" (Sunderland, 1968: 624). The implementation of this policy destroyed the tribal economic system and pastoral production. It led not only to the misery and impoverishment of the tribal/nomadic population, but it also created considerable economic hardship for the country as a whole, such as the destruction of the country's animal products. (6) An Englishman travelling in province of Fars in 1945 observed:

... I have dwelt at some length on these conditions because they are those into which many thousands of nomadic tribesmen were forcibly introduced after their disarmament in the thirties.... It will be evident that in the course of half a dozen years of more many hundreds of them died from the effects of disease or famine, and that their health and morale, especially of the younger generation, were radically impaired... (after the Second World War) they were quick to return to a nomadic life. About 90 percent of those who were settled are now living in tents and migrating again and beginning to recover from the effects of their past oppression. (Quoted in Golabian, 1977: 253)

After the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, many of these sedentarized tribal population returned to the nomadic life again.

3.3.2. The Pastoral Nomadic Mode of Production in Iran:

Most historians of Iranian society have identified the nomadic

structure of that society as an extension and another form of feudalism. For instance, some Soviet scholars have spoken of "nomadic feudalism" in Iran. This view is also shared by some of Western historians: Keddie argues that the invasion of Iran by Turkish nomads in the eleventh century led to the spread of nomadic life which contributed to the development of "tribal feudalism" until the mid-nineteenth century (1972: 365). Acknowledging the absence of serfdom and a manorial system among Iranian nomads, she describes the Iranian nomadic structure as a form of feudalism under which "military power was largely in the hands of tribal leaders, who also held revenue rights to and often administered large peasant and sometimes even urban population." (1981: 13) Under this system, tribal khans

provided the armies and were paid in rights to revenue collection. Real rule in many tribal/nomadic, peasant, and even urban territories thus rested with tribal leaders and the central rulers had to rule indirectly, playing one urban or tribal faction off against another.... (Ibid.)

It is our view that the conceptualization of the nomadic organization of production as "feudal" is both inaccurate and inadequate. As Perry Anderson has argued, "pastoralism represents a distinct mode of production, with its own dynamic, limits, and contradictions" (1978: 218) that should not be confused with other modes of production.

Pastoral nomadism lacks a clear conception of landlordism. As a general pattern within the Iranian Asiatic formation, nomads did not own the land, nor did they pay rent for the lands they occupied. On very few occasions, and under very special circumstances, they

were taxed (Cf. Smith, 1978: 58). Even when they were compelled to pay taxes, many times they refused to comply with government demands and entered into confrontation with the political center. As Iron (1974: 635) has discussed in the case of the Yamut Turkoman, an essential function and cause of the Yamut mobility was the avoidance of government conscription and tax-collection. During the feudal period of the Qajar rule, the Luristan tribes usually avoided the government demands for taxes by moving back and forth between their winter quarters in Khuzestan to their summer quarters in Lurestan (Sheikholeslami, 1978: 228). Of course, within the structure of tribal/nomadic unit, the kadkhuda and/or tribal chiefs collected levies and imports which were exacted for their own consumption. These kadkhudas, in many cases, acted as a subordinate to the regional chief (kalantar) who himself was accountable to supreme tribal/nomadic chief (ilkhan).

Another important factor distinguishing the pastoral nomadic mode of production from feudalism is the role of kinship ties and codes. In feudal society, kinship ties are primarily replaced by economic ties between landlords and individual cultivators who traded their services to use the land or to obtain military protection. In pastoral nomadism, kinship and clan ties are important factors even in deciding the socio-economic status of a nomad.

It is also inaccurate to view the nomadic population as "a bunch of people always in search of grass and water." Nomadism is an important economic organization suited for a specific ecological structure. Nomadic life is based on a very tight organization of

production and a technically skilled division of labor. It involves various political and economic activities, precise legal concepts of territorial rights, and a hierarchy of responsibility and authority. In other words, it is a mode of life and production. It is for these reasons that we argue that historically the pastoral nomadic mode of production has been an integral part of the Iranian Asiatic social formation. As a distinct feature of the Iranian Asiatic social formation, pastoral nomadism has also often been in conflict with the other productive relations existing within the Iranian social formation (Cf. Khusravi, 1979: 55-56; Vardasbi, 1975: 35). It should be noted that there is no homogeneous social form common to all pastoral nomadic groups in Iran. Comparative studies of the nomadic population in different regions of the country indicate considerable variation in nomadic social forms. What we are concerned with here are the basic social relationships of production at the general level of abstraction. In other words, the rubric "pastoral nomadic mode of production" is used as an ideal-type concept explaining the nature and character of a specific social organization of production.

The pastoral nomadic mode of production is a system of production in which the organization of life is based on patterns of movement and residence. It involves "the appropriation and exploitation of animals and pastures by human social groups" (Tapper, 1979: 1). The productive forces of pastoral nomadism are based upon "the husbandry of ruminant animals" and "the utilization of natural grasses as fodder" (Goldschmidt, 1979: 15). Pasture and flocks are the main sources of production for both subsistence and

exchange.

Wealth is not measured in amounts of land or gold, as is respectively the case in agrarian feudal and capitalist modes, but in terms of animals and the amount of fodder needed to feed one animal or a group of animals. As the locus of social relations, the household (khaneh or ujaq) is the unit of production as well as that of consumption (Barth, 1961: 11).

The nomads of Iran have usually lived in tents and had no fixed abode. They bred domesticated livestock in herds, primarily sheep, goats, and camels, horses, and moved seasonally from one pasture to another. Mobility was an essential principle of their life. The pastoral organization of production was dependent on this movement from one area, where the fodder was depleted, to another, where the fodder was plentiful. In the course of time, as this movement found a pattern, the pastoral nomads began to adopt a distinct pattern of movement and settlement. In Iran, this took the form of semi-annual migration to summer and winter quarters. Pasture lands were divided into two categories: those used in the summer (yeylaq) and those used in winter (geshlaq). The migration from yeylaq to geshlaq and vice versa was based on the pattern of seasonal and ecological changes. The migration pattern, which every nomadic group followed, was called its eyel rah (nomadic route). Campsites were usually dispensed by tribal khans. These sites were sometimes assigned to different families each successive year.

The social structure of nomadic life was hierarchically arranged. A simplified and generalized scheme of this structure can be depicted as follows: The smallest component unit of the nomadic

structure was a "tent" or a nomadic "extended household." A combination of several tents constituted a camp (mal). Several camps made a sect (tireh) and several tirehs constituted one clan (tayefeh). It is the combination of several tayefehs which made a tribe (eyel). The above pattern, of course, varied from tribe to tribe, region to region, and time to time. For example, the Basseri tribe consists of many sects (tireh) and each sect in turn comprises several units called descendants (olad). Each of these olads consists of several households which are further organized in several camps called ordu or mal (Barth, 1961). However, despite all these differences, nomadic society was marked by certain structural features which distinguished it from other forms of social relations.

Grazing lands were used by the tribal/nomadic groups as a whole and were allotted to different tribal units at tribal congregations convened at a certain point of time in the year. Sometimes a newly formed tribal/nomadic group was assigned to a pasture land already held by another older group. In this case, assuming that there was enough pasture land, the two groups shared the rights of usufruct. Access to grazing land, wells, and other productive resources was directly controlled by the government through the tribal/nomadic nobility because legally the land was not owned by the nomads. While the ownership of the pasture land was determined by the political structures beyond the tribal/nomadic unit, the rights of usufruct were decided at the tribal/nomadic level by kin or family relationships. Since the basic relations of production here were tributary relations within an Asiatic structure, as described

earlier, the ruling nobility usually held control over the pasture land through the ideological institution of kinship and patrimonial support as well. As Bradburd (1979) has argued, kinship, as an ideological construct, is an idiom of tribal/nomadic unity which palliates the contradictions of social relations of nomadic mode of production.

While the nomadic population was primarily engaged in animal husbandry, if social conditions were favourable, some of the nomads became involved in agropastoral activities in which animal husbandry still took priority. As a matter of fact, such tribal/pastoral groups like the Bakhtiyari had their historical origin in an agricultural economy (Garthwaite, 1969: 59-60). There are many historical accounts indicating that pastoralist chieftains had sometimes controlled the agricultural sector from which they derived extensive dues in cash, kind or services, too. Many tribal/pastoral groups in Iran were engaged in farming in order to supplement their diets, especially when they could avoid government demands for rent and/or taxes (Hodgson, 1974, II: 81).

In terms of production, Iranian nomads were engaged in the production of their own maintenance, and usually produced a surplus as well. The latter was usually produced for the purpose of exchange. In this regard, for instance, nomadic tribes have been the main suppliers of raw material, e.g., wool, to Iran's most important industry, the carpet industry. Some of this surplus product was exchanged with town people as well as the settled agricultural people for a number of purposes: to receive necessary commodities of other kinds and to acquire weapons and ammunitions.

The rest of the surplus was usually expropriated by the ruling classes, like the khans and military leaders, courtiers, and the Shah. City dwellers were very much dependent on the hides and rugs or blankets, and the meat and milk or cheese produced by the pastoral nomads. This production for exchange, however, was partially guided by consumption and should not be regarded as production for exchange in a capitalist market.

Slave labor was also found in the nomadic life, but its economic importance was minor, and it did not constitute the major economic life of the nomads. As a matter of fact, slave labor existed along with the domestic relations of production and, sometimes, clientele relations, i.e., wage-labor in the form of services or in kind, and/or in money. Many of the pastoralists were engaged in caring for the flocks and animals of the wealthy. Some of these pastoralists received cash in return for their services and some acquired grazing rights in the areas owned by rural and urban landowners. An example of the latter case in the sixteenth century is the tribes of Kuh-Gilu who long had the responsibility of caring for the flocks of their Kurdish, Arab, and Lur affiliates (Munshi, 1971: 275; Tabrizi, 1928: 597-8). The Ghazan vazir, Rashid ud-Din, himself also possessed large herds and flocks of animals which were supervised by Turkoman and Arab tribes (Lambton, 1953: 79-80).

The Iranian nomads were usually mutually dependent on the settled peasants for the exchange of their products and satisfying the needs of each other. As Spooner (1971: 201) has indicated:

It is well to remember that historical and ethnographic

evidence together suggest that there has never been a totally pastoral society, but that non-pastoral products have always been an important part of the diet of pastoralists, and activities associated with acquiring them have figured largely in their annual cycle and division of labour.

While market exchange relationships with the non-nomadic population were common, the existence of the same type of relationship among nomads themselves was nonexistent. The nomads rarely bargained among themselves; however, their exchange within the tribal/pastoral unit usually took the form of dyadic relations of simple bartering. Many a time when the nomads could not obtain their necessary goods from the sedentary population, they sought them through trade in the adjacent towns or cities. Nomadic tribes have often been involved in mercantile activities. Since trade between cities crossed steppes, deserts, and mountains, the nomads not only were breeders of animals to sell to the caravan traders, but also became caravan traders themselves.

A contradictory tendency characterizing the social relations of production in Iranian pastoral nomadism has been the tension between communal relations and property relations. While within the tribal/pastoral unit the means of production (herds of animals) was owned by the tribal khans or chiefs, the pasture land and water were often communally held and were regarded as the property of the State or of the Shah. The egalitarian relations of production attributed to pastoral nomadic groups in the Middle East represent nothing more than a generalization of the social relations of direct producers. Despite the seemingly equal relations of production within the tribal/pastoral unit, i.e., among the herdsmen, the tribal

aristocracy was the expropriator of the surplus product, of which some went to the Shah or the State. The pasture land did not belong to the tribe. The tribal/nomadic population was given the right of usufruct through the grant of land or assignment of office to tribal chiefs by the Shah. Those external politico-economic relations, determined or affected by the state, and compounded with the internal dynamics of kinship system, generated a differentiated structure of social relationships which led to the establishment of unequal access to the politico-economic resources of tribal/pastoral society.

Later when the Asiatic mode of production gave way to a feudal mode in the late seventeenth century, the tension between communal and property relations took the form of the conflict between property relationships versus contract relationships. That is, while the means of production was owned or controlled by tribal/pastoral khans or the tribal aristocracy, there was a tendency to bring the herdsmen into a shepherding contract. These shepherding contracts were maintenance mechanisms through which the nomadic households were made dependent on the owner of animals and/or land (Bradburd, 1979: 78). Through this contract, the herdsmen and their families were engaged in part in the production of their own subsistence, and in part in the production of a surplus. The spread of these contracts, which really represented a form of wage-labor either in money form or in the form of sharing the produce of animals, marks the beginning of the process of commercialization of the nomadic life. It is from this time that one can observe a structural shift from a principally subsistence

economy to a more commercial pastoral economic structure.

The tribal/pastoral chiefs were powerful mediators between their tribe and the state. They articulated the political, economic, and ideological relations within the pastoral nomadic tribes and acted as representatives of the ruling powers in regulating the internal relations of the tribe. Their functions, according to Helfgott (1977: 49) can be classified as: a) acting as an arbitrator of a "system of legality that ensured the maintenance of order and reciprocity"; b) mediating among the disparate economic units; c) organizing tribal/nomadic military activities and ensuring political leadership.

The tribal/nomadic chiefs were often appointed by the Shah. In most of the feudal periods, like the Afshar, the Zand, and the Qajar, the office of chief tribesmen was hereditary (Watson, 1866: 6). The Shahs invariably attempted to play tribal leaders against one another in order to weaken their power vis-a-vis the power of the state or of the Shah himself. For instance, in order to reduce the political power of tribal leaders popular among their tribal/nomadic subjects, Shah Abbas, the Safavid ruler, replaced several of the Turkoman khans by granting the job to his ghulam administrators (Helfgott, 1977: 51). Also, when Naser ud-Din Shah, the Qajar ruler, found it difficult to subdue the Qashqa'i nomadic tribe, he gave more public attention to a counter confederation called Khamseh (Oberling, 1974: 65).

3.3.3. The Nomadization of The Iranian Asiatic Social Formation

Nomadic invasion of Iran by non-Iranian tribes was a recurring phenomenon from the early eleventh to the late sixteenth centuries. In the early eleventh century the Oguz invaders moved into Iran. Some Oguz tribal/pastoral federations, which entered Iran with the Saljuqs, migrated to the Anatolian peninsula, Armenia, and Mesopotamia, while others, like the Afshar tribe, remained on Iranian land and became an integral political force in Iranian history up to the present time (Barthold, 1962: 110). In 1185-87, about a hundred and fifty years after the initial Oguz invasions, another large group of Oguz people came to Iran and located in Kerman province (Muhammad Ibrahim, 1964).

One-half century later, the Mongols poured into Iran. The invasion of the Mongols caused another wholesale push of Turks into this land. During the Mongol period, the immigration of Inner Asian tribal nomads to Iran was encouraged, and the increased nomadic predation remained a constant problem for Iran during this whole period. This immigration had a very considerable impact on the demographic development as well as the ethnic composition of Iranian society. As Smith (1978: 67-8) has shown:

Two-tenth of the Inner Asian nomad population was detailed for the conquest and occupation of the Middle East: some 170,000 men, accompanied by perhaps (multiplying by 4) 680,000 women and children, and (multiplying by 10) perhaps the equivalent of 17 million sheep in their accompanying camps and herds. Of these, some one-fifth to one-fourth were stationed in Anatolia, and the rest were

based in Iran, although some of these would winter in the lowlands of Iraq, and, taken together with the depopulation caused by the invasion, increased the proportion of nomads in the population as a whole. Since most of the new nomads were Turks, while most of the sedentary population was Iranian, it altered the ethnic composition of Iran as well.

One century later, the followers of Timur-e Lang accompanied their leader in his way into Iran. Even as late as the sixteenth century, in the reign of Tahmasp I, the Yaka and Ukhlu nomadic tribes (the Yamut Turkomen) moved into the steppe bordering upon Astarabad. These tribal nomads became a buffer population between the Uzbeks and the Safavids (Rumlu, 1934: 138-9). This continuous immigration greatly enlarged the nomadic tribal population of Iran, thus affecting the social structure of the society and changing the ethnic composition of the Iranian population. As Helfgot (1977: 56) has pointed out, these migratory movements "strengthened geographic and ethnic localism and structural compartmentalization of Iranian society."

This ceaseless movement of nomadic/tribal groups into Iran from the first quarter of the eleventh century down to the middle of the sixteenth century kept the country in an unsettled condition. With the political stabilization of the Saljuqs in twelfth century, there developed a symbiotic relationship between pastoral and village communities (Tabrizi, 1928: 600ff), but the social structure of the society remained predominantly tribal/pastoral.

This increase in nomadic/tribal population and, subsequently, in predation of agricultural areas had a devastating effect on the development of both the rural and urban economies of pre-capitalist Iran. The predatory incursions of these nomadic tribes into the

economy of the cities and villages were probably the most devastating aspect of the Iranian Asian social formation.

One of the most harmful effects of the Turkoman and Mongol invasions was the weakening of agricultural production to the point that the agrarian surplus could no longer stimulate urban handicraft production and trade activities . A further effect was the hindering of the the development of an independent urban bourgeoisie within the Iranian Asiatic social formation. The existence of different nomadic people, associated with various ethnic groups, intervened in and impeded the development of the capitalist sector of the economy, the growth of which would have allowed for the further growth of a commercial class. The frequent conflict and competition between different tribal/nomadic groups over the control of trade routes, and over the spoils from raiding the travellers on those routes, impeded the development of commercial activities and discouraged traders in taking the risks of long distance trade. The spread of dealing in kind and the expansion of bartering also outnumbered the monetary dealings and led to the decline of mercantile economic activities. The urban areas became the seats of tribal/nomadic authorities and ceased to be trade centers to the extent that they were before. They basically functioned as an extension of the agrarian and flock raising countryside. The overall impact of this nomadization of the society was the retardation of primitive capital accumulation. During this period, pastoral nomadism rendered the economic development of the country impossible and "the pre-capitalist structure of Iran remained stagnant in comparison with its Western European counterpart"

(Helfgot, 1977: 56).

The development of stable agriculture was often hindered by the destructive nomadic raids. After the invasion of the Mongols in the thirteenth century, pastoral nomadism, already strengthened by the Saljuqs, became a very important aspect of the Asian social formation in Iran. For a long time, pastoral nomadism overcame the Asiatic mode and intensified its grip over the other forms of social relations. Of course, it remained an important aspect of Iranian society up to the beginning of the twentieth century, but it never played so predominant a role as it did from the thirteenth century to the early years of Shah Abbas I's rule in the sixteenth century.

The ascendancy of this mode after the Mongolian invasion brought the agricultural and industrial course of development to a halt and suspended the flourishing course of trade and commercial activities among the cities in the Asiatic structure of Iranian society. What makes this ascendancy of the pastoral nomadic mode during the Mongol rule important is the conflict between this mode and other forms of productive relations. The competition of peasants and the pastoral nomadic people to control the agricultural lands, the greater military capacity and strength of the nomads over the sedentary peasants, and the mobile character of nomadic production were important factors which not only determined "the size of the agrarian surplus necessary to sustain urban development" (Helfgot, 1977: 55), but also contributed to the underdevelopment of the Iranian society. The increasing influence and effect of nomadic social relations of production on the Iranian social formation after the eleventh century led to the retardation of agricultural

techniques, the conversion of irrigated and arable lands to pasturage, and the reinforcement of tribal land-holding over the peasant communities. Since the Mongols were used to nomadic life, they destroyed any town and village they found in their way. During the period of the conquest, the cities of Marv, Nishapur, Maragheh, Qazvin, Hamadan, Ardebil, Balkh, Qum, Esfahan, and Herat were all depopulated. The Mongols, who saw Iran as their personal yurt (camp, pasture site), replaced the urban life and the agricultural economy with a migratory cattle-raising economy. As Patai (1971: 75) put it:

Throughout all history, desert people waged wars against the settled sons of the town, and if they prevailed the settlers had to retreat and abandon the outskirts of the town, which were rapidly incorporated into the desert.

When Chingis Khan came to Iran, he ruined the cities, destroyed the dams and qanats (underground water canals), burned the forests, and massacred the population. He ordered his nomadic troops to destroy any city and village they would see in their way. This, of course, was very well done to the degree that even the last living being in Nishapur, a cat over the wall, was to be killed.

Petrushevski (1968: 486) quotes from Saifi's Tarikh Nama-yi Harat that:

... from the frontiers of Balkh as far as Damghan people ate only human flesh, dogs, and cats for whole year [1220-21 A.D.] because the warriors of Chingis-Khan had burnt down all the granaries.

Speaking of Timur's adventures in Sistan, Hodgson writes:

At one town there, he varied the idea of towers of several heads by having his towers formed of two thousand live men bound and built up with brick and mortar; presumably, for a time, such a tower would give off sound as well as light. The main city of Sistan was massacred (with no distinction of sex) and all the country systematically devastated, even the wealthier people, though spared, were led off into exile in Khrasan. (1974,II: 434)

Speaking of the effects of this invasion, Will Durant also notes that:

Never in history had a civilization suffered so suddenly so devastating a blow. The barbarian conquest of Rome had been spread over two centuries; between each blow and the next some recovery was possible; and the German conquerors respected, some tried to preserve, the dying Empire which they helped to destroy. But the Mongols came and went within forty years; they came not to conquer and stay, but to kill, pillage, and carry their spoils to Mongolia. When their bloody tide ebbed it left behind it a fatally disrupted economy, canals broken or choked, schools and libraries in ashes, governments too divided, poor, and weak to govern, and a population cut in half and shattered in soul. (Durant, 1950, IV: 340-1)

It is estimated that during this period the population of the country declined to as much as one-third of its pre-Mongol total (Petrushveski , 1968: 484-87). The later influx of the Jelalis (Celalis), the Shahsevan, and even the Yaka Turkomen in Khurasan caused an uprooting of the local Iranian population, including many Kurds, in locations like Khurasan, Astarabad, Azarbaijan, Shirvan, and Georgia.

3.3.4. The Tension between Nomadic Life and the Structure of Settled Communities:

Generally speaking, the history of the Iranian social formation is in some respect that of the lack of a stable relationship between

predator pastoral nomads and the settled agrarian population. As Garthwaite (1978: 82) has argued:

Tribal competition for land, as well as that with sedentary society, probably constituted the major factor for strife; in addition, migration with its potential for exacerbation of intergroup rivalries and the necessity for exchange with sedentary society, may have sharpened the potential for internal conflict.

This conflict between migratory nomads and the settled population has been an important aspect of Iranian history which has persisted, in a modified form, up to the twentieth century. This conflict was tense, especially during the periods in which the pastoral nomadic mode was strong. As Minorsky (1943: 187) has noted:

From the beginning of the tenth century A.D. the basic fact of the social and political organization of Persia has been the dual character of its population, namely, the opposition between the native Iranians (both the sedentary inhabitants of towns and villages and the semi-nomad mountaineers) —on one hand, and the Turk invaders and newcomers (either warriors or cattlebreeders) —on the other.

The nomads have always interrupted the stable life of the urban and rural societies. The precarious life in the steppe-lands led the Iranian nomads periodically to assault the settled life and rob the settlers of their food-supply. The pattern and frequency of these raids make them one of the basic coordinates of the Asian social formation in Iran. The effects of successive raids were cumulative, rather than temporary, and detrimental to the reconstruction of the agricultural economy. As opposed to the villagers, whose economic life was based on agricultural and artisan activities, the nomads subsisted on animal husbandary. The

migratory movement of the nomads seeking pasture lands often inflicted considerable damage to the crops of the sedentary population (Hodgson, 1974, II: 81-91). Usually armed, the nomads would frequently ransack unarmed villages (Petrushevsky, 1965, II: 129). Discussing the overpopulation of nomads resulting from the Mongol invasion and the subsequent in-flow of tribal forces, Smith (1978: 68) argues that the country could not accommodate them anymore. Thus:

Many nomads were faced with failure and sedentarization, and struggled to avoid it by engaging in outright robbery and in quasi-legal theft, demanding from peasants the dues customarily and appropriately provided by nomads: hospitality and help for travelers, supplies and support for envoys and courtiers, occasional taxes. Since the peasants were already paying 'regular' taxes at about the limit of their ability, these demands were disastrous.

The phenomenon of plunder usually became more frequent whenever the mortality rate among domesticated animals was high (Khusravi, 1979) or factors such as bad weather or high taxes brought nomads to desperation.

However, there is more than material and ecological conditions involved here. Nomads have usually viewed theft and looting as acts of bravery (Cf. Bayge, 1945: 40-3). The attitudes of the sedentary people of the desert toward the tribal nomads were affected by the latter's warlike quality. While the villagers have often had a feeling of awe for these warring nomads, the latter showed a feeling of contempt mixed with envy toward the settled population (Patai, 1971: 81).

When the central government was strong, the relationship

between nomads, villagers, and city merchants tended to be peaceful; whereas in times of political instability or state weakness, the nomads were put in an offensive position and tended more to engage in the ancient practice of "raiding." The nomads usually had a hegemonic position over the sedentary settlements, and could assault villagers with virtual impunity. In many cases, villagers often paid "protection money" to local nomads to safeguard themselves against their occasional attack (Rabino, 1928: 99). It was these nomadic assaults which forced the city and village dwellers to lock themselves within the high walls around their residence called qal'eh. This self-closing architectural form is chosen for security reasons because, as the historical accounts show, there are numerous instances in which villages suffered depredations at the hand of the nomadic population. European travellers have documented many of Turkoman assaults in Khurasan and other nomadic raids on the sedentary population around the country. In nomadic raids upon the cities, artisans and manufacturers have always been the target of nomadic kidnaping because they had knowledge of arms-making and could manufacture arms for them. It was for that purpose that the Mongols carried to captivity in Central Asia large numbers of skilled artisans (Helfgot, 1973: 16).

3.4. Slave Relations in Pre-Capitalist Iran

Along with their unilinear approach to the historical development of Iranian society, some of the Soviet historians, like Diakonov (1957), have characterized the Parthian period (250 B.C.-

227 A.D.) as one in which slavery was a dominant mode of production. According to these historians, this period corresponds to that of the European society when the slave mode of production was dominant. It is the contention of this author that this characterization of Iranian history is inaccurate and represents a pedantic schematism that does not bear historical scrutiny.

A close examination of historical documents reveals that in all Near Eastern societies, in both the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, agricultural production was usually carried out by the free tenant farmers or share-croppers. Also, the industrial works and crafts were carried out by the free artisans or skilled workers. As Wittfogel has pointed out:

There were many slaves in India, China, and the Islamic world, but in none of these large civilizations did slave labor dominate agriculture or handicraft. (1957: 323)

Historical accounts provide evidence that during the Achaemenids, many slaves owned real estate, possessed their own slaves and had their own seals (Frye, 1963: 146). The slaves could even buy their freedom (Mendelsohn, 1949: 99-106). It is for this reason that it is hard to distinguish clearly between a household slave, a freeman, and a slave bought in the market within the pre-Islamic Iranian Asiatic social formation. In the Achaemenid and Seleucid times, farming by slave labor was far more expensive than by free skilled labor. Therefore, slave-owning became an expensive enterprise; so much so that by Seleucid times the proportion of the slave labor to free labor significantly decreased. This was, of course, more true of domestic slavery than of state and temple

slavery. The temples always owned slaves who were dedicated to them either by the state or by private masters. The majority of the slaves owned by the temple or the state were the captives of war. Private slaves also had the obligation to work on state projects such as road and qanat constructions. Historical documents related to the sale of private slaves indicate that the sale contracts often stipulated whether the slave had served his public obligation or not (Mendelsohn, Ibid.: 99). Under the Achaemenids, forced labor was a norm and many of the public buildings and imperial palaces were constructed by forced labor without pay.

Under the rule of the Parthians, the economic basis of Mesopotamia and the western parts of Iran rested on the possession and exchange of slaves. These slaves, along with prisoners of war, were employed to construct roads, palaces, fortresses, and walls. One industry in which slave labor was extensively employed was mining. Slaves were also the main category of manpower used for public works undertaken by the central government.

All this demonstrates that the existence of social relations of slavery in the Asiatic social formation of Iran is an unquestionable fact. However, while slavery has long existed and persisted in Iran, it found no chance to become a dominant mode of production in this social formation. As a subordinate form of social relations, slave relations always existed along with other subordinate modes of production within the Iranian social formation; but it cannot be regarded as a dominant mode of production, as once was the case in Europe. Although slavery was one of the most important aspects of productive social relations during the Parthian period, it never

constituted the dominant mode of production. As Colledge (1967: 86) has noted, "there is little evidence of true slavery in Parthian (if we except the predominantly Greek border town of Dura), although it must have existed."

Slavery existed and continued to exist in this society, but it never achieved the significance it had on the Roman estates. The slaves in this society, variably called Anshahrik, Risk, or Bandak, worked on the king's or his satraps' lands and enjoyed a relative freedom. These slaves had a relative share of their products ranging from one tenth to one fourth. This right was even transferable to their children (Vardasbi, 1973: 39). Some of these slaves belonged to temples, some to the nobles, but the majority belonged to the patrimonial despot.

While in Europe slavery lost its momentum with the emergence of feudal mode of production, in Iran, as in the rest of Asia and Africa, the slave mode of production, even as a subordinate form of social relations, lost its significance when the Asiatic social formation of Iran dissolved. However, its traces persisted in the form of domestic slavery until the consolidation of dependent capitalism in the early twentieth century. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, slaves usually belonged to individual families or landed aristocracies. These slaves were domestic rather than productive slaves.

The existence and persistence of this institution of domestic slavery, as pointed out by Katousian (1981: 23), has led some social scientists to confuse the slave mode of production with the institution of domestic slavery. As historical accounts reveal,

with the exception of the Turks in Iranian armies of the early Islamic era, the slaves were basically domestic and "were limited almost exclusively to the towns; they were not used at all for working the land and even in cities provided only a part, alongside the free wage-earners, of artisan craftsmanship" (Cahen, 1975: 328). But it should be remembered that even the "military slaves" used in Turkish armies, brought from central Asia, did not resemble the "slaves" in the Roman society. These Turkish slaves were captured youths who were brought up and trained as military officers in the patrimonial household and most of them were later integrated into the patrimonial household.

The domestic nature of slavery in Iran and the special character this relationship took in this part of the world has led some apologetic observers to conclude that slavery in the East in general, and in Iran in particular, had been a humane enterprise! Speaking of slavery in Iran, one of these contemporary apologetic observers writes:

Slavery in the Orient never assumed the proportions nor the inhuman aspect it did in the West. When Snouk Hurgronje, the well-known Dutch Arabist, made his famous visit to Mecca, he was surprised to see the humane, almost egalitarian, treatment received by the slaves, male and female. The main reason is that they were never employed in hard work, not even in agriculture. In Iran, too, slaves were exclusively house slaves, and since the prices were high, only the wealthy could indulge in the luxury of owning slaves. In the patriarchal households they were treated like the other servants, and the Persians if he did not always pay his servants well, at least used to be a kind father to his retinue. Consequently it rarely happened that the owner would sell a slave, and liberation was not considered a boon by the slave himself. (Hass, 1946: 107-108)

Writing about the origin of these domestic slaves, Hass identifies them to be from Abyssinia and Black Africa.

It should be noted that in the Iranian cities there has always existed a large number of laborers, or "freemen," as they were called, who lacked any occupation and were "ready to come to blows for anything or nothing" (Cahen, 1975: 328) who should not be confused with slaves. While pre-Islamic Iran possessed large reserves of slaves, the Islamic tradition, when it became dominant in Iran, added to their number and "enabled them to undertake military or commercial operations on the frontiers of Muslim territory" (Ibid.). The Arab invasion of Iran relatively intensified the enslavement process because Islam did not abandon slavery, but simply gave it a human face. The conquered people of Iran were regarded as "slave" (mawali) and were used in the wars, while barefoot and hungry, without any share in the spoils (Ibn al-Athir, n.d., V: 121). The Arab historian Zaydan reports that during the Arab invasion of Iran, when Mu'awiah, the Umayyad Caliph, realized that the number of mawalis was high, he decided to kill some of them and sell the others in the slave market (Zaydan, IV: 72). The Arab expansionists revived and extended the existing slave relationships in the Iranian society. During the Abbasids, slaves were brought into Iran for sale from Central Asia, East Europe, and Africa. These slaves were used basically for domestic work or, in the case of females, as haram women (Spuler, 1970a: 14-17). Under the Samanids, while the crafts, trade, and bazaar received special protection, one of the most important sources of wealth was the slave trade (Rizvi, 1980: 61). The Mongols, whose nomadic structure

was based on raids and on capturing the settled people, also contributed to this tradition in Iran. They used slaves as laborers for making the weapons and other instruments of war and clothes for the troops (Petrushevsky, et.al., 1967, II: 379 & 397). Most of the slaves captured in battles and wars were either incorporated into the military units or used as manpower for public or private works. For example, on a raid into Georgia during the Safavid period, Shahverdi Khan Ziyad-oglu Qajar captured thousands of slaves whom he brought into his service either as household servants or as guards (Munshi, 1971: 70-3).

Despite all these examples of slave relations, as mentioned earlier, at no time in the history of Iran did these relations constitute a dominant mode of social relations. Interestingly, while the examples of slave relations abounded in pre-Islamic Iran, with the development of the iqta system of land assignment, even the small number of slaves previously employed in agricultural and industrial activities decreased.

3.5. The Capitalist Sector Within The Iranian Asiatic Social Formation

Another type of social relationship existing in the Asian social formation in Iran was the mercantile trade relationships based on merchant capital. Trade was one of the most salient aspects of economic life in pre-Islamic Iranian empires. Iranian merchants travelled far to China and India. The Iranian Shahs encouraged their subjects to engage in trade and money-lending.

share of the tribute they could levy on the traders. The existence of long distance trade has always been an important source of revenue for the pre-capitalist Iranian states. The Asiatic states benefited considerably from it, indirectly by means of taxation on the proceeds of transactions and directly through the profits extracted from caravans organized by them or through the activities of their commercial agents.

It should be noted that this kind of relationship constituted a capitalistic sector, not a capitalist mode of production --a sector which existed as an appendage to the Asian social formation. What here is called "capitalist sector" does not operate fully in a capitalist way. Here certain elements of capitalist production and circulation of values are present, but they are not sufficient to constitute a capitalist mode of production yet. As Rodinson argued:

The term 'sector' indicates a certain more or less coherent area of the economy where an activity of broadly the same type prevails, carried on by people subject to similar motives. (1973: 54)

What are these "same type of activities" and "similar motives" ? These activities consist of all forms of economic interaction directed toward exchange in the market. This exchange was facilitated by the existence of "money capital" and was conducted for the purpose of making "profit." However, we should remember that this capital works primarily outside of production. Surplus value is essentially extracted through the sphere of distribution. Capital is money-capital and basically operates in the realm of circulation assuring the flow of money in the economy. In addition

to facilitating the exchange of commodities and bringing in luxury products from afar, this money-capital assures adequate credit to the ruling members of the society whose wealth is basically in the form of land ownership.

While this sector was one of the most extensive aspects of the socio-economic structure of pre-capitalist Iran, it remains subordinate to the dominant Asiatic mode until the emergence of Western European capitalism and its penetration into the Iranian economy in the sixteenth century. With the arrival of European capitalism and the integration of Iran into the world capitalist system, this sector flourishes and comes into conflict and competition with the dominant feudal mode. It is during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century that capitalist productive relations move toward ascendancy --however, still subordinate to the larger economic unit of the world capitalist system.

Being an open country located at the crossroads of the main commercial routes of both ancient and modern times, Iran has always been involved in international trade. Since the country was located on important trade routes, such as the well-known Silk Road, it could not be indifferent to this type of economic activity. The most important commercial roads known in pre-Islamic period were "the Royal Road of 1,677 miles between Ephesus and Susa, and the even longer road from Babylon to Hamadan, subsequently extended as far as Kabul in order to reach the Indian satrapy" (Simkin, 1968: 6).

During the pre-Islamic period, Iran was engaged in manifold

exchanges of agricultural and industrial products with the Byzantine empire (Ashtor, 1976: 78). I-Tsing, a Chinese author, mentions Iranian ships sailing to Canton in 671 A.D. (Ibid.: 107). Writing about Iranian commerce, Simkin observes:

Strong, efficient government, good transport, agricultural and industrial production, monetarization, banking, and standard measures all helped trade to surpass any previous level in the Ancient World. Internal trade grew in every province of a prosperous empire. International trade reached out to countries which had never been in commercial contact, such as Greece and Babylon, and extended, far beyond the Empire's limits, to the peoples of the Rhine, Danube, South India, and Ceylon (1968: 7-8).

Hirth has reported that Iranian eyebrow-dye was an important item to China for the Empress (Cf. Haurt, 1927: 165). During the Sassanids, there were many industrial factories in the cities of Tavvaz, Shatta, Rey, and Marv which were producing goods for export. During the early Islamic period, Iran expanded her commercial relationships into neighbouring Arab territories such as Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. The Abbasid period experienced a high level of commercial and urban development. Commodity relations and craft production, either by private petty-producers or state enterprises, permeated and influenced many spheres of economic sector. Internationally, Iran was an important link in the chain of commerce connecting the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean (Ashtor, 1976: 80-4). During the Saljuqs, trade was expanded, especially with Europe. The major trend of socio-economic development in the country was exactly contrary to that characterizing the history of Europe in the same period. Even during the reign of Mongols, during which the country's trade and urban development suffered hard blows from the

nomadization process initiated by the Mongol rulers, Iranian merchants retained their international ties and traded with merchants in Venice and the Far East (Spuler, 1971: 42). After the establishment of the Mongol rule, Tabriz, by then the capital of the Ilkhans, became one of great emporiums of international trade. Foreign merchants came there to buy Indian spices as well as Iranian manufacturing products (Ashtor, 1976: 264). The Ilkhans were receptive to the European interest in doing business in Iran. The emerging demand for silk in the European textile industry in the late thirteenth century provided an outlet for Iranian silk (Braudel, 1972,II: 320). During the fourteenth century, European traders, especially the Italian merchants, were freely travelling in Iran and had vast trade activities in the towns of Azarbaijan, especially Tabriz, and other Iranian trade centers. In Zarand of Kerman, a kind of cloth was woven, known as layered Zarandi, and sent as far as to Egypt and Magreb (Ibn Hauqal, 1966: 272). In Basna, a kind of fabric was made on which the name of Basna was engraved (Istakhri, n.d.: 65). According to Spuler, the Northern and Eastern cities of Iran, especially Rey, Qazvin, and Qum exported their textile commodities, which often bore the name of the manufacturing town, as far away as Europe. These export commodities included not only industrial goods such as carpets, leather articles, silk or cotton cloths, but also agricultural crops like dried fruits, dates, sugar-cane, and spices. During the Safavid period, commercial relations with Europe constituted an important aspect of economic life of the country. In this period, Iran regained its previous status and again became a land which, through

the Persian Gulf, linked Asia to Europe. Since it was an important intersection of trade routes which connected the Far East to the Mediterranean and Europe, Iran could extend her trade to China, India, and European countries. Different European envoys, especially those of Queen Elizabeth, attempted to foster instrumental and advantageous relations with Iran. In this period, the Persian Gulf became an important trading center because, for the European East India Companies, it was a gate to the Iranian market. The demand for Iranian silk was high and the profit on the sale of East India goods in Iran was great.

Some of the Iranian towns were even specialized in commodity production. For instance, Mazandaran was one of the areas in which, due to the availability of timber, the furniture industry was prevalent (Spuler as quoted in Rodinson, 1973: 33-4). Soaps were manufactured in Balkh and Arrajan, perfumes were made in Fars and Azarbaijan, and dyer's materials were produced in Hamadan, Qum, and Tabarestan (Spuler, 1970: 18). During the Abbasids, many towns were specialized in the production of luxury goods for export: Khurasan, Bukhara, Samarqand, Marv, and Nishapur in cotton textiles; the Caspian provinces in silk and wool textiles; those of Khuzestan and Fars in luxury silk and cotton fabric (Ashtor, 1976: 78).

Such a vast network of commercial interactions could not have been possible without the existence of a financial credit system. The practice of trade in credit in Iran dates back to the early centuries of Achaemenid era. The existence of these commercial activities was accompanied by extended financial dealings which illustrate the existence of financial capital as early as the pre-

Islamic era within the Iranian Asiatic social formation. According to Ghirshman (1978: 341), the bill of exchange, which was known from the second millennium B.C., was widely used during the Sassanid period and "... Jewish banking circles in Babylonia and analogous Persian institutions played a leading part in its circulation." At this time, the "cheque," a term derived from the Pahlavi language, was invented by the Iranians and became a legally recognized title-deed. Money in the form of coinage had a widespread use in both the pre-Islamic and Islamic period. Since there were many bandits (rahzan) on the roads, businessmen settled their deals by means of cheques. The money was deposited with a money-changer (sarraf) in one city and was cashed in sarrafi in another city. According to Naser Khusrow (1956), in 444 A.H. (1052 A.D.) there were 200 sarrafs (brokers) in one of the bazaars of the city of Esfahan.

The complexity of the economy required a fair amount of banking activity in one form or another. There were two kinds of deposit banking: one for safekeeping and another for investment. While the latter was always deposited with merchants and money-lenders, the former was usually, especially during the Islamic period, entrusted to the religious leaders or to other trustworthy members of the community. During the Abbasid period, bankers issued letters of credit and drafts which were exchanged in almost all parts of the world at that time (Rizvi, 1980: 55-6). As Ashtor (1976: 80-4 & 114) has indicated, the high level of trading activities in Abbasid period was encouraged by the patrimonial state through the stabilization of the currency, increasing liquidity in the economy, and the expansion of money relations and credit arrangements such as

letters of credit (safteh), check (sakk), and bonds (khatt). In the twelfth century, during the Saljuqs, due to the assignment of the land-tax to the military leaders and because of government's monopolization of some industries, industrial activities were curtailed and banking declined to a great extent. Another factor contributing to this decline of banking was the shortage of silver money throughout the century (Ashtor, 1976: 216).

Around the seventh century the Jews living in Iran were involved in many commercial activities and financial dealings such as banking. They had "widespread contacts and the machinery for paying by cheques and bargaining on credit." Many a time, they furnished credits and loans to the merchant aristocracy within the Caliphate (Spuler, 1970: 13). Most of the commercial activities in the eastern part of the country, and as far as China, were carried on by Iranian Moslems. In this eastern part of the country, the well-known "silk road" merged with the ancient "royal road" of the Achaemenids. These roads linked in Hamadan and passed through the cities of Rey, Damghan, Nishapur, Marv, and Amul. On the Persian Gulf, Iranian commercial activities were intensive and widespread. Siraf, to the south of Shiraz, became the main port through which the goods were imported and exported (Ibid.). Within Iran, money transactions were common and the silver dirhem was used as a unit of exchange.

In most of pre-Islamic Iran, Iranian merchants were engaged in commercial activities of all sorts. When the Arabs invaded Iran, these commercial activities expanded and the merchants seized upon the new opportunities which were brought about by the Arab conquest.

Not only did Islam not discourage the profit-making activities of merchants, but it encouraged them (Rodinson, 1973). The Prophet Mohammad is quoted as saying that: "merchants are the messengers of this world and God's faithful trustees on Earth." (Quoted in Lewis, 1964: 91) Despite the prohibiting attitude of Islam towards usury, the practice of reba (usury), as Rodinson (Ibid.) has documented, was very widespread among the Moslem merchants. In Iran, the non-Moslem population, especially the Jews, along with some of the Moslem merchants of the bazaar, were always involved in money-lending transactions. In the seventeenth century, Chardin (1811, VI: 121) observed that in Iran usury was widely practiced especially "by Indians, among the Gentiles, and the Jews, who [were] bankers; but the Mohammadans [sic] also engage[d] in it so far as their means allow them." The existence of these practices is a good indication of the degree to which the capitalist sector of the Iranian Asian social formation was developed and expanded.

The existence of national and international economic transactions and extensive imports and exports also indicates that Iranian craftsmen produced commodities not to be consumed only by themselves, but also to be sold in markets. The attitudes of Iranian merchants towards commodity production and production for market are demonstrated in exchange activities which were taking place in all carvanserais in the roads and gates of the country. Although these attitudes and practices did not represent the dominant form of production within the Iranian Asiatic social formation, their presence affected the articulation of social relations of production within this formation. Production was

carried out not only by the independent producers in their small shops or farms, but also by numbers of workers employed in different industrial workshops and agricultural lands around the country. Examples of wage-laborers working in private industrial activities in pre-capitalist Iran abound. The founder of the Saffarid dynasty (861-900 A.D.) was himself a coppersmith's apprentice (saffar) who even transmitted his name to his dynasty (Rodinson, Ibid.: 52). During the Islamic era when the citizens were regarded as free Moslems, many of the merchants and craftsmen employed wage-laborers to work with them. These merchants owned the means of their own production and paid a price for the workers' labor-power.

However, despite the considerable use of wage-labor, wage-laborers usually did not have a recognized position in society. The recognition of wage-laborers as an independent force within the Iranian Asiatic social structure became feasible when Iranian craft guilds were formed and organized after the thirteenth century. One of the peculiar features of the economic structure of pre-capitalist Iran has been the guild system. Craft guilds were especially important in the bazaar and should be distinguished from merchant guilds which, as Lambton (1970: 80) has mentioned, were "... a late growth in Persia and not widely founded until the late nineteenth century." These guilds secured the special interests of their members and the profession around which they were organized. Within an Asiatic social formation, these guilds always suppressed any competition which could lead to the expansion of the capitalist sector or the innovations which might have jeopardized the economic interests of these craftsmen. Some professional guilds monopolized

the sale of certain commodities and blocked the creation of new commodities. One example of the rivalry between the craft guilds can be found in Ibn Battuta's accounts in the fourteenth century. Speaking of this rivalry in Esfahan, he wrote:

The members of each trade form corporations, as also do the leading men who are engaged in trade, and the young unmarried men; these corporations then engage in mutual rivalry, inviting one another to banquets, in the preparations for which they display all their resources. (1929: 91)

The Iranian merchants (bazarganan) were a socially honored class consisting of the wholesalers, brokers, international traders, and dealers in luxury goods. Many merchants held their fortunes in properties such as land from which considerable social power accrued to them. As Cahen (1975: 326) has argued:

To a considerable extent the merchants drew the capital with which they conducted their business not only from the profits of previous transactions, but from the revenues derived from land acquired out of those profits or from the estates of prominent persons who were anxious to obtain interest, by means of various contracts of association and commendam, on the income from their property, or again from state revenues which they administered, either when trading for the treasury or as marginal profit on tax-collection.

However, the merchants drew their preeminence, not so much from their occasional landownership, but from their vital role in integrating the economic life of the villages, towns, and cities. The merchants were mediators between the rural, tribal, and urban economy, between the national and international markets, and more importantly, between all these units and the household economy of

the patrimonial state. They acted as brokers for the sale of the produce of the crown lands, in exchange for goods between towns, provinces, and foreign markets.

In many ways, merchants were dependent on the protection or assistance of the patrimonial state. International trade was obviously contingent on healthy political relations of the government with the trading country which were often guaranteed by formal treaties. The state also signed treaties which guaranteed the personal and commercial safety of, and consular protection to, foreign merchants. Many times the states took the responsibility of protecting their merchants against infidel foreign privateers. Special envoys were appointed to supervise the network of caravanseries, to protect the roads across the desert, and to police the trade, postal, and pilgrimage routes.

The relationship between the patrimonial state and the merchants was usually precarious. Patrimonial authority did not leave the merchants secure in obtaining their income and accumulating their wealth (Katousian, 1981: 20). They were often subject to the arbitrary confiscation of their wealth by the Shah, his local magnates, or the bandits in the long and deserted roads. Fearful of this appropriation, the Iranian merchants were more willing to spend their wealth rather than to accumulate it. The prevailing mode of arbitrariness at all levels of social power left these merchants with no rational alternative. (7)

From time to time, the state imposed serious fines upon merchants and even viziers. Many times this took the form of the expropriation of property and wealth (musadarat). In the medieval

period, the sum confiscated in this way sometimes amounted to more than 100,000 dinars. For instance, Ibn Farat, an Abbasid vizier, complains that the Caliph has confiscated 10,000,000 dinars of his wealth. To compensate for this loss, this vizier appropriated the same amount of money from a jeweller named Ibn Abdullah (Zaydan, n.d.: 371). Muqtader, an Abbasid ruler, also expropriated 16,000,000 dinars from the wealth of a merchant named Ibn Hesas (Hitti, 1951). Muqaddasi, the geographer of the medieval period, writes about the hardships the Iranian merchants went through when they moved around on the roads. He complains about high taxes and the way the merchants were being searched at different spots. In specific, he cites the repeated exactions in Basra by the Qarmatians and again by the Daylamites in another place (Muqaddasi, 1906: 105).

Some of the factors contributing to the lack of a strong bourgeoisie in Iran included the arbitrary nature of political power and, consequently of justice, the insecurity of the life and property due to political instability as well as to the despotic nature of patrimonial rule, and the lack of an effective power on the part of merchants and craftsmen vis-a-vis the military and bureaucratic elite (Issawi, 1977: 164). As Cahen (1975: 326) put it:

Whatever may have been the social standing of businessmen, they were not the masters --it was the military who were to achieve that eminence.

Within the Iranian Asiatic social formation, the centralization of power was accompanied by centralization of economic surplus in the hands of the ruling class. This ruling class consisted of

patrimonial authority and its military and bureaucratic associates. The cities were the center of the production of luxury goods for these ruling elements. These conditions militated against capitalist industrial development and competitive capitalist activities. For the rulers wealth was the basis of power and mere possession of it would satisfy their needs and greeds. They felt no need for increasing productivity beyond the level of consumption, and did not realize the necessity of innovations in productive forces.

A great deal of evidence indicates that state intervention into business activities, the restrictions it imposed over foreign trade, and the heavy taxation it exercised, all had an impeding effect on the growth of merchant capital in pre-capitalist Iran. In addition to the land taxes, the trade of merchants was always an important source for financing the operations of the state. The state extracted a considerable portion of its revenues from the control of trade by the sale of concessions to merchants and by collecting custom duties as well. Frequently, the merchants provided the state with loans and came to its help in the time of crisis. It is reported that a wealthy Jewish merchant, called Ibn Allan, gave Nizam ul-Mulk a loan of 100,000 dinars (Ashtor, 1976: 215). This, of course, is also an indication of the amount of capital owned by some of these merchants --an amount which was disproportionately high.

The pre-capitalist patrimonial states of Iran were not simply tax-collectors and property expropriators. They also attempted to control the economy by investing in commerce and employing merchants

in government-sponsored enterprises. They employed merchants or created many partnerships with them to trade on their behalf. Shah Abbas I demonstrated a great deal of interest in the economic aspect of the patrimonial bureaucracy and personally engaged in foreign relations with the Ottoman Empire and European commercial forces. However, it should be mentioned that this involvement in commercial activities was not motivated by any desire to acquire profit for the sake of accumulation. They participated in commercial activities and intervened in the economic sphere because they wanted to expand their consumption and have a tight control over the economic activities and the merchants. Many medieval historians report that the Arab rulers who governed Iran owned many textile workshops in which many craftsmen worked for the government in lieu of wage salary. These workshops were called bait al-taraz (in Farsi, tarazkadeh) and their appointed supervisors were known as sahab al-taraz (in Farsi, salartaraz) (Istakhri, n.d.: 64 & 192; Ibn Hauqal, 1966: 231, 261, & 137-71). Under the Saljuqs, there existed a small class of wealthy merchants and bankers who worked in coordination with the viziers and, as their agents, they rendered these courtiers various services (Ashtor, 1976: 215). For example, while Abu Sad Ibn Simha was a financial advisor and banker for Nizam ul-Mulk, 'ar-Rais' Abu Ibn al-Asbaghi fulfilled a similar task for Nizam ul-Mulk's rival, Tadj ul-Mulk (Ibid.). It is also learned that Khajeh Rashid ud-Din Fazlullah, the Mongol vizier who owned numerous villages, gardens, qanats, and flocks of sheep, horse, and camels all over the country (Cf. Lambton, 1953:79-82 & 92-6), possessed 35 million dinars money capital that he had invested in different

commercial enterprises around the country (Vardasbi, 1975: 69).

As mentioned before, the state itself was also an important agent of commercial and industrial activities. During the Sassanids, the state was in fact an important producer with many workshops around the country. The government had monopoly control of many goods, especially raw silk imported from China. The state went so far as establishing a rival industry in cities of Susa, Jundishapur, and Shushtar (Ghirshman, 1978: 342). During the Abbasids, the number of cities grew and the creation of new occupations and industrial enterprises in these cities became a preoccupation of the government. As a result of this process, the number of non-agricultural workers involved in the state enterprises increased (Ashtor, 1976: 150-3). It is even reported that the government set up some workshops in the prisons. The prisoners of Bukhara were engaged in the making of saddles for horses which were exported to foreign countries (Muqqadasi, 1906: 224). The Abbasid state also encouraged raising loans from merchants on interest. Generally speaking, the tenth century is known to be a period in which the industrial activities, especially that of mining, flourished. The state owned all the mines and contracted them out to licenced private individuals to exploit them. These contractors had to pay a percentage of up to one third of the proceeds to the treasury (Bausani, 1971: 87). During the Saljuqs, the production of silkatun, a precious kind of silk, was a monopoly of the state (Ashtor, 1976: 215-6). Under the Mongols, the industrial crafts made in the karkhaneh (a currently used term for factory or workshop) were under the control of the head of the civil service,

the sahib-divan (vizier of the great divan).

In conclusion, we can argue that the merchant capital had an important position within the Iranian Asiatic social formation. The relationships organized around, and based on, this merchant capital were extensive and constituted what we have termed the "capitalist sector." However, despite this extended capitalist sector, the political factors dominating the social relations of production did not allow for the development of an autonomous merchant class. The economic involvement and political intervention of the patrimonial state into economic affairs, as will be discussed later in this work, hindered the development of independent economic classes. Patrimonial bureaucratic control of the economic activities paralyzed the independent economic activities of the merchants and prevented them from developing into an autonomous social class.

3.6. Endnotes

(1) The reason culture and ideology are hyphenated here is to specify the autonomous nature of culture. Many Marxian theorists subsume culture under the broad concept of ideology. In our view, while the concept of ideology embraces social values and norms, it does not contain any reference to the cultural practices which are not necessarily ideological.

(2) Perry Anderson (1974) has argued that one must avoid inflating residual concepts such as the concept of "Asian" by applying it to morphologically heterogeneous societies. The term "Asian" is, of course, a geographically limited term, but the use of geographical terms as universal designations is not uncommon in social sciences. The term can be used as an umbrella covering specific forms of social organization of property relationships. It is simply a type-label which, as a mode of production, generically designates a state-organized class society (Draper, 1977, I: 537-42). Cross-cultural application of concepts, I believe, does not contradict the principles of historical specificity, as long as these concepts remain accurate designations for the realities they represent.

(3) Turner has also taken a similar theoretical approach to pre-capitalist structure of Iranian society by seeing it as a structure "... constituted by over-lapping modes of production." Using this approach, however, he has reached a somewhat different conclusion: "... Iranian history is the effect of the oscillation between prebendalism and feudalism in which the feudal mode of production is dominant." (1980: 75) More specifically, he argues that Iranian pre-capitalist formation demonstrates an oscillation between centralization and decentralization, prebendalism and feudalism, and a pastoral nomadic mode of production and a feudal mode (Ibid.: 75-80).

(4) Pastoralism and tribalism are usually used interchangeably. However, it should be remembered that not all tribal people are necessarily nomads. In case of Iranian social formation, many tribal people, especially Kurds, Lurs, and Baluchis have produced their subsistence through agricultural production and lived in village communities.

(5) Generally speaking, uymag means tribe or tribal kinship association. However, during the Safavids, this term had broader meaning and also referred to a tribal kinship unit with economic and administrative functions. This unit had control over craft, pastoral, and agricultural activities.

(6) See Ettela'at, No. 801, 17th Aban, 1320.

(7) Katouzian (1981) even suggests that this arbitrary power exercise, and not the teachings of Islam, is the reason for traditional merchant charity in Iran --a phenomenon unknown in Europe in spite of its Christian teachings.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL NATURE OF THE IRANIAN ASIATIC SOCIAL FORMATION

The political structure of Iranian society throughout history has been nothing more than the cyclical change of dynasties. Over the past twenty-five hundred years, Iran has experienced thirty dynasties. Up until the overthrow of the monarchy by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1978, two hundred and sixty monarchs have mounted the Iranian throne in succession.

As mentioned in Chapter I, the political structure of these monarchies can perhaps be best understood in terms of the patrimonial model of rulership. The Iranian monarchs have always "tended to rule in a paternal, patriarchal, and patrimonial manner." (Bill and Leiden, 1979: 152) Patrimonial monarchy has persisted in Iran, in various forms, from the middle of the first millenium B.C. until 1978, during which it was changed to a patrimonial feqahati rule (a rule by religious leaders). While this system of government underwent many changes and adaptations to changing circumstances, in essence it has always remained a patrimonial rule.

This study intends to use Max Weber's model of "patrimonial authority" as a heuristic device for the study of the political

structure of the Iranian Asiatic social formation. It should be noted that the concepts of "patrimonial state" and "patrimonial authority" are used as concepts which do not necessarily reflect the detailed working of the actual state under investigation. These concepts are analytical devices which bring different elements of social structure into a coherent theoretical system. Weber (1978,I:229-57, 263-4; & II: 966-72, 1006-69,1086-92) himself pointed out that although the patrimonial state represented a pure type which did not exactly match with any specific historical case, there were a number of states which approximated its structural form more closely than the others. Using Weber's heuristic constructs enables us to highlight the sociological similarities and historical continuities as well as the differences and discontinuities between earlier and later historical developments of Iranian society. In order to apply this model to the Iranian case, a review of theoretical literature is initially in order.

4.1. Max Weber's Model of Patrimonial Authority

Max Weber developed his ideal type of "patrimonialism in terms of three types of authority: charismatic, traditional, and legal-rational authority (1978: 212-301). He specified traditional authority in three pure ideal-type categories: a) gerontocracy and primary patrimonialism in which the patrimonial ruler does not have any "personal administrative staff" (Weber, 1978: 231); b) patrimonialism and, in extreme cases, "sultanism" in which the patrimonial ruler establishes military and political administrations

as "purely personal instruments" for his despotic power (Ibid.: 231); and c) estate-type domination in which the patrimonial power is appropriated through various forms of feudal relationships (Ibid.: 255-66).

Weber discusses different possible centrifugal and centripital forces existing between the patrimonial ruler and his administrative staff which change the relationships between the two into different form of feudal or patrimonial control. For Weber, the distinction between patrimonialism and feudalism is very important in understanding the nature of political institutions in pre-capitalist societies. However, this study will omit the theoretical discussion of the various possibilities of the emergence and growth of patrimonial or feudal structures and proceed with the characterization of patrimonial authority.

Patrimonialism is a unilateral domination of the patriarch, as opposed to feudal rule which entails the use of vassals and favorites whose loyalty is founded on an offer of personal, conditional, and revocable fealty. Patrimonial rulers treat the others, whom they regard as subjects, as an extension of their own will and power. Patrimonial rule is an arbitrary rule. The individual and social rights of citizens or subjects are based upon the patrimonial ruler's discretion and on tradition. Political rights are defined traditionally and not on any legal-rational basis. Whatever rights exist in society are based on traditions including the authority of patrimonial rulers.

The despotic institution of patrimonialism bears not merely a temporal but also an essentially religious character. In principle,

the ruler sees himself as the source of all rights. He exploits these rights "like any economic asset --sells it, pledges it as security, or divides it by inheritance." (Weber, 1978: 232)

Power and authority are vested in the hands of one major figure as a ruler or a small oligarchal elite with one person as the head. There may exist several assistants or aides such as viziers, ministers, and so on, but the final authority in any decision-making process is the ruler himself. Patrimonial elites are integrated in a network around a patrimonial leader, linked to him either by their belief in his personal qualities or by the material rewards derived from their association with him. The rewards result from the patrimonial leader's selection of his personal followers for patronage positions. As Weber has pointed out:

The object of obedience is the personal authority of the individual which he enjoys by virtue of his traditional status. The organized group exercising authority is, in the simplest case, primarily based on relations of personal loyalty, cultivated through a common process of education. The person exercising authority is not a 'superior,' but a personal 'chief.' His administrative staff does not consist primarily of officials, but of personal retainers. Those subject to authority are not 'members' of an association but are either his traditional 'comrads' or his 'subjects.' What determines the relations of the administrative staff to the chief is not the impersonal obligations of office, but personal loyalty to the chief (1957: 341).

Because the masses are denied political participation and kept in check by the regime's military forces, politics often takes the form of a struggle among different rival factions and cliques of the elite itself. The factions may compete with each other in the attempt to gain influence with the patrimonial leader who determines

the distribution of the rewards of office. The power of nobles or the elite rests upon their personal relationships to the leader. The society is essentially regarded as "an enlarged household, and the personal ties that dominate in the household are the model for the ties in any other patrimonial unit." (Bill and Leiden, 1979: 161)

There is no independent corporate body distinct from the patrimonial household capable of challenging the patrimonial authority effectively, "without creating a major disruption of the organizational structure of the national state." (Bakker, 1979: 28) Since the patrimonial ruler theoretically owns all the land in his country, no economic activity or possession can be seen independent of his will. He can confiscate the right of usufruct from individuals regardless of their social or economic status. This leads to the lack of development of a coherent class structure in the society. As Weber (1978: 231) argued, in patrimonial societies the military, political, and civil administrations are "purely personal instruments" of the patrimonial ruler. Military aristocracy and landed classes are usually dependent on patrimonial households.

The patrimonial ruler controls all land and labor in his country. All the subjects must render mandatory services to the ruler or his appointed officials, and must offer a portion of their annual produce to the ruler as tribute. The patrimonial ruler has the power to use or exploit any human and natural resources. he can render these resources to others to exploit or use. He can also exclude some from using or controlling any of these resources. For

example, agricultural producers living on the land are liable to the patrimonial ruler for tribute and tax.

More concretely, Wertheim (1968: 424-5) limned a more specific and summary characterization of patrimonial rule. These features include: (a) assigning important positions to relatives; (b) assigning high offices to court staff; (c) attaching religious elite to the court; (d) dispatching confidential agents to different political and economic centers; (e) taking periodic royal tours: The king travels widely and frequently, renewing in countless face-to-face interactions the personal bond between himself and his subjects; (f) excluding officials from seigneurial land-holding in regions where there already exist some officials or not assigning officials to the regions where they may have landed property or kinship ties; (g) shortening the terms of officials in regional positions and rotating them periodically from post to post; (h) supervising officials through espionage and censorship. The king maintains a network of newswriters or intelligence gatherers outside the regular administrative structure who report directly to him; (i) attaching sons of officials to the court as pages; (j) demanding "personal guarantees" such as hostages or regular attendance of the delegate at court. On the departure of some of high officials, the king often requires that a son or relative be left behind as a hostage. The king usually demands of all soldiers and officials regular appearance at court from time to time.

4.2. Patrimonial Despotism: A Synthesis

To achieve a coherent conceptualization of the Iranian pre-capitalist socio-politico-economic structures, this study attempts to relate Marx's important contributions in this area to those of Weber's. This study views the works of Max Weber on Islamic societies as complementary to Karl Marx's earlier works on Asiatic societies. While Marx and Weber have differing epistemologies, their historical accounts of Asian societies show a great deal of similarities. Weber's studies of the Asian societies do not repudiate Marx's conclusions, but rather they supplement them sociologically (Cf. Zeitlin, 1968: 111-19). When this essential continuity is understood, then, we will be able to see the significance of the dialectical interaction between the economic base and the political structure of the society.

What Marx described as the peculiarity of the Asian society -- the monopolization of the control of the social surplus by the state due to the provision by the state of the direct conditions of production -- was also the focus of Weber's attention. Weber's discussion of the political bureaucracies in the Islamic societies extends Marxist entrepreneurial explanations of the genesis of the Oriental state by adding to it "a concept of the autonomous development of political institutions." (Sawer, 1977: 54) According to Weber, when, in the absence of a contending force, a bureaucratic structure, e.g., state, is formed to deal with some vital public affairs such as "river regulations" and "irrigation," it would

continue to expand its domain of influence. This occurs with or without a more general economic rationale (Weber, 1978,II: 1260-62). This explicit argument by Weber is very similar to Marx's implicit attempt to explain the correlation between the Asian village community, as an inhibiting force in the development of a large-scale social organization and communicative networks, and Oriental Despotism.

Marx perceived Oriental rulers as arbitrary forces who constantly intervened into the economic affairs of their society. Like Marx, Weber saw the need for large-scale irrigation as a factor in the emergence of patrimonial bureaucracies of the Orient (Ibid.). This similarity between "Patrimonialism" and "Oriental Despotism" does not mean that the two concepts are completely synonymous, as Stokes (1978: 20-1) tends to view them so. The two concepts are interrelated in that the political and economic factors become intertwined. While Marx emphasizes the despotic nature of "Oriental Despotism" of Asiatic societies, Weber stresses the arbitrary nature of "Patrimonial Authority." While Marx discusses the lack of a clear distinction between the political and economic in the Asiatic mode of production, Weber argues for the lack of a hereditary nobility in those societies. These similarities and the close relationship between the concepts of patrimonialism and the Oriental Despotism provide a common ground for developing a synthesis of the two models.

To synthesize Marx's and Weber's views on Asiatic societies, it is possible to characterize the political structure of the Iranian Asiatic social formation as "Patrimonial Despotism," and thus the

Iranian Shahs as "patrimonial despots." Such a characterization specifies the very sociological nature of Oriental Despotism, described by Marx, and demonstrates the socio-political character of the very relationship upon which this structure is founded. This sociological specification of the nature of Iranian political structure allows us to develop a more systematic understanding of the political structure of Asiatic societies with despotic rule based on patrimonial relations of production. Such a relationship, discussed below, is heavily dependent on state intervention into the economic development of society and requires an understanding of the articulation of power and economic production. Control over the means production as well as economic production coincides with control over society. The relationship between the subjects and the Asiatic state is one of appropriation, thus forming a contradictory relationship.

Based on the principles of political economy, the state is essentially a part of the superstructure of society. But within the structural conditions of Asian social formation, the state is not only a part of the superstructure of the society, but it also plays a major entrepreneurial role by providing the communal conditions of production such as irrigation and communicative facilities and assuming an interest in the condition of the soil, agriculture, and its surplus product (Cf. Sawyer, 1977: 51-3). Here, like the feudal and slave societies, state intervention becomes an economic necessity upon which the individual producer is partially dependent in order to maintain his/her political and economic privileges, if there are any (Cf. Marx, 1973: 475). The state, as the supreme

political institution intervening into the economy, bears a direct relationship to the productive base of the society.

Within the Iranian Asiatic structure, administrative relations regulating the political sphere were a part of the relations of production. Throughout most of Iranian history, the Iranian patrimonial state has been in charge of: a) the organization of production, b) the regulation of surplus absorption, c) the institutions which governed the disbursement of this surplus and finally, d) the process of social reproduction. In this society, the appropriation of surplus by the non-producing class was based on a politico-economic definition of the rights of a patrimonial state. Economic production was geared to serving the needs and the purposes of the state. Economic control went along with political control. For example, speaking of this society, Will Durant observes:

The life of Persia was political and military rather than economic; its wealth was based not on industry but on power. (1954,I: 359)

The patrimonialization of the Iranian society was a process initiated by every new Iranian ruler. By attempting to bring all the corners of power under the authority of the central government and the Shah, the patrimonial state infused all the processes of social change and social relationship and subordinated everything to itself. It is important to note that the patrimonial state and patrimonial rulers are seen here as embodiments of specific social relations. As Marx cautioned his readers in the preface of Capital:

To prevent possible misunderstanding, a word. I paint the capitalist and the landlord in no sense couleur de rose. But here individuals are dealt with in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class relations and class interests.
(1967: 10)

For purpose of this discussion, the political structure is seen not merely as the superstructure, but a major part of a totality which constitutes the Iranian Asiatic social formation. Here the relations of production are not exclusively determined by economic factors, but by both political and economic factors. As long as these relations are influenced and conditioned by non-economic factors, the determination of the socio-economic formation cannot be found on pure economic criteria. In this formation, the appropriation of surplus product takes both economic and non-economic forms. These non-economic forms include political, legal, and ideological relations. The non-economic category of the state produces economic structural effects with implications for the whole productive entity. Therefore, it would be inadequate to separate the economic structure from its political form. The ubiquitous nature of patrimonial despotism, its penetration into and effect on all levels of society, created a dialectical dependency between the superstructure and the infrastructure which appeared stable during the periods of political and economic stability, but proved most fragile when the contradictions within the system emerged. As the economic crises intensified, the political stability usually became vulnerable and the social formation became pregnant with major political and economic changes.

Here, a final methodological note is in order: The concept of

"patrimonial despotism" is not merely a descriptive category; It is a useful theoretical device which allows us to explain conceptually intricate political relationships characterizing the Iranian social formation. The use of this concept does not imply that there has been a purely patrimonial despotic state corresponding, in all its details, to the ideal-typical characteristics of the concept depicted here. Different states in one or another Iranian dynasty have had historical peculiarities which might not fit into this model. However, it is our contention that all these states, in their concrete historical form, generally conform to the model of "patrimonial despotism" constructed here.

4.3. The Socio-Historical Characteristics of Iranian Patrimonial Despotism

4.3.1. Absolutistic and Arbitrary Power:

Writing about ancient Iranian dynasties, the Greek historian Herodotus observed that Iranian kings always had absolute power and did not allow it to be diffused (Cf. Krader, 1975: 337). The pre-Islamic Iranian kings were absolute despots with absolute power. Speaking of them, Will Durant says:

His power was theoretically absolute; he could kill with a word, without trial or reason given, after the manner of some very modern dictators; and occasionally he delegated to his mother or his chief wife this privilege of capricious slaughter. Few even of the greatest nobles dared offer any criticism or rebuke, and public opinion was cautiously impotent. The father whose innocent son had been shot before his eyes by the king merely complemented the monarch on his excellent archery; offenders bastinadoed by the royal order thanked His

Majesty for keeping them in mind. (1954, I: 359)

The arbitrary exercise of power and absolutist rule have been two prevailing features of the old Iranian tradition of kingship. Whether the patrimonial household was strong or weak, the system of ruling was based on the arbitrary decisions of the ruling elements. As Curzon put it:

The government of Persia is little else than the arbitrary exercise of authority by a series of units in a descending scale from the sovereign to the headman of a petty village. (1966, I: 391)

When Harun al-Rashid, the Abbasid Caliphate, entrusted his administration to Yahya as his vizier, he is quoted saying:

I invest you with the rule over my subjects. Rule them as you please; depose whom you will, appoint whom you will, conduct all affairs as you see fit. (Palmer, n.d.: 221)

The Achaemenian kings followed an Egyptian custom and called themselves "king of kings." Nobles had to bow before the "king of kings," kiss his hand, and bend their knees in front of him. Many of the kings required visitors to prostrate themselves at full length before them. The Sassanid nobility could not even visit the king unless summoned. A passage in the accounts of Don Juan reads:

The Khans, though their offices are considered hereditary, for they hold them as of their own property, are liable to be dismissed by the king at his pleasure, should they anyway be found in fault, for they are but his servants; and indeed all the Khans and governors who serve the state holding positions of importance are liable to be dismissed at any moment. (1926: 45-6)

According to Watson (1866: 13), this pattern of expectation was so

high in the nineteenth century that Iranian kings of this period usually demanded their breakfast be served by the noblemen in the court. But it should be remembered that this strong control of the nobility did not mean that the landholders and governors did not act arbitrarily; they obviously did so whenever they could get away with it or could resist the authority of the central government and defy the patrimonial despot. On some occasions, they were granted such a right to exercise arbitrary power. However, even when they acted arbitrarily, their actions were conditioned by and limited to the amount of power delegated to them by the Shah.

Patrimonial monarchy saw itself as a necessary and functional force uniting the loose fragments of the country into "a corporate, closely united, compact and severely disciplined whole --presenting a firm and bold front to the outer world." (Kremer, 1977: 25) The kingship was the only national institution at the center of which the Shah was regarded as the Qebleh-e Alam (the center of the Universe). The Shah regarded himself as the Shadow of God on the earth. "He was," as Curzon (1966,I: 433) put it, "the point upon which turned the entire machinery of public life." To him, all people, even the nobles, were his "slaves" (bandaka) or ra'iyyat (those who work on someone else's land or subjects).

4.3.2. Authority Delegation: Centralization Through Decentralized Authority

The centralization of power sometimes takes a more nominal form within which political authority is delegated to different clients.

Political protege (entesab) was an important character of patrimonial despotism in Iran. During the rule of the Safavids, the royal protege arrangement was called entesab-e Shahi. Whenever the country had politico-economic stability, the entesab relationship worked as a mechanism of keeping the entesab groups in their place. However, when the country went through political instability and economic dislocation or experienced an incompetent ruler, the entesab groups came to fight one another for the control of sources of power and wealth. This usually occurred at the time of the accession of a new Shah. For example, the long reign of Qajars was marked by intermittent conflicts between the patrimonial efforts in centralization and the local magnates and tribal leaders' insistence on local autonomy. Even in the case of the Saljuq empire, Lambton has argued that political structure of the country was "a loose confederation of semi-independent kingdoms over which the sultan exercised nominal authority." (1968: 218) Interestingly, the Saljuq princes who governed different provinces were known as maleks, that is, the owner of the land. This was in contradistinction to the sultan's power which was to be politically absolute. However, against this contradiction, the Shah or sultan always claimed the ultimate ownership of all land --a symbolic claim upon which the Shah or sultan could extend his authority all over the country. This has been one of the most important contradictions marking the Iranian patrimonial state. As Stauth discusses this:

The quantitative expansion of revenue sources of the state requires necessarily a strengthening of the bureaucratic control, and a wider base of local representation of the central state. On the other hand, the formation of a

local control creates at the same time a strong participation of the local agencies in extracting the revenues --not least through its potentials of direct intervention --and ultimately a powerful local element of the political apparatus develops. The fight for distributing the surplus product generally results in a sharper repression over the community. By the phase of general rejection of the central power, peasant movements, palace-revolts and conquests from outside, arise and may lead to the foundation of a new dynasty. (1980: 126)

The officials of the patrimonial state have potentially great power as compared to their powerless subjects. However, since their power is delegated to them by the patrimonial despot as a matter of grace, it is usually very precarious. They have no security of tenure and can be dismissed at will and without cause by patrimonial despot. The officials are the servants, not of the state as an impersonal institution, but of the despot who is the embodiment of the state. The authorities of the legislative, executive, and judicial bodies of the government are all embodied in the person of Shah. Military, political, and civil officials conceive of their tasks as basically a service to the Shah. They view their duty as basically to be respectful and obedient to the Shah. When their loyalty was in any way called to question or when they became too independent or powerful, they were quickly demoted. For instance, during the Safavids, Shah Abbas I removed some of the qezelbash chieftains to isolated posts to alienate them from their traditional holdings (Savory, 1961: 100). Writing about the Qajar court in 1825, Fraser observed:

The nobles and superior officers of court are subjected to the caprice of a tyrant who can neither endure opposition nor disappointment The greatest noble in Persia is never for a moment secure either in his person or

property; if a fit of rage, jealousy, or avarice, of which he is the object, happens to seize his sovereign, a word, a look from the despot subjects him to the cruellest insults; he may be best, maimed, disgraced like the lowest groom; his person violated in a way degrading to humanity, his wives and daughters delivered to the list of muleteers, and the little family honor a Persian can possess may be scattered to the winds, without the unhappy sufferer having the least hope of remedy; without even the event creating the least sensation: it is the shah's pleasure; and if he be firm on his seat, the lives and properties of his subjects are less than the dust beneath his feet. (1825: 171)

The relationship between the Shah and his amirs (the chief military officers of a province), iqta-dars (the holder of an iqta), and governors was based on distrust. The former had always some trusted men of his own in different localities to observe the conduct of these subordinates and report their excesses. During the Achaemenids, there were three high officials in each satrapy: a satrapy (khshathrapa), a general (karanos) in command of the armed forces, and a secretary or chancellor. The task of the latter was to watch the behavior of the satrap and report to the patrimonial court (Huart, 1927: 74).

This same pattern was prevalent during the Islamic period. One of the functions of the atabeg institution in Saljuq times was to prevent the rebellion of princes. To control the ruling elements not associated in blood, it is reported that during the Saljuqs, the court often kept a number of hostages from different tribal groups, e.g., Turkomen, Kurds, and Shabankara, and others --and from former ruling families in order to prevent their relatives from rebellion and disobedience (Lambton, 1968: 224). Also, Saljuq sultans "sometimes played off one amir against another by assigning the same

district to them simultaneously." (Ibid.: 238)

In essence, those subjects who had complaints against muqta's or amirs could seek redress from the sultan or the shah. However, practically the sultan or the shah was rarely accessible to the peasants or artisans. This could only happen when the Shah or sultan came to pass through an area and when the peasants were not prevented from coming close to the Shah or to his court demanding redress.

The patrimonial household usually had an effective spy system which informed them of the conduct of their agents and subjects around the country. Speaking of pre-Islamic Iran, Huart writes:

... the provinces were covered by an elaborate police organization The officials known as the King's Eyes and Ears went every year to the most distant regions, to investigate the situation, followed by a company of soldiers to protect them and to give them effective help if required. On the bare report of these officials, the court took irrevocable resolutions. Governors were recalled, and sometimes put to death, without form of trial or right to present their defense." (1927: 74-5)

The significance of this spy system is well stressed in many of the historical accounts or documents left from Iranian authorities in the past. In both *Mirrors for Princes*, and *Sabuktagin's Pand-Nama*, a great deal of importance is attached to the existence of an spy system for the kingdom. Sabuktagin recommends that the use of spies and honest *sahab-barids* (or *sahab-khabar*) is very important for the peace of the country. Also, Nizam ul-Mulk devoted four chapters of his book, Siyasat-Nama, to different aspects of internal and external security and the use of spies and secret agents in the

minor courts of the governors. He argues that the spies should be disguised as merchants, travellers, Sufis, and so on. They should be given the responsibility to report on the conduct of governors, officials, and landlords who may have a propensity for rebellion. Writing about pre-Islamic Iran, Will Durant says that the Shah usually

... sent to each province a general to control its armed forces independently of the government; and to make matters trebly sure he appointed in each province a secretary, independent of both satrap and general, to report their behaviour to the king. As a further precaution an intelligence service known as "The King's Eyes and Ears" might appear at any moment to examine the affairs, records and finances of the province. (1954,I: 362)

During the Safavid reign, the Shah usually appointed three officials to each province. One of these three persons was called vaze'eh-nevis (literally meaning reporter of events) whose task was reporting to the Shah whatever occurred there. All "three officials were there, in fact," says Lambton (1953: 107), "to watch over the governor's actions and to oppose him should he undertake anything contrary to the interests of the state." It is important to note that the amirs, muqta's and governors correspondingly often had their own agents at the courts to keep them informed of the Shah's attitudes towards them as well as of current developments in the capital (Lambton: 1968: 224).

In order to preserve power within the reaches of the patrimonial center and avoid geographic disintegration, the Iranian Shahs dispersed political and economic power among members of their family. Family solidarity provided a basis for the political

cohesion of the country. Whenever the family lost its cohesiveness and divided against itself, the political system of the country became fragmented and led to political disintegration. To run a vast empire, Iranian patrimonial despots had to divide their power among the members of the patrimonial household. In most of the Iranian dynasties, especially those of Islamic era, both political and economic territories are divided into principalities through office and land assignment. One of the reasons for this phenomenon is the tension between the centralization and decentralization of power which has always characterized the patrimonial rule over the vast territorial spaces. Another way of reducing this tension was the practice of forming alliances by means of royal marriages. Such a practice usually allowed the Shah to have an adequate control over provincial governors who were often a member of the patrimonial household.

The transfer of power from one Shah to his successor was often done through the system of nominating a vali'ahd. The Shah or sultan usually proclaimed one of his sons as his vali'ahd (crown prince) and sometimes granted lands and offices to members of his family too. For instance, when in 1066 A.D. the Saljuq sultan, Alp-Arsalan, appointed Malek-Shah as his vali'ahd, he granted iqta's to various members of his family. On his deathbed, he is reported to have granted even further assignments (Lambton, 1968: 235). However, this practice, while intended to ensure the stable and favorable transfer of power, did not always ensure the intended succession. As a matter of fact, it often worked to the contrary. When a weak prince or an impotent son succeeded to the throne, it

usually created instability and led to the disintegration of the dynasty.

While the patrimonial state usually maintained a huge bureaucracy, the social relations of power within the Iranian social formation were arranged in a way that the patrimonial household, in many cases, simply substituted itself even for bureaucratic machinery, not merely as a branch of the state, but as potential source of private power and influence which could be used for independent ends beyond the goals of the patrimonial bureaucracy. These households, composed of royal families and the ruling aristocracy allied to them by marriage or clientage, were powerful patrons of economic units of the country.

It should be noted, however, that this patrimonial elite is very different from the feudal elite in Europe. Iranian patrimonial officials often included the sort of people who were "raised from the dust," while European feudal lords were aristocrats who had historically a political constituency. In many cases, patrimonial rulers incorporated the old tribal leaders or unknown loyal soldiers into their household. For instance, during the Abbasid rule, the Caliphs preferred the mawalis (Iranian converts) to their blood kin and entrusted them with partial political power. Mawalis were a class of political confidants dependent on the person of the Caliph. The relationship between the Caliph and mawalis was that of clientage. During the second and third centuries A.H., these mawalis were the client-confident, in relation to the Caliph's patrons, in the Abbasid house (Lessner, 1980: 95-7).

4.3.3. The Bureaucratic Character:

The patrimonial despots of Iran usually maintained a large court to which they appointed leading delegates to manage their military affairs, private revenues, collection of taxes, and a host of other court functions. Functions such as the taxation of rural production and urban trade required a large bureaucracy staffed by scribes, accountants, tax agents, and so on. The most important function of the bureaucracy was the management of the land revenues set aside to support the army (Lambton, 1953). This bureaucracy existed to serve the needs of the patrimonial despot, to control the administration of revenue, and to manage the state projects of a public nature such as irrigation, qanat cleaning, construction of qal'ehs (city or village walls) and military campaigns.

The bureaucratization of patrimonial rule in Iran goes back to the pre-Islamic era. The satrapy institution, developed in early Iranian dynasties, was a bureaucratic response to the problem of running a multinational empire. The Sassanid also had a huge bureaucratic organization which was run by one of the four classes of that society: dapiran or administrators. In the highly centralized bureaucratic organization of the state, the scribes (dapir) held an extremely important position. Their task was different and rewarding. They had to be familiar with the very difficult system of Aramic-cum-Iranian ideogrammatic writings. The head of this administration was occupied by the eran-dapirbad or dapir-mahist. This administrative leadership was assisted by a

number of other officials concerned with the law: the postal system, finance, etc. Provincial satraps of the earlier periods were replaced by new governors called marzban. This administrative structure was so vast and effective that Wilber writes:

The remarkable internal stability of the empire was largely the result of the efficient and highly centralized administration of its group of ministers and large secretarial staff. (1976: 36)

Later, the administrative system of the Abbasid caliphate was largely modelled on that of Sassanids. During the Saljuqs, this same administrative system was the basis of the Turkish administrative system of iqta.

The Saljuq state delegated many of its functions to different administrative and military muqta's in various provinces. The sultan was also in charge of various functions including the collection of taxes, which was done through the central divan (bureau), and juridical functions. In the divan, the sultan delegated his functions to the vizier who supervised all aspects of the administration. The divan over which the vizier presided consisted of four main departments: i) political department (divan-e insha or rasa'el) which primarily took care of the correspondence and political appointments; ii) financial department (divan-e istifa-ye mamalik) which primarily was concerned with the revenue accounts, tax assessment and collection, and the public expenditure; iii) supervisory department (divan-e ishraf-e mamalek) which audited the financial transactions and supervised administrative functioning; iv) military department (divan-e ard) which controlled

military registers and records of military iqta's and concerned with recruitment of troops and their expenditure (Lambton, 1968: 257-60).

Many of the viziers achieved mobility through the subordinate ranks of the divan. Transfer from the divan of one malek to another was not encouraged. Members of divans usually had a common specialized training. In addition to their abilities and good conduct, acceptance of patronage was an important requirement for upward mobility (Ibid.: 264). The Saljuq bureaucracy had no tradition of integrity and independence. As Lambton has pointed out:

... the vizier could not expect loyalty from his colleagues, and consequently self-preservation demanded that he should fill key places as far as possible with his relatives and clients, the former because he could in some measure control them and the latter because their hope of advancement would be at least temporarily bound up with his. (1968: 266)

4.3.4. The Military Character:

Another basic characteristic of patrimonial despotism in Iran is the development of extended, loyal, and disciplined armies. These armies consisted of units whose primary allegiance was to the person of the Shah rather than to any value or force distinct from the kingdom. Many of these military units were the household troops of the patrimonial despots.

Iranian patrimonial despots have always viewed the army and military strength as the basis of order, stability, and greatness. This is evidenced in Nizam ul-Mulk's complaints about the reduction of military expenditure in the government of Malek Shah (Nizam ul-

Mulk, 1954). He argues that dismissing the armed men would create a potential source of rebellion and disorder. In the Iranian context, in which the patrimonial institution resided over an extensive bureaucratic empire, it was impossible for the imperial household to manage the affairs of the army under its supervision. Therefore, the armies were divided into two groups: the private household troops of the Shah, and the soldiers of major subordinate bound to the service of maintaining order in the provinces.

The Iranian despots developed huge armies with specialized capacities. According to Herodotus, the Achaemenian grand army, which was led into Greece by Xerxes, composed of 1,700,000 infantry, 100,000 mounted troops, and 510,000 sailors and marines. This shows the large organized military capabilities of this kingdom. The king had a bodyguard of ten thousand, known as "immortals." Because of their nomadic background, the Parthians, who succeeded the Seleucids, were not interested in horse-troops and did not develop any naval forces which they needed to war with Rome. They even did not have any standing army and in times of war and enemy attack, kings and satraps usually levied troops which came together at a fixed point (Rizvi, 1980: 27). But their successors, the Sassanids kings revived the Achaemenian tradition of maintaining a standing army independent of the provincial armies.

During the Islamic period, this tradition of maintaining large armies still remained strong. It is reported that at the time of his assassination, Alp-Arsalan, the Saljuq ruler, was accompanied by 2,000 slaves. Another Saljuq ruler, Malek Shah had 15,000 soldiers of his own when he was vali'ahd. When he became the king, he is

said to have had 40,000 horses in his service (Lambton, 1968: 229).

A major military state in pre-capitalist Iran was the Safavids. In addition to old state forces, comprising 58,289 mulazeman (regular militia of the provinces) and possibly 60,000 qurchis (tribal cavalry), the Safavid ruler, Shah Abbas developed new troops consisting of a corp of 12,000 musketeers (tofangchi), an artillery corp of 12,000 (toopchi), and 10,000 royal slave corps (qullar) (Banani, 1978b: 102). He even received some military advice and assistance from English Sherley's brothers. In order to detribalize the leadership of the army and reduce the power of qezelbashs, he raised a corps of royal slaves (ghulaman) by recruiting the sons of Georgian and Caucasian converts to Islam. These slaves were paid from the royal treasury and were not dependent on booty. They were loyal to the central government and had no sympathy towards the qezelbashs. This predominant military character of the Safavid state has led Hodgson (1974,III: 25) to call it "a military patronage state."

The weak Qajar state even followed this pattern, too. Reports concerning the size of the army during the rule of the Qajar are not consistent. Sir John Malcolm reports that the Qajar army, consisted of nearly a thousand royal guards (ghulaman-e shah), a large body of cavalry of eighty thousand who were commanded by tribal chiefs, and twelve to fifteen thousand men rugular (Shadman, 1939: 21-2). These figures are consistent with the number Mirza Hossein Khan uses in his letter to Naser ud-Din Shah in 1875-76 (Safaei, 1971: 35). It should be remembered that the Qajar army, despite its large size, was not as strong as the armies of previous dynasties. This was

partly due to the feudal nature of social relations in this period and partly due to structural constraints put on Iran by European imperialist powers.

The development of big armies by patrimonial rulers had two major societal effects. First, since these armies were expensive machineries to maintain, the burden of their expenditure fell on the shoulder of peasants and artisans who had to pay high taxes and dues. Furthermore, these armies themselves were too crushing a burden on the economy to allow socio-economic resources to be channeled into programs of technological and economic development. Second, because of the exploitative and oppressive structure of the administration of these armies, when these patrimonial despots came under foreign attack, in many cases their troops and subjects deserted their ranks and joined the foreign forces. This was due to the oppressive conditions under which they were kept and controlled. Al-Balazuri (1967: 379) notes that in the war of Qadisiyeh, the Daylamite troops left their barracks and joined the enemy. On the actual day of the war, these soldiers, along with the Arab army, fought with the Iranian army. Many of these subjects were the landless peasants or poor city dwellers. As a matter of fact, one of the basic reasons the Arabs were able to conquer Iranian land and destroy the strong Sassanid empire was the aversion the Iranian people had toward their own government and , thus, their readiness to accept the Islamic call for brotherhood and equality --a slogan under which the Arabs came to Iran but never tried to fulfill . The same phenomenon occurred when the Mongols attacked Iran. The Iranians hated the Kharazmshahids so much so that they did not

bother even to challenge the Mongols seriously (Vardasbi, 1975: 71). This historical pattern was repeated even in the early twentieth century. It was the despotic policies of the Qajars which in many occasions caused the Iranian people to resort to foreign embassies and ask for amnesty during the Constitutional revolution (Cf. Kasravi, 1968).

As will be discussed in Chapter XI, it was this same despotic relationship which paved the way for the penetration of imperialism into Iranian soil in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of the weaknesses of the Iranian social structure, which helped this penetration of imperial powers into Iran, was its patrimonial structure. The colonial penetration of Britain and Russia in this period was facilitated by the patrimonial and despotic nature of the Iranian power elite (Cf. Nafici, 1966 & Mahmud, 1965). All those powers had to do was either to capture or to penetrate into the apex of the pyramid of patrimonial power. With that, the rest was theirs. For example, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many of the early commercial transactions of the English and Dutch agents in Iran was arranged through favoritism. Penetration into the Iranian market was done through corrupt dealings such as bribing, establishing behind the scene connections and so on. It was the highly centralized and autocratic nature of socio-politico-economic power that made it possible for the British, the Dutch, and the Russian to exploit Iran. By winning the favor of the Shah, they all were able to utilize the existing social relations of production in their own interests. A more specific example of this was the English and Dutch East India Companies' opening of trade in Iran

during the Safavid period. Historical evidence shows that all agents of these Companies, one after another, had established contacts with the Court's entrusted men like Mullayembeg and Mohammad Ali Beg. Most of these people were bribed, as states the English East India Company's agent William Burt who himself had a very good and close relationship with Mullayembeg --a man who worked in his support in Shah's court (Cf. Palmer, 1932).

4.3.5. The Divine or Semi-Divine Character:

Another socio-historical characteristic of Iranian patrimonial despotism has been its claim to a divine or semi-divine right to rule. All Iranian despots have characterized themselves, in one way or another, as the "Shadow of God" on the earth. Pre-Islamic Iranian "kings of kings" (Shahanshah) regarded themselves as "descendants of the gods." The Sassanid kings linked themselves to the legendary of Keyani kingdom and claimed to be the heir of the farr, which symbolized their divine right to the throne. The Abbasid Caliphs each defined themselves as the "Deputy of God on Earth" and "Commander of the Faithful." The conception of the Shah being a manifestation of God can be found in many of the Shah's proclamations. For instance, in one of pre-Islamic inscriptions we read:

I, adorer of Mazda, the god Shahpur, king of kings of Iranian and non-Iranians, of the race of the gods, son of the adorer of Mazda, of the god Ardashir, king of kings of the Iranians, of the race of the gods, grandson of Papak, king of the empire of Iran I am the ruler. (Quoted in Wilber, 1976: 34)

Or Nizam ul-Mulk, the powerful Saljuq vazier, states in his Siyasat-Nama that:

God most high chooses someone from among the people in every age and adorns him with kingly virtues and relegates to him the affairs of the world and the peace of his servants. (Quoted in Lambton, 1968, V: 210)

A similar statement can be found in a document from Sanjar's divan stating that:

Since God ... has placed the reins of kingship in our grasp and caused the shadow of His great favor and compassion to be spread over our affairs and raised us to the rank and status of [having] the name of 'The Shadow of God upon Earth' (Quoted in Lambton, Ibid.: 209)

Another example of this attempt by Iranian rulers at establishing a dynastic and semi-divine connection for their patrimonial rule can be found in a poem by the Safavid Shah, Shah Isma'il, in which he characterizes himself as the total sum of all the previous kings named in the Shah-nama of Ferdowsi:

Today I came down to earth: I am lord and king!
Know as true that I am Hadar's son!
I am Pereydun, I am Khoarow, I am Jamshid and
I am Zahhak, I am Rustam son of Zal, I am
Alexander!
The mystery of ana'l-Haqq "I am God", the
famous cry of al-Hallaj is hidden in this
heart of mine, for I am the Absolute Reality
and Reality is that which I do utter!
(Quoted in Filippani-Ronconi, 1978: 79-80)

And other passages quoted from him read:

From Pre-Eternity the Shah is our Sultan,
our pir and murshid, our soul.

I am Very God, Very God, Very God!
Come now, O blind man who has lost the path,
behold the Truth
I am that Agens Absolutus of whom they speak.

(Minorsky, 1942: 1047)

These statements should not be seen only as the fantasy of a young man striving for power, but as the manifestation of a certain political perspective which attempts to establish a dynastic foundation for political leadership. The Safavid Shahs based their political power on three ideological factors: (a) the ancient idea of the divine right of the king or *hvarnah/khvaranah/farr* (kingly glory), (b) the claim to being the representative of the absent Imam Mahdi, and (c) the claims of being the *murshid-e kamel* (supreme spiritual guide) of the Sufi order in their time (Cf. Savory, 1974:183-4).

Busse (1975: 284) has suggested that the Buyid ruler Adud al-Daula's undertakings, such as construction of bridges, bazaars, and mosques had an ideological undertone bearing out his claim to Sassanid descent and "his ability to restore the grandeur of the Persian monarchy." Perhaps the only Shah who abandoned the idea of being the king of kings was Karim Khan Zand. To achieve legitimacy, in 1765, Karim Khan assumed the title of *vakil ul-ro'aya* (a representative of the people) and abandoned the title of *vakil al-dawla* (a delegate of the government) (Perry, 1979: 216). Karim Khan never claimed the title of Shah. He regarded himself merely as a *vakil* (deputy or delegate).

The idea that the king is the shadow of God on the earth is theoretically substantiated by some of the leading Islamic theologians. It is often argued that in Islamic Iran the king's authority was limited because of the Shi'a doctrine of the state

which regards all authority to be that of the Imam. This depends very much on the interpretation of Quranic verses by different religious authorities as well as different schools of thought. Imam Muhammad Ghazzali (1058-1111), Islamic theologian, philosopher, and mystic of eleventh century, viewed the kings and prophets on a par and argued that the kings are God's selected delegates over His creatures (Al-Ghazzali, 1964: 45; also Cf. Lambton, 1954: 47-55). Nasir ud-Din Tusi held the view that the kings are divine appointees for the purpose of maintaining harmony among the people (Tusi, 1964: 187-95). Nizam ul-Mulk (1954: 5-6) also considered the kings as God's vice regent through whom "the doors to depravity and wickedness" are closed.

The religious source of these views, in addition to statements attributed to the prophet Muhammad, is a Quranic verse which states that:

O ye who believe, obey God and obey the Apostle and those among you invested with authority. (Qur'an, IV: 58)

Shaikh Najm ud-Din Razi went even further and argued that kingship was above prophethood. For him, since the exercise of dominion is God's attribute, therefore it is more exalted than prophetic rank (Razi, 1933: 235). Nizam ud-Din Shami (1937: 7-9) also made a similar argument on a more practical basis. He argued that the role of kings in establishing order is more important than even that of the Qur'an because the subjects are more fearful of the king than of the holy book. (1)

It should be noted, however, that the kings' authority remains

theoretically legitimate as long as they have not deviated from what God has ordained. An unjust king who indulges in fulfilling his own pleasures is the vice regent of Satan, not of God (Razi, 1933: 236-7; Lambton, 1956 & 1954: 50). While the king is the highest symbol of secular authority, he is theoretically, and usually practically too, denied the sacred authority. He can achieve the support of the sacred only through his favourable relationship with the ulama, who assume that authority. An Islamic hadith (statements concerning the deeds or sayings of the Prophet or Imams) reads:

If you see the ulama at the gates of the Kings, say, they are bad ulama and bad Kings. [But] if you see the Kings at the gates of the ulama, say they are good ulama and good Kings. (Adamiyat, 1959, IV: 324 Quoted in Algar, 1969:22)

However, it is historically important to remember that throughout the Iranian history, the enforcement of the law has often been the province of the kings and their authorized delegates. The ulama were always the expounders of the law, but they had no solid and stable means to put their percepts fully into practice. The Shahs obviously compromised their decisions on important matters, but in very few cases did they give in to the ulama's authority. In most cases, even when the Shahs were involved in the ruthless elimination of their enemies, the consent of religious authorities was acquired. For instance, based on the accounts of Muhammad b. Ibrahim in Tarikh-e Saljuqian-e Kerman, Bosworth argues that:

Although Muhammad [a Saljuq ruler, 1142-1156) was clearly a bloodthirsty tyrant, he contrived by his ostentatious piety to make a good impression on the chronicles.

Muhammad b. Ibrahim, the local historian praises the amir for his pensions to the ulama and ...; he never killed anyone without first obtaining for this a fatwa from the religious authorities. (1968: 134)

This limitation of the power of king has always been the main source of contention between the religious dissidents and the patrimonial despots. Therefore, it can be argued that this same source of legitimacy has served as the basis of both stability and instability in Iranian political history. Once a patrimonial despot lost his divine legitimacy, he had to resort to force as the only means of control. Anytime the conflict between the patrimonial court and the ulama became intense, the patrimonial despots increased their military capabilities and depended more on violence. It is for this reason that Iranian patrimonial despots often maintained huge armies for whose cost they had to extract more taxes from the peasants.

Therefore, it is important to note the ideological nature of this emphasis on the divine character of patrimonial rule and on religious leadership. The Iranian Shahs did not have the same political status as that of European kings. They were despots whose legitimacy was based "on personal success rather than on legitimate succession." The use of the myth of the "divine right of the Shah," as Katouzian (1981: 14) has pointed out, "was indeed functional because it did not so much legitimate dynastic succession as legitimate personal success: it was the divine right of personal might, rather than of ancestral privilege." (Cf. Mahdi, 1979)

4.3.6. Patrimonial Insecurity and Violence:

Intrigue and insecurity have been two established characteristics of Iranian patrimonial despotism. Many of patrimonial households have been torn apart by the rivalry from within and without. Men of politics always attempted to accumulate wealth and establish a network of interest groups in order to secure their offices. Many a time, they competed with one another for the favor of the Shah or sultan. Iranian history is abundant with the examples of brothers killing brothers or fathers blinding their sons or relatives in order to rule them out of the political competition.

Violence has been one of the most common aspects of political life in Iranian history. Patrimonial rule was embroiled in a long war of competition for wealth and power, palace intrigue, political in-fighting, and back-room gossiping. This can be readily observed in the Iranian miniature paintings depicting battle scenes and the combats between different champions or champions and monsters (div). Iranian historical chronicles are full of stories of assassinations, intrigues, death by external means, and the destruction of human life through inhuman methods. Iranian despots could rarely tolerate the contention of anyone for power except themselves. As Sa'di (1919,I: 3), the Iranian master poet, was to say: "Ten dervishes can sleep on one rug, but two kings cannot be accommodated in an entire kingdom."

One of the most important mechanisms of control used by Iranian patrimonial despots to suppress their rebellious governors, who contended for political autonomy, was the common practice of killing them off, mutilating them or locking them up. This has been one of the ugliest aspects of the political history of Iran. To neutralize political contention or remove threats, Iranian patrimonial despots often resorted to the practice of killing, blinding, and castrating their unloyal subjects, even if they were the members of patrimonial household. Many Sassanid kings and princes were drowned in swamps, blinded, or killed during hunting or military expedition by their own kinsmen. This ugly tradition continued throughout Iranian history down to the first half of the twentieth century after which new methods of torture and silencing dissent were invented and used. Shah Abbas I killed or blinded all his sons in fear of their rebellion. Nader Shah blinded his only son on the suspicion of his treachery. Agha Mohammad, the first Qajar king who himself had been castrated, tortured to death Nader's grandson, who had already been blinded by others. Suspicious of the intentions of his Grand Vazier, Fath Ali Shah had him thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil and had his entire family killed except a sickly boy. Even Karim Khan Zand, a ruler inaccurately labelled as "just," blinded, incapacitated, executed, and tortured many of his opponents and individuals who had been his most trusted friends, relatives, and lieutenants. Naser ud-Din Shah tortured his brother Muhammad Shah II nearly to death (Cf.

Perry, 1979: 97-110).

The fate of government officials and vaziers was not much different. Majd ul-Mulk Yazdi, Khajeh Shams ud-Din Juvaini, and Khajeh Rashid al-Din Fazlullah were three grand vaziers who were the victims of hair-raising treatment by successive Ilkhanid rulers. The assassination of Imam-quli Khan by the Shah Safi, Haj Ibrahim Kalantar by Fath Ali Shah, Qa'em Maqam by Muhammad Shah II, Amir Kabir by Naser ud-Din Shah, and Taimur-Tash, Nusrat ud-Dawleh, Sardar As'ad, and many others by Reza Shah Pahlavi constituted a small portion of the examples of this same detestable character of the arbitrary rule of Iranian patrimonial despotism (Cf. Katouzian, 1981: 24-5).

What made these practices even more intolerable was their replication at the lower level of the social hierarchy. Different amirs, khans, qezelbashs, and kalantars entered into crass means of advancement to higher positions by killing their opponents and competitors. For instance, during the Safavids, the number of offices were limited and the number of landless qezelbash amirs were extremely high. Yaqub Beg b. Ibrahim Khan Dhu'l-Qadr was a landless amir at Shah Abbas I's court. To acquire a post, he killed his uncle, the hakeem of Shiraz, and substituted for him in his position. In 1539, Mehdi Quli Sultan Arashlu rebelled against the rule of Tahmasp I. This act jeopardized the position of his brother Sirindik Beg Qurchi-Bashi, who was the hakeem of Shustar. Therefore, Qurchi-Bashi sent an army under the command of his own son to kill his brother (Reid, 1978: 119). These fratricidal conflicts

constituted a major aspect of political life within the Iranian Asiatic social formation, especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

With so much cruelty among the members of the ruling class, it is not hard to imagine the scope of violence imposed upon the ordinary people. To cite only one example, it suffice to mention that when Agha Mohammad Khan, a Qajar ruler, captured the city of Kerman in 1794, 20,000 men were blinded and 900 executed on the spot in order to provide a pyramid of skulls as an expedient war memorial (Harrison, et.al., 1945: 281). In many occasions, barbarous acts like these were applied to the poor subjects who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time or who by accident the Shah's anger fall upon them, or lost the king's grace. A nineteenth century European observer has noted numerous instances of the cruelties and arbitrary strangulation of the subjects by the kings in this way:

We may see the great Shah Abbas putting to death, with his own hand, an innocent traveller, while sleep, because his horse startled at him; and cutting off a man's nose, and forcing him to eat it, for some equally trivial offense; Aga Mahomed Khan putting out the eyes of those who ventured to look upon his hideous countenance; and maiming or destroying numbers for slight or imaginary faults. Nadir Shah breaking all bounds of humanity, and shedding seas of blood, with a sweeping disregard to every impulse but those of his own dark and savage disposition; and chiefs and governors every where beating, maiming, and rendering their property from those ryots [ra'iiyat = peasants] unfortunately placed in their power. (Fraser, 1825: 191)

To all these we should add the cruel treatment of peasants at the

regular time of tax collection and oppressive measures irregularly applied to peasants and artisans in order to extract more produce and money from them.

4.4. Endnotes

(1) It should be remembered that there are and have been some theologians who have interpreted the above-quoted religious texts and statements differently and have opposed the rule of the kings. However, this group has often been in minority. During the Safavid rule some members of the ulama had started to air such views but they were ruthlessly suppressed by the establishment. It is only in the past few years that this view has come to dominate the religious establishment in Iran and this did not happen until Ayatollah Khomeini was able to successfully establish an Islamic Republic ruled primarily by clergy.

CHAPTER V

SOME HISTORICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ASIAN SOCIAL FORMATION IN IRAN

To support the theoretical position laid out in an earlier chapter, an objective study of the Asian characteristics of pre-capitalist Iran is in order. What follows is an attempt to briefly delineate the salient socio-economic features of Iran's irrigation system, the politico-economic traits of its cities, and the socio-economic structure of the productive forces and relations of pre-capitalist Iranian villages. This attempt will be followed by the study of land-assignment and the land-owning system in the next chapter.

5.1. Artificial Irrigation

Iran consists largely of arid and semi-arid lands with insufficient rainfall. The country does not have too many large rivers and some of its rivers even flow outward into the neighboring territories. As a consequence, drought has been a frequent phenomenon in the natural and economic life of the country. While agriculture has always been the main source of economic activity,

even in the capitalist period, the shortage of water-supply, due to the climate, has been the main factor limiting agricultural development in this country. The magnitude of this shortage can be realized when we remember Chardin's (1811) statement in the nineteenth century that only one tenth of Iranian lands were cultivable at that time.

The climatic factors of Iranian society are so distinctive that failure to account for their impact on the socio-politico-economic structures can suggest an inaccurate understanding of the socio-economic relations emanating from those structures in this society. Since economic activity takes place within a geographic location which is under the governance of a specific political framework, an understanding of economic geography and its interaction with the political economy of this society is in order.

In Iran, water is not a free gift of nature. The scarcity of water in this plateau has greatly affected the nature as well as the distribution of economic activities in this land. Most of agriculture has been dependent on artificial irrigation. The availability of water has usually determined the site of settlements, the establishment of towns and cities, the types of husbandry, the concentration of agricultural production, and consequently, the need for co-operation and social intermingling. Even pre-Indo-Iranian settlements in this plateau were determined by the accessibility to natural supplies of irrigation at or near river valleys, the mouths of the wadis, and well-watered mountain valleys (English, 1966: 18).

Only a few cities are not located next to a natural source of

water. These locations are usually oasis centers which have served traditional transportation routes. The supply of water has always been an important factor in determining land use and agricultural productivity. Cultivation has been limited mostly to the vicinity of rivers, and to the lands irrigated artificially. However, this importance of water in Iran does not imply that we should regard this country as a "hydraulic society," as Wittfogel mistakenly does (1957: 373).

To combat this water shortage, throughout history the Iranian peasants have developed a large irrigation network consisting of underground canals (qanat), dams, and irrigation canals, the function of which was to divert the rivers and floods toward the locations in which the water was needed. Qanat is of Iranian origin and dates back more than two thousand years (Cressey, 1958). Qanats or underground conduits (in Eastern Iran called Kariz) were the most important system of irrigation in the Iranian plateau during the pre-capitalist period and remained so even during the dependent capitalist period. According to a contemporary source, even in the middle of this century the irrigation of over one-half of the cultivated land in the country was based on qanats (Goblot, 1971: 214-19). Qanats were constructed in the form of a series of shafts with decreasing depth and an underground conduit which connected them together. Since the slope of the conduit was less than the ground surface, the trapped water was discharged above ground at the point where the two slopes converged. The discharged water ranged from a few quarters to about 21 gallons per second depending on the size of the qanat and the climate of the area (Cf. Lambton, 1953:

Water was usually supplied in rotation to various owners or buyers. Its allocation was based on its total availability. That is, the cycle of rotation varied as the water supply fluctuated. The shared utilization of water, as well as discrepancies between its supply and demand, was the source of many social conflicts among the villagers and between villagers and nomads. When a rotational change was necessary, the share-owners congregated in the presence of the kadkhuda (headman) together with the landowner and/or the government representatives. When the supply of water was adequate, this method worked well, but in times of scarcity, agreement was very difficult to obtain and social conflict was much in evidence (Sunderland, 1968: 615).

The construction of qanats and their maintenance throughout the vast plateau were not easy: they required organized efforts and manpower as well as large capital expenditures. Since the cost of construction was high, and since the individual land owners were unable to build qanats, the task was usually undertaken by the central or local government. Historically, the qanats were usually owned by the central government or the Shah and the administration of the irrigation system was largely in the hands of the state (Petrushevsky, 1966,II: 18-9). Writing about pre-Islamic Iran, the Greek historian Herodotus says:

The rivers of the kingdom [of Iran] belonged to the Shah; and when the water flowed for irrigation, a government official supervised the share of water going to each tribe or small town. For the water to flow, there was a heavy tax which was sent to the treasury of the kingdom. (Translated from a quote in Vardasbi, 1975: 29)

However, there are many cases in which small canals on private mulk lands were privately owned. In some cases the Shahs leased the qanats in lieu of some specified rent. Control of irrigation and water supply was a considerable source of revenue for the patrimonial states and authorities. For instance, during the Safavid period, the Shah had an estimated income of 4000 tumans from the water tax in the neighborhood of Esfahan. He also received 1000 tumans from the water tax from the river of Fars (Tadhkirat Al-Muluk, 1943: 181).

Rights to water and land have usually been held conjointly. After the Safavid period, when the Asian mode of production developed into feudal mode, the right of ownership of these qanats became a complicated matter because in many cases single landowners were claiming the ownership of the qanats in their domains. Sometimes, they were jointly owned or usufructed by several people each possessing a percentage of the total (Wilber, 1976: 292). During the feudal era, many qanat owners eventually assumed the ownership of the land these qanats irrigated. In this sense, Gaube (1979: 6) argues that qanat irrigation has contributed to the further development of landownership in Iran.

Tenth century historical accounts indicate that the administration of water shares (mustaqeh and later haq-e ab) involved a special bureau called divan-e ab (Lambton, 1953: 214). Kharazmi mentions that the Sassanids had established a divan called kast afzood by which all the water shares were recorded (Quoted in Vardasbi, 1975: 30).

However, it should be noted that the ownership of qanats and water foundations have been a complicated issue in Islamic Iran. According to Islamic law, water cannot be bought or sold because it is a movable object produced by nature. But the channels through which the water flows and the right to use it are matters of negotiation.

Since the pre-Islamic kingdoms of Iran usually encouraged agricultural development, the development of the qanats and the irrigation system was an important aspect of the economic tasks of the governments. In 260 A.D., a combined dam and bridge, called the Shushtar dam, was built on the Karun river which irrigated an extensive area called Mian-Ab (Fateh, 1926: 11). During the Achaemenids, agricultural activities were valued more than commercial activities. Cyrus "despised the commercial habits of the Greeks" (Wilber, 1976: 29) and placed great emphasis on agricultural development. To encourage agricultural development, Iranian kings undertook large public works projects. For instance, "one of the achievements of the Achaemenid kings was the digging of subterranean canals which were of vital importance on the plateau and in other areas where water was short, such as the Syrian desert on regions of Central Asia." (Ghirshman, 1978: 182) In 550 A.D., Khusrow made significant reforms in the areas of public administration and public facilities (Wilber, 1976). The Seleucid also expanded agricultural lands and made water canals which brought arid lands under cultivation (Javan, 1961: 221). The Sassanid kings also made many dams and improved the irrigation system of the country (Sykes, 1951). In this period, a centralized and planned system of

irrigation was developed and controlled by the central government. The Sassanid rulers built many dams in the south and western part of Iran (Wilber, 1976: 293). The most often-mentioned dam in this period is the Shadravan which was built by King Shapur (Petrushevsky, 1966,I: 204). The early Arab rulers also expanded the dam system erected along the Karun and the Dez rivers earlier (Wilber, Ibid.). The Buyids also initiated the construction of a centralized irrigation system in Fars which involved large scale public works. Band-e Amir, built in 906 A.D., irrigated tens of miles in the plain of Persepolis (Wulff, 1966: 246). In the early fourteenth century, during the Mongol rule, Rashid ud-Din repaired the Shadravan dam, which was built by King Shapur earlier, in order to improve irrigation in his lands (Petrushevsky, 1966,I: 204). The Mongol rulers in Iran constructed several dams, among which are those in Saveh and Qum, often mentioned in historical accounts (Adl, 1964: 1566-7). During the Safavids, the Shah sponsored construction of seven dams in the province of Khurasan and three dams in his own lands (Enayatolah, et.al., n.d.: 228-31).

The construction of dams and qanats by the government involved different methods of labor utilization. However, in most of these 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, and in other cases slave labor was used in cleaning or building qanats or dams. For instance, during the Sassanid period, the Shadravan dam was built mostly with the help of Roman prisoners of war (Adl, 1964: 1561-4). Another example of using forced labor

for public works of this kind is found during the Safavid period. In the sixteenth century, Shah Tahmasp I decided to divert some water of Karun river into that of Zayandeh Rud in Esfahan. The purpose of this initiation was to make Zayandeh Rud a broad stream commendable to the city of Esfahan which was then the capital of the country. This project was not, of course, successful at its inception and it was later followed by the Shah Abbas II. In each time, the Shahs entrusted this type of work to their viziers or the governors or amirs. The manpower necessary for project was made available from troops and civilian labourers who were "conscripted and subject to heavy fines if they broke camp." (Fitt, 1953: 127)

Another method of constructing dams and expanding qanats we have come to learn about is the grant of exemption from the land tax for a fixed period of time to those who made the land cultivable through the construction of irrigation networks. This was one of the methods used by the Achaemenids in pre-Islamic Iran (Wulff, 1966: 245). However, this same tradition exists in Islam too. According to Islamic law, a person is entitled to the usufruct of deserted lands if he makes it cultivable.

It can be concluded that a major character of the Iranian Asiatic formation has been the preoccupation of the local or national government authorities with the construction and annual cleaning of qanats and the other water sources. The organization of water works was basically the task of the central government headed by the patrimonial despot. This task provided the State an objective basis upon which it could establish its dominance. The land, in and of itself, was worth nothing; it became a source of

value when it was "vivified," that is, watered. The act of irrigation was equivalent to the act of appropriation. It was the control of irrigation which made the Iranian patrimonial state the real appropriator of agricultural surplus.

5.2. The Isolated and Self-Sufficient Character of Iranian Asiatic Villages

One of the basic structural characteristics of rural pre-capitalist Iran is the segmentation and dispersion of its village communities. This segmentation was partially due to the physical geography of the land: rugged terrain, mountain ranges, extensive deserts, barren soil, inadequate rainfall, etc. These isolated and self-sufficient village communities did not break out of their isolation until the second half of the nineteenth century when Iran experienced a transformation in her agricultural production, i.e., commercialization. Before discussing this character of self-sufficiency, a theoretical note is in order: This self-sufficiency is defined in terms of the production of subsistence and of consumption and does not refer to the reproduction of the conditions of production. For instance, the village was to a certain degree dependent on the sources outside of the village unit such as the state or land-holder. Here, while the village produced dairy foods, raised cattles, and grew staple crops for its own consumption, without being dependent on an external market, it had to rely on the state or its representatives for reproduction of the means of production such as qanats. Therefore, the reproduction of the conditions of production rests, to some extent, with a larger unit

or external factor.

Iranian villages of the pre-capitalist period were self-sufficient agricultural units which owned all the fields and flocks necessary for subsistence. As Lambton argued:

From early Islamic times 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. This was especially the case where the inhabitants retained their former religion; in such cases they remained autonomous in civil and judicial affairs. 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. Due to the favorable climate, the villages located in the northern provinces had enjoyed a higher degree of self-sufficiency. In these villages, a shallow well could satisfy the villagers' need for drinking water, whereas in the southern and eastern regions, drought was a common phenomenon and the village communities were more dependent on the rivers, qanats, and other sources of water. Some villages even produced their own clothing. Fraser, a nineteenth century European visitor to Iran, observes that in Khurasan many villages produced "stuff for shirts and trousers, handkerchiefs, and other domestic purpose ... , though not for exportation." (1825: 379)

Most of these villages were small, tightly packed clusters of dwellings containing fewer than a hundred inhabitants. These villages had few facilities other than a mosque, a few shops, a common bath, and possibly a shrine. The village land was usually divided into the following quarters: a) under cultivation, b) ready

for cultivation, c) fallow, and d) residential (Vadie1, n.d.: 74). The residential area, called qal'eh (1), was often fortified by protective high walls. Some villages even had a watch-tower to survey the surrounding territory. (2) The lands cultivated by the villagers laid around the residential qal'eh. Qal'eh is basically a characteristic of those villages which lacked rich and sufficient water sources. These villages were usually located in the desert areas. Those villages located in well-watered areas tended to have a scattered settlement pattern (Behnam and Rasekh, 1969: 193). An adequate and diverse water supply allowed these villages to have multiform patterns of life and production. These villages were usually located in the northern part of the country and, in contrast to the villages in the central plateau which usually had a mono-crop character, produced more than one or two crops.

The villagers often lived in a cluster of houses built of sun-baked mud. Their houses were often grouped either around a small open square (maidan) or narrow alleys which wound through the village. These houses were often, and of necessity, utilized by livestock too. In some villages, stables for animals were built outside of the residential area or in the middle of the qal'eh. The Iranian villages were very much dependent on their livestock, and regarded them as an auxiliary economic asset. Most households owned a few animals, such as goat, sheep, chicken, and a donkey for transport. The wealthier peasants also owned a few cows. These animals were usually grazed near the houses on uncultivated land or else in herds collectively looked after by a shepherd (Sunderland, 1968: 617). A village shepherd used to care for the villagers'

animals as well as for those of the landlords on a contracted basis similar to a crop-sharing contract between peasants and landowners. When the villager took care of the landlords' flock, the produce of the flock was usually shared in various ways depending on the contract (Lambton, 1953: 351)

The reasons for this physical compactness, extreme dispersion, and geographical isolation of Iranian villages are not hard to find. Due to lack of roads and communicative infrastructure, many of these villages were even unknown to the central government and could only be reached through tribal khans. Only a small number of them could use all-weather roads.

Geographically, Iran is a mountainous country with an arid climate and a severe water shortage. With these natural endowments, agricultural production is not possible without a collective organization of human resources. The availability of water sources and of qanats has been an important factor in the formation of compact, concentrated, and self-contained villages. Politically, the only way Iranian villagers could protect themselves against hostile aborigines, nomadic tribes, and other social and natural threats was to establish concentrated, compact, and self-contained settlements. Another political reason for this rural cohesiveness had to do with the patrimonial nature of the Iranian political structure. The patrimonial policies of the Asiatic social formation demanded that the villages be treated as corporate units. For the central government, it was easier to assess taxes and revenues from a collectivity than from individual peasants. This socio-geographical segregation was also reinforced by religious and ethnic

diversities. As the names of most of the Iranian villages indicate, the inhabitants of many of these villages were members of one or several clans. As Behnam (1971) has indicated, many villagers identify their village as a settlement of their clan. This illustrates the fact that clan and kinship relationships have had a determining role in the formation of nucleated villages. In each village, clan members usually lived in a certain quarter (mahaleh) (Cf. Mahdi, 1975).

Finally, a word should be said about the productive forms. Within the Iranian Asiatic formation, the forces of production were undeveloped. The technology of production was simple and the division of labor was low. Agricultural production was carried out by two different methods: *bilkary* and *gavkary*. *Bilkary* refers to tillage by spade and hand, a primitive and labor intensive production method. *Gavkary* refers to farming through the use of draft animals such as oxen, donkeys, horses, buffalo, and even camels. When, in the mid-twentieth century, agriculture was changed from feudal to capitalist production, a new method of semi-mechanized farming came into use. With respect to the kinds of production, at least three forms are identifiable: *seyfi-kari* (raising summer vegetables), *qalleh-kari* (cereal farming), and *baqdari* (fruit gardening).

5.2.1. Urban Domination and Economic Exploitation

While Iranian villages were economically self-sufficient, it would be wrong to assume that there was no interaction with the

external environment and non-local economic units. While the most important concern of the peasants was to grow crops to feed themselves, this was not their sole concern. By definition, they were all subjects of the State and, thus, were linked to the larger entity of the city. They had to produce not only as much as they needed, but as much as the State or its representative/land-holder required them to produce.

The city, the village, and the tribe have constituted three important economic conglomerations of the Iranian social formation. While each of these three has had a distinct life-mode, each has been dependent upon another in one way or another. English (1967) has called this the "ecological trilogy." As he has demonstrated, these isolated villages have always been dominated by the urban centers. That is, since agricultural production was the basis of the economy and the major source of government income, the village was an integral and functioning part of the larger structure of the urban life (English, 1966: 87-97). This dominance was exerted through decisions made about the land produce, the demand for animal husbandry, and the types of craft activities by the government officials, landlords, and merchants living in the cities. While the agricultural resources were dispersed and the peasantry was not well organized, the cities were more effectively in communication with each other through a network of common trade and constant travel.

Rural life was always controlled by absentee landlords and the urban merchants living in the cities. The majority of Iranian landlords were actually urban elites with military, bureaucratic, or merchant interests in the cities. This was, indeed, the basic

reason for the presence of this elite in the city (Cf. Goodell, 1980: 314). These lords derived a considerable portion of their income from non-agricultural sources. Most of the agricultural surplus produced in the villages found its way to the cities where these landholders were living. While the villages contributed to and supported city life by their surplus produce, the cities and towns "contributed very little to the open country, where the elementary needs of daily life and even implements were supplied by local labour." (Cohen, 1975: 319)

While for the most part village life was independent of the outside world and most of the non-food products were produced by local artisans, there were still a few commodities which villagers had to buy from neighboring towns or to exchange with nomadic populations passing through their villages seasonally. Most of the time, these commodities included steel implements, tobacco, articles of clothing, utensils such as metal pots and pans, and foodstuff such as sugar, salt, and tea. In the distant villages, these commodities were bought from the peddlers or urban merchants who came to the villages once or twice a month. However, in general the peasantry was least dependent on external trading for its survival.

Although money, as a medium of exchange, was used all over the country, in villages most of these economic transactions were carried out in kind. Historical evidence indicates that many of these villagers did have cash available and used it in exchanges with the city merchants and peddlers. Money lenders, peddlers, tax collectors, and other urban representatives were the first groups whose penetration into villages contributed to the development of

money-relations in rural Iran. Within the context of feudal relations, both in the Asiatic and feudal periods, many city merchants controlled the economic life of the villages through a system called pish-kharid or buying crops in advance. As a consequence of both lack of cash and indebtedness, often some peasants had to sell their crops to the city merchants in advance (pish-furush) in order to obtain necessary cash for buying agricultural or non-agricultural necessities not available in the villages. As Gaube states:

In these transactions the merchants alone gain up to 100 percent profit by the device of manipulating winter and summer prices; they also have a free hand in dictating the prices of the goods the farmer buys. Thus, many farmers enter a vicious circle without a way out and the merchants gain almost complete control of everything that happens in the villages. (1979: 10)

Also, on many occasions, rural petty-producers had to depend on these city merchants for provision of the raw materials for carpet-weaving activities from which these peasants derived a considerable portion of their livelihood. In these cases, the merchant supplied the raw materials necessary for production of carpet and, therefore, received a large share of profit in its sale (Cf. Lodi, 1965).

Within the villages, economic exchanges usually were in kind. Even the few wage-laborers who were employed by local small landowners or landholders were usually paid in kind. Since production was seen as a family concern by the peasant, when he hired someone to help in cultivation of the land, he would regard the laborer as a part of his family. As Lambton put it:

Such labourers often form part of the household of the holder of the plough-land and are clothed and fed by the latter. (1953: 367-8)

In many of the villages, non-agriculturalists like the barber, the bathman, the mullah (clergy), and so on were all paid for their services partially in kind. Since the villages were to a great extent closed economic units within which the circulation of surplus products was low and slow, the occasional exchange of products which often existed there took the form of barter trade. Agricultural surplus created in the villages flowed to the cities and entered economic circulation in the local towns or regional markets.

5.2.2. Social Structure of the Villages

Since production within the village community was organized collectively and there was a low of division of labor, the Iranian village communities showed a rudimentary form of stratification. Because the landlords or landholders usually lived in the cities, and because the land was usually redistributed annually or seasonally by the village production unit (boneh), the village structure did not show high differentiation among the peasants. Social differentiation during the pre-capitalist era was primarily based on social, political, economic, and religious status. An individual's position within the community was largely determined at birth and he/she had few opportunities to be mobile unless an external factor, such as war, conscription, invasion, etc., disrupted the stability of social life in the village and offered

new opportunities for change.

Because of the primitive productive forces and the predominance of a subsistence economy, the social division of labor remained simple. Basically, the villagers were divided into two categories: agricultural producers and non-agriculturalists. In turn, agricultural producers consisted primarily of two categories: nasaq-dars and khushneshins. (3) The former category referred to peasants with traditional rights of cultivation on some parts of the land owned or controlled by land-holders. The latter referred to agricultural wage-laborers (barzegars) as well as non-agriculturalists like craftsmen and the service workers in the village community.

A major proportion of the rural population consisted of these agricultural wage-laborers (khush or khushneshins, literally meaning "squatter on the plowland") who sold their labor-power for cash and/or in kind. They were landless populations working on the land of others in return for a payment of some type (Lambton, 1953: 2-4). (4) Notwithstanding, some of the khushneshins owned oxen which they could rent to the nasaq-holders for the purpose of ploughing. This group was called gavband and their socio-economic conditions were much better than those khushneshins who did not own any means of production and had to earn their livelihood only by working as laborers. The latter were either employed in their own village at working seasons or had to search for work in neighboring communities or towns.

Nasaq, a collective arrangement of village lands among the villagers, refers to the capacity of a village in ploughlands

(juftgave, meaning yoke of oxen). (5) According to this arrangement, each household had some share (shair, fard, and pa) of land and water. Nasaq-dars (holders of nasaq right) were often organized in a traditional productive collectivity called boneh. (6) Boneh was a productive as well as distributive unit which consisted of many village households which organized their available resources (water and land) in a rotating system (Cf. Safinejad, 1972). The arable land were periodically redistributed in direct relation to the nasaq-dar's ability to undertake his cultivation (Vadiei, n.d.: 73-6).

Within the village communities, the proprietary rights to the land were reckoned on the basis of shares of water or plow-land. As Reid put it:

The size of the plow-land (juft, zuj, or yugh) varied from one region to another, but in general it was that amount of land which one yoke of oxen could plow within a certain amount of time. Smaller units of land were called langs, one lang being equivalent to one-half of the juft. The system was employed from a very early date in Iran and was marked by the communal or collective organization of all these individual plots for the usufruct of the community. (1978a: 93)

When the water was used as the basis of division, the terms sa'at (hour), estakhr (pool), pialeh (bowl), and so on were used.

The rules of redistributing the resources varied from place to place. In some places it was based on the arbitrary decision of kadkhuda or mubasher, and in some other places it was done by the drawing of lots (Lambton, 1953: 299-300). Generally, the attempt was made to even out the differences in the quality of land, its distance from the residential area, irrigability and so on. The

members of the boneh were not attached to the land but rather to the village as a socio-economic unit of production. According to this system, the nasaq is a usufruct right and there is no right of alienation. On the one hand, since nasaq rights were considered as "residential privileges," the peasant could not transfer his rights or sell his shares on his own (Safinejad, 1972: 42-3). On the other hand, the individual nasaq-dar was responsible to the community and not to the landowner or government representative. It was the community which was responsible for the landowners' dues and the government taxes. It should be remembered that the khushneshins were not members of any boneh, although they were hired by the boneh. The members of each boneh were sometimes relatives and their kinship or family ties had brought them together. Some of the bonehs even had a family name.

The occupational structure of the village was homogeneous. Most of the villagers were engaged in agricultural activities; Only a few were engaged in service or craft occupations. The latter included shoemaker, tailor, carpenter, barber, religious functionary, and tea shop-keeper. However, craft production has been an important ingredient of village life which cannot be overlooked. Many villagers were involved in the production of carpets, short-napped coarse carpets, straw mats, pottery, etc. Production in these crafts had usually an individual character. Individual villagers set up a carpet framework in their houses, and had their women or children spend their spare time on carpet-weaving activities and set up their own small workshops. In addition to their own domestic labor, these villagers usually hired child labor,

too.

Golabian has summarized the occupational structure of pre-capitalist Iran graphically in the following way:

Table 2

Occupational Structure of Iranian Villages
During the Pre-Capitalist Period

----- All Occupations -----			
Agricultural Producers		: Non-Agriculturalists	

Nasaq-dar	: Khusneshins	: Service	: Non-Agricultural
peasants	: (i.e., agri-	: workers	: producers, such
with right:	cultural	: such as	: as carpenters,
of owner-	: workers paid	: bath-	: blacksmiths,
ship or	: in cash or	: keepers,	: millers, carpet-
right of	: kind.	: barber,	: weavers, etc.
cultiva-	:	: priests,	:
ting vill-	:	: shop-	:
age land.	:	: keepers,	:
:	:	: etc.	:

Source: Adopted from Golabian, 1977: 163.

There was also a social division of labor based on age and sex. Children were involved in light activities such as herding, gathering wood or grasses, cotton spinning, spindling, and carpet-weaving. Women were involved in both household and farm work. They were the hardest working group who specialized in processing agricultural products, weaving carpets, and so on. In the time of peak demand, they had intensive participation in farm work too. Men were involved in major farm activities which required physical strength and usually played a supervisory role in the affairs of both farm and family.

Some of the elders in the village were called rish sefid (white

bearded), individuals who had extensive experience in the affairs of the community. They usually handled public problems, settled disputes, and provided advice. The villagers entrusted the supervision of their affairs to these persons. The elders were also known as mo'tamedan (the trustees). Frequently, one of the rish sefids would be chosen as the kadkhuda who stood at the top of the socio-economic stratification of the village. The kadkhuda (the headman) was a respected member of the community and controlled all the affairs of village life, except the religious ones. However, when the mullah (clergy) was absent, the kadkhuda's persuasion was a very effective means of deciding religious and social matters. The kadkhuda was usually helped by a few assistants called pakars and one or two dashtbans whose function was to watch over the fields. Kadkhudas were chosen either by the villagers or by the landlord and government. Historically, the landowners and government have often tried to domesticate the kadkhudas. The last attempt in this direction was the law passed in October 1935, according to which the kadkhuda was defined as the "owner's representative" and his position was formalized as "a law enforcer" who received his orders and directions from the landowner.

The absentee Iranian land-holder and/or landowner either chose a kadkhuda from within the village or appointed a foreman (mubasher) from outside who secured his interest in the village and managed his affairs with the peasants. The landlords themselves often had no direct contact whatsoever with the people whose labor made it possible for them to indulge in leisure and luxury. It should be remembered that the allegiance of the kadkhuda to the

landowner/holder or state, as Goodell (1980: 312) has suggested, was constrained by the fact that he was a member of the village community.

Near in rank to the kadhuda were the few families who owned small plots of land and cultivated it either with the help of a few hired workers or with the help of members of their extended family. These independent producers were able to produce sufficient crops to enable them to live modestly. Then comes the position of the landless peasants who either were involved in sharecropping or tenant farming. At the bottom of the village structure were the landless seasonal workers who were often faced with starvation, especially in a bad year in which there was no margin of livelihood.

Finally, the Iranian village community was more than a simple assemblage of peasant households. The village unit was a small sub-totality within the Iranian Asiatic social formation combining social, political, cultural, and economic relations in a coherent and integrated socio-economic whole. By definition, it represented a true social community with all the socially necessary functions, a community to which the members were committed by birth or marriage and bound by different implicit and explicit socio-politico-economic ties. These communities can be truly described as what Redfield (1955 & 1956) called "folk societies": small, isolated, non-literate, and homogeneous, with a strong sense of group solidarity. The population was bound together by the glue of custom, convention, and religion --an embodiment of what Durkheim calls a "mechanical solidarity." The life processes were organized around the rhythm of the agricultural cycle.

5.3. The Nature and Characteristics of Iranian Asiatic Cities

In his celebrated work, *The City*, Max Weber argued that Iranian cities were "a market place, a center of trade and commerce, and a fortress." (1958: 91) To discuss each of these fundamental characteristics within an Asiatic mode of production, the political nature of Iranian cities is a convenient point of departure.

5.3.1. Iranian Cities as Political and Administrative Centers

Iranian cities, in all historical periods, even when the Asiatic mode of production lost its ascendancy and the feudal mode of production became dominant, have been administrative centers of government (Khusravi, 1979: 42; Ashraf, 1974: 78). Many cities such as Marakanda, which was built by Cyrus and is known as Samarqand, and Dura on the Euphrates were fortress cities (the latter was converted into a fortress by the Parthian). In Iranian history, some cities emerged and declined along with the rise and fall of political dynasties. For instance, when the Achaemenids decided to establish Susa as their power center, they declassified Ekbatana (later called Hamadan) against the Assyrian offensive until the eight century B.C., to be their summer quarter. As mentioned by Max Weber, "Ekbatana and Persepolis were royal castles with surrounding settlements." (1958: 75) Both the Saljuqs and the Safavids made Esfahan their capital, while the Zands chose Shiraz as their capital. In the early centuries of Arab domination and Abbasid political power, it was Zabulestan which later became the stronghold

of the Turks from the steppes. The latest change in the location of the capital in the history of Iran was made by the Qajars who chose Tehran for their capital.

Cities like Shiraz, Esfahan, Maraqeh, Tabriz, Qazvin, Mashad, and Ardabil have been the capital of the country at one time or another. Also, cities like Kerman, Yazd, Gorgan, and Damqan have been the political seats of many important Shahs, local and national authorities, and tax-collecting officials (Cf. Adibi, 1972). The names of many Iranian cities are composed with the word shah: Kermanshah, Shahabad, Shahrud, Shahi, etc. Making a similar point, Georges and William Marcais have even suggested that the shape of the Islamic cities is determined in part by the exigencies of political power (Hourani, 1970: 12). Baghdad, the Abbasid capital, was a round-city which Scanlon (1970: 180) calls "Royal Quarter" (dar al-saltana). English (1966: 21-2) reports that the major reason for the establishment of Kerman city, by Ardashir I in 240 A.D., was to build a defensive outpost to buffer tribal incursions from Baluchestan. The basic structures of the city, as it developed later, were the palace and military quarters.

No force in the life of Iranian cities was of greater importance than the state. Organized urban life depended on the intimate participation of the government in many important aspects of urban affairs. The urban economy was very much linked with the military economy and urban production was in the service of the government (Khusravi, 1979: 31). As Adibi put it:

Whenever the central government was strong enough, the cities expanded and roads were built; when it was weak the

cities became weak and with disappearance of political power cities lost their glory. (1972: 26)

Finally, as political seats, these Iranian cities also served as the centers of cultural and religious activities embodied in religious schools (madrasas), shrines, khanqahs (Sufi hospice), and zur-khanehs (sport centers, the word literally means "house of strength"). Major cities like Esfahan or Mashad usually had a grand mosque which served as the center of many religious and educational activities (Cf. Gaube, 1965: 16-21). As Hodgson (1974, II: 81) has discussed this aspect of Islamic medieval cities, these cities were culturally very attractive to the privileged elements of pastoralists and agriculturalists, who demanded "the countryside not only of material resources for any high culture but of its human carriers"

5.3.2. Cities as Centers of Trade

In addition to being a center of the bureaucratic services of the government, such as the tax recording, military training, and dispensing of justice, Iranian Asiatic cities were also the center of artisan activities and the sale of commodities. Although these cities were the center of political power, they had a solid economic basis. Otherwise, they would not have been able to survive the dynastic changes and the periodical destruction of states (Cf. Hourani, 1970: 10). The institutional continuity of the existence of these cities, despite the political changes, was insured by their economic function which enabled them to maintain themselves. This

basic economic function was realized through economic interactions of which the government was a part.

Trade, artisan, and commercial transactions have always been important functions of these cities. Most of Iranian cities were situated at the crossing of major trade-routes. Economically, they served as entrepôts and markets for passing caravans, as well as for surrounding nomadic and village communities. Most of the manufacturing and industrial factories, except the carpet workshops which were often located in the rural areas, were always located in the cities and each city was specialized in the manufacture of one or two specific commodities.

The expansion of overseas trade with China, India, and African countries, coupled with the influence of Mesopotamia on the Iranian leaders in the third and fourth centuries, greatly contributed to the growth of cities and increasing urbanization. As a result of this trend, new cities such as Kerman, located on the Indo-Iranian commercial highway, were founded by the Sassanids (English, 1966: 21). As English has shown, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the city of Kerman was one of the most important commercial centers of the country, producing carpets and shawls and functioning as a trans-shipment point for the exchange of European goods. Since the Kashmir goats and sheep of this province produced high quality wool and down, its shawls and embroidery were well-known and were exported to Asian, African, and even European countries. In the Western world, Kerman shawls were in high demand, by ladies of the Victorian era, and were brought there through Istanbul. In the seventeenth century, the British and Dutch East

India companies decided to establish some factories in this city and export raw wools and shawls (Ibid.: 26).

The cities and their citizens were basically involved in non-agricultural activities and were usually dependent on the agricultural surplus extracted from the villages. Around some of the cities, however, low-scale agriculture existed, especially the cultivation of cooking vegetables, to supply the cities' basic needs. Garden farming and the occasional maintenance of single animals were not rare phenomena. These trends have led some sociologists, like Ashraf, to believe that Iranian cities has always shared an economic unity with the villages, i.e., the towns being involved in agricultural production and the village being involved in "industrial or craft production." Hence, Ashraf (1974: 42-6) concludes that there was no clear-cut division of labor between the two entities and they had a similar "identity" in terms of agricultural production.

Nonetheless, the involvement of the townspeople in agricultural production seems not so significant because it was not large-scale. Additionally, the town's people involved in agricultural activities were simply petty-producers, small tenant farmers, and small-holding farmers. These farmers were mainly producing for a market. Their products were destined for city markets and were often sold for cash and represented the historical genesis of small capitalist farming in Iran (Navidi, 1977: 184-5).

Therefore, it was a general rule for the cities to receive most of their necessities from the villages without seriously being obsessed with growing crops or rearing livestock. The flow of

surplus was mostly directed from agricultural and industrial centers to the governments in the cities (Puyan, 1971). However, the agricultural surplus was not the only source of government revenue. The government obtained a large portion of its revenue from the bankers, merchants, and craftsmen who produced goods for a wide market and financed or organized international trade.

The merchant communities in towns were communally organized and centered around the bazaar. The bazaar embraced many merchants who were involved in domestic and national businesses. In many cities, especially those close to the border areas, the bazaars enjoyed relative autonomy in their internal activities and had a modest volume of foreign trade (Cf. Ashraf, 1970; Chardin, 1811, IV; Minorsky, 1958: 55-9). As Gaube (1979: 66) has shown, the bazaar is an original creation of the Islamic Middle Ages and constitutes the primary characteristic of the Islamic oriented city. In almost every Islamic society, the development of the bazaar is closely associated with the development of the city.

The social structure of urban communities was complex and composed of various social classes and strata. In addition to the ruling class and its civil, military, and religious officials, the artisans and shopkeepers constituted a large portion of the urban population. At the bottom of the urban class structure were the majority of townspeople like craftsmen, itinerant vendors, unskilled laborers, porters, workers employed in services, beggars, and so on. The absentee landlords were also one of the main social strata residing in the cities, a very important characteristic of the Asiatic mode of production in Iran. In medieval Europe, the feudal

lords lived in their domains and the cities were relatively autonomous and outside the control of the feudal magnates. This autonomous character of the cities in Europe was one of the most important causes of the development of capitalism in Western Europe (Hilton, 1976). Unlike the European cities, the Iranian cities were deprived of this autonomy. The Iranian landlords lived in the cities because "they were closely involved with the large merchant houses and in wholesale, foreign, and forwarding businesses." (Bausani, 1971: 90) Therefore, merchant capital was very much tied to land revenue and vice versa. The revenues earned from the land were used as a support for the increases of trade profits, and the merchants profits. There was no margin of conflict between the two.

In the Asiatic social formation of Iran, the social division of labor between agricultural work and handwork industry such as carpet-weaving was not complete, and manufacturing did not become separate from agriculture. While many of the peasant communities were engaged in artisan and handicraft activities, there were many artisans who were involved in agricultural production (Ashraf, 1974: 42-6). This trait is partly responsible for the relative self-sufficiency of the villages in the Iranian Asiatic social formation. Another consequence of this low division of labor between the town and the village was the involvement of the landowners in the industrial and business activities, which in turn also contributed to the growth of the capitalist sector in major cities. There are historical accounts of the Saljuq period which indicate that many *muqta*'s put their money capital in business activities or invested it in handicrafts. Manufacturing shops in

the city were usually owned by these land-holders and military officers. The muqta's or amirs, whose assigned lands were adjacent to the cities, usually required the peasants under their control to work in their artisan workshops too. For instance, the son of a Daylamite king in the tenth century A.D. is reported to have freed all artisans who had been in the possession of his father (Abu Delf, 1963: 69).

5.3.3. The Structure of the Cities

Iranian cities had a hierarchical structure which fitted into the larger hierarchical structure of patrimonial despotism of the Asian social formation, i.e., the empire. City, tribe, and village were socio-economic units vertically structured in the politico-economic structure of the empire (Mehrain, 1979). At the top of the urban structure stood the Shahs or their representative governors and their households. This household, as we discussed earlier, was an extension of the person of shah. On the second level were the members of the ruling body, i.e., palace and high ranking government officials and the members of nobility. Close to this rank were the ulama (clergy), the qazi (judges), and the muhtaseb or darouqeh (police). On the lower rank were lower administrators, lutis (gallant men), soldiers, petty-merchants, and so on. At the lowest level of the social structure were the wage laborers, peasants living in the cities or adjacent areas, etc. Sometimes we find this lowest level to be truly communal in structure and geographically located in separate wards in the cities. These communities were

organized by leaders whose power was more ethical than politico-economic. They usually had no coercive machinery to implement their wishes and relied on moral standards and status measures of control in order to keep order.

These cities were divided into three parts of citadel (kuhandiz), suburb (birun), and the core city (shahrestan) (Cahen, 1975: 318). These units were hierarchically divided. There were princely quarters with palaces and citadels (also called arg), administrative quarter, economic quarter (the bazaar), and residential areas divided on the basis of religious affiliation. To be safe in times of chaos and to maintain close contact with civic and commercial leaders in the city, the political and commercial elite usually lived within the walls of the citadel (arg) or as close to them as possible. Some of the rich landholders or amirs built walled houses resembling small fortresses. For example, during the reign of the Safavids, Badr Khan Afshar, the first qurchi bashi (state trooper) of Shah Abbas I, built such a house in Qazvin. Earlier in the same period, Pir Mohammad Khan Ustajlu possessed a huge house very much like a caravansarai on the road between Qazvin and Kushk (Reid, 1978: 91).

The residential areas in the cities were also enclosed by long walls around them called qal'eh. In some periods, all the streets and quarters were protected by these walls. For instance, in the early eleventh century, all the streets and quarters of Isfahan had strong bars and gates (Naser Khusrow, 1956). (7) As stated by Iranian historian, Naser Khusrow (Ibid.: 121), these walls were security belts protecting the city-dwellers from the nomadic as well

as foreign invasions.

Like the Asian villages, Iranian cities also enjoyed a certain degree of self-government. Each urban unit or residential area was divided into different wards (mahalleh) consisting of various religious communities, social classes, and professional groups who were represented by a mediator called kadkhuda or ra'is-e mahalleh (Lambton, 1970: 80-1). Each of these city wards had its own public bath, bazaar, and mosque. These wards were usually self-contained and enclosed with strong walls and gates. The administration of these wards were usually in the hands of local officials chosen by the local population. While the qazi was the religious judge and the muhtaseb was the civil administrator, the community of each ward had an administrative body of its own called lutis. The lutis represented the civil society and not the state.

In order to collect taxes and exert effective control over these communities, the state usually relied on the person of the kadkhuda, who was sometimes appointed by the state, especially when the central government was very strong (Mehrain, 1979: 70). The kadkhuda occupied a mediatory role as an official of the 'urf (customary law) and often was subordinate to the kalantar (mayor). While the kadkhuda was more directly accountable to the patrimonial authority, he was more responsive to his constituency at the local level. It is for this reason that it was usually hard for the Shahs to choose their man as kadkhuda. As Malcolm noted:

If the king should appoint a magistrate disagreeable to the citizens, he [the kadkhuda] could not perform his duties In small towns or villages the voice of the

inhabitants in the nomination of their kut-khodah, or head, is still more decided; and if one is named whom they do not approve, their incessant clamour produces either his voluntary resignation or removal. (1815,II: 456)

In general, the administration of the cities was in the hands of the government. When carrying out the large projects of public nature, like constructions and military enterprises, the central government also used urban dwellers as a pool of unpaid laborers (Minorsky, 1943: 462). Sometimes, this laboring was regarded as the tax share and the laborer was exempted from the annual tax.

5.3.4. Iranian Asiatic Cities as Compared with Western European Cities

Discussing Western European cities, Max Weber (1958: 88) maintains that a city has five distinguishing characteristics: fortification, market, court administering a partly autonomous law, urban associations, and at least partial autonomy. If we apply these features to Iranian cities of Islamic era, we find that two of these characteristics are missing. First, Iranian cities of the pre-capitalist era did not have any legal privileges conferred by the state because the shari'a, the Islamic law, does not recognize any civil privilege for one group of people over another. Second, these cities were not autonomous entities (Hourani, 1970: 13-4). These cities were not entities in opposition to the villages, as was the case in feudal Western Europe. These cities were, as suggested by Hourani (Ibid.: 16), "agro-cities" which were very much dependent on the food-supply produced in the countryside.

The countryside, which enjoyed a high degree of economic self-

sufficiency, was also in need of a ruler or an army to protect it against the attacks and pillaging of nomads and foreign invaders. In other words, while the city was economically dependent on the countryside, the countryside was politically dependent on the military forces usually positioned in the city. The economic dependence of the city on the agricultural economy of the villages became greater when the cities grew in size and as the central government achieved more political strength. In most of the Middle Ages, the Iranian cities and the ribats (fortified caravanserais) villages were mutually interdependent (Rizvi, 1980: 9). Yet, there were exceptional towns which produced their food necessities in agricultural wards around the town.

Except for the dependency of the city on the agricultural surplus of the village, there were few common interests between the urban and village units for which they could enter into any conflict. The relationship between the two, as Marx (1973: 479) put it, was an "indifferent unity." Despite the economic dependency of the city on the villages, and the need of the latter for political protection from the government, the interactions between the two units were minimal. This relatively low level of interaction, in turn, reduced all sorts of potential conflicts between the two units. The cities, as well as the villages, were in constant conflict with the nomadic population which occasionally invaded these units and pillaged all their supplies (Khusravi, 1979: 32). Therefore, while in feudal Europe the town and countryside were antagonistic, in the Iranian Asiatic social formation the two enjoyed a unity against the tribal/nomadic unit.

After the tenth century in Europe, the city was not the constituency of the feudal lord anymore. With the development of trade and the growth of the commercial class in these cities, there emerged a growing tension between the dominant social class in the cities and the lords of the manors. Conversely, in pre-capitalist Iran, the landowners and land-holders (muqta's or tuyuldars) were living in the cities and were an important constituency of the socio-economic structure. Iranian commercial classes and their guilds, as compared with the nobility, were a subordinate element in the political structure of patrimonial despotism of Iran. In securing their political and economic interests, the Iranian patrimonial despots did not find themselves in need of any alliance with the commercial and manufacturing classes. Both landed classes and commercial classes were under the Shah's control and in any emergency situation, the latter resorted to an alliance with rural and tribal landowners and land-holders who had better access to their subjects. This structure of alliances impeded the emergence of the conflict which was the source of the development of forces of production and the emergence of capitalism in Western Europe.

5.4. Endnotes

(1) In the north eastern part of the country, which is a mountainous area, qal'eh is called kakat.

(2) As Behnam and Rasekh (1969: 204-9) report Rosenfield believes that qal'eh should be seen as an architectural style rather than a security device. I do not think that this is an accurate characterization of this phenomenon in the Iranian plateau. It is certain that construction of qal'eh had its architectural traits, and probably these traits have had their own architectural evolution. But the early motivation to design such a device had more to do with the socio-political factors rather than architectural ones.

(3) The description of land arrangement presented here is fairly general. The terminology as well as the detailed organization of this arrangement may vary according to the time and location.

(4) In some parts of the country the term khushneshin is used for those villagers who are not working on the land, either as the owner, crop-sharer, or service workers (Cf. Hooglund, 1973).

(5) The term nasaq is one of the most common terms indicating the right of usufruct. However, in some parts of the country different terms are used referring to this phenomenon, such as sar-qufli, qara peshk, jovar, and so on.

(6) In different parts of the country different terms are used for denoting this phenomenon. These terms include: sahra, haraseh, sarkar, paykar, pagav, and darkar (Cf. Safinejad, 1972).

(7) In Tarikh-e Bukhara (History of Bukhara) these walls are called rabaz. In the Islamic period, rabaz was a section of the town which bordered the villages. The rabaz themselves sometimes had qal'eh.

CHAPTER VI

PRODUCTIVE RELATIONS AND PATTERNS OF LAND-HOLDING DURING THE ASIATIC PERIOD

As discussed earlier, when describing the socio-economic conditions of pre-nineteenth century Iran, Western historians and social scientists use the term "feudalism" without any reservations or theoretical considerations. This usage is atheoretical and these authors often do not have a historico-theoretical understanding of the "feudal mode of production." In a broad sense, they use the term to refer to traditionalism or everything that is not yet modern. Their application of the term is dichotomous and reminds one of common theoretical dichotomies in classical Western sociological literature, such as Durkheim's mechanical and organic solidarity (1947), Tonnies' *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* (1957), Parson's universalism-particularism, achievement-ascription, and specificity-diffuseness, and Redfield's folk and urban society (1947). For these theorists, "feudalism" stands against modern Western capitalism, which is supposedly a higher stage in societal development. The position taken in this work opposes that approach because by feudalism this thesis refers to a mode of production which has a sociologically specific historical character. In Chapter III we argued that feudalism, even as a mode of production,

does not correspond to the totality of the social relations of production in pre-capitalist Iran, even though it is applicable to certain aspects of these social relations. These relations, as we argued, approximated the model of "Asiatic social formation," within which a variety of social relations of production are contained, as explained in the Chapter III.

Except for the works of proponents of the feudal thesis, most studies of landownership and land-assignments in pre-capitalist Iran lack any consideration for a general model of the social relations of production in pre-capitalist Iran. It is the contention of this author that one cannot have a clear picture of the complex historical character of productive relations within the Iranian social formation unless one develops a model of the forms and patterns of land-holding and landownership as an approximation of the complex historical reality of these forms and patterns. The model of "Iranian Asiatic social formation," developed in the Chapter III, is a general concept embracing the historical complexity and temporal variations of relations of production in pre-capitalist Iran.

When Marx distinguished between Asian societies of the East and feudal societies of the West, he had already presupposed that the actual forces of production in both types of society were nearly the same. Except for the large-scale irrigation works in Oriental societies, there were no clear-cut differences in the forces of production between the Asian mode of production and the feudal mode of production. Essentially, when the forces of production in two societies, or within a specific society, manifest structural

similarity, it is the relations of production, rather than the level of productive forces, which distinguishes one mode of production from another (Cf. Terray, 1972: 103). Both Oriental and Occidental societies were agrarian societies dependent on a specific kind of technology appropriate for agricultural production. By making a distinction between the specific nature of social relations of production in the East and in the West, Marx isolated the determining forces of production characterizing both feudal and Asian societies. "Oriental Despotism" was a historical characterization of relations of production in Asian societies.

It was these relations of production, based on the economic role of the state in the Asiatic mode of production, which distinguished the Asiatic mode of production from a feudal mode. In Asiatic societies like Iran, it was only the economic power of the state which allowed the construction of monumental projects such as an imperial highway stretching from Susa to Sardis in pre-Islamic period. The Shah was theoretically the owner of all the lands in the country and the population was regarded as his ra'yyat. The khans and muqta's 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 appanage, not as baronical estates as in feudal societies. The land-holders and government officials collected taxes and tributes and, while retaining a portion of them for themselves, usually sent these tributes to the patrimonial rulers in the capital. In cases in which these officials or land-holders retained all the earnings for themselves, they had still collected them on the basis of the authority of the patrimonial despot, not on

the basis of their own authority.

With respect to the position of Iranian peasants, they were neither slaves nor serfs. During the Islamic period, they were called fallah (farmer) and al-akara (plowman) and were regarded legally as freemen, generally owning their own labor-power and carrying out their production on individual plots. They worked on the lands which they did not own and paid taxes and/or rent either to the state or its representatives and agents.

In Islamic Iran the law required the state to protect public lands, that is, lands not owned by individual proprietors. In addition to a subsequent concern of this religious tradition for protecting the right to private property, this implied that in principle all land belonged to hafezan-e mellat (the guardians of the people) or sahaban-e dulat (the owners of the state, i.e., the government) (Lambton, 1970). But this does not imply that private ownership of the land did not exist in pre-capitalist Iran. Indeed, private-property-holding elements existed in the pores of Iranian society; but, they did not represent the dominant mode of property-holding and do not provide a theoretical basis for constructing a model of social relations of production throughout pre-capitalist Iran. The large landownership (umdeh maleki), as a dominant form of ownership, is a characteristic of the Iranian social formation during its feudal dominance after the eighteenth century when the power of the ulama was relatively reduced and in many ways brought under the control of the ruling class either by co-optation or by force. Prior to this period, this form of landownership was marginal and assumed prominence only during times of political

disintegration which led to the decentralization of independent provincial rules. As a rule, large feudal land-holding was not a dominant pattern in pre-capitalist Iran because the landed aristocracy could not transmit its land to its heirs intact. When a landowner died, the Islamic law demanded division of his estates among his sons. This inevitable fragmentation of the land, coupled with the same breakup by appropriation and alienation in times of dynastic change or foreign invasions, hindered the development of large land-holding (Sunderland, 1968: 625). As Katouzian has pointed out:

there was no guarantee that a man's fortune, of whatever form, would be passed on to any or all of his descendants: it could be easily confiscated or usurped by public bodies or 'private' persons. (1981: 15)

The large land-holding seen in the twentieth century Iran dates back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the feudal mode of production was at its zenith in Iran. This same phenomenon in the Asiatic era, which surely existed in a subordinate form, was associated with the patrimonial despotic state or with those private individuals who were associated with this institution either through blood or political fidelity.

As stated earlier, the subject of landownership or patterns of land-holding in pre-capitalist Iran is very complicated. From a political economy perspective, ownership of the means of production, such as land, is a matter of surplus distribution within a social formation. The distribution of agricultural surplus in the Iranian Asiatic social formation was determined by the contradictory

relationships between direct producers and the non-producing class of appropriators of the surplus. Direct producers consisted of landless and small landed peasants. The appropriators of surplus consisted of absentee landlords, urban merchants, and the patrimonial household. These groups were in a constant struggle to increase their share of the agricultural output. The outcome of this continuous struggle at any time and place determined the legal structure and the scope of the ownership of the means of production, as well as the scope of the productive output.

Historically, there have been three forms of land acquisition in Iran:

1) Collective Ownership: Communal ownership of land has always been, and to a lesser degree remains at present time, a feature of the Iranian social formation. In pre-capitalist Iran, there were many communities in which the means of production were collectively owned. This mode of ownership was gradually transformed through confiscation or money relations.

11) Acquisition of Land through Economic Means: Another way of acquiring land was through money relations. In this way, land became a commodity in the market. The urban merchants, money-lenders, and petty landowners all were involved in purchasing land. This method of obtaining land was common only in the areas adjacent to the cities where commercial agriculture was more prevalent. In pre-capitalist Iran, this practice was more prevalent when and where feudal relations were existent and/or dominant.

111) Acquisition of Land or Appropriation of Ownership Rights through Political Means: During the Asiatic period of Iranian

history, successive patrimonial despots granted lands to loyal members of their administration and the military officers. This system was called iqta or tuyul. Many times these iqta's evolved into outright ownership. However, such ownership rights seldom lasted because of successive changes in political power and dynasties. With the establishment of new patrimonial dynasties, most of the assigned lands in previous dynasties were appropriated and reassigned to new elements.

Iqta, as it was discussed in Chapter II, is an institution which emerged in the tenth century as a result of socio-economic changes during the Abbasid caliphate. These socio-economic changes, as Lambton (1953 & 1968) has argued, required the state to find a way of financing its extended bureaucratic operations. The iqta was a response to such a socio-economic need. What was new with the development of the iqta system is that the Turkish tribes introduced a new method of distributing wealth among servants of the state and the army. Beyond this, the administration developed by Turkish tribes was not so much different from the Iranian administrative system used in the past, i.e., the satrapy institution. As a matter of fact, while the Saljuq tribal character influenced the Iranian administrative system, it was the old Iranian satrapy institution that provided the basis for a new administrative system.

The iqta took two basic forms: iqta al-istighlal and iqta al-tamlik. The former was the assignment of the revenue of a piece of land to someone and the latter was the assignment of the land itself (Lambton, 1953: 29-30). The iqta had various functions: First, it was an effective administrative means through which provincial

affairs could be handled. Second, it was a means through which the surplus produced by agricultural producers could be transferred to the central government. Third, as Lambton (1953) has discussed, it served as a means through which government expenditures, especially administrative and military expenditures, could be paid. Fourth, it was a mechanism through which the political loyalty of officials and other members of elites could be checked. And finally, its application served as a mechanism for creating political loyalty.

In pre-capitalist Iran, the relations between peasants and landlords usually took one of three forms: (a) muqasameh (fixed rent); (b) muqata'eh (fixed share); (c) muzaraeh (crop sharing). The muqasameh was an agreement on the basis of fixed rent which was paid partly in kind and partly in cash. In muqata'eh, the share of the landowner was assessed at a fixed sum at the beginning of the agreement. This type of relationship was common mostly in summer cash crop cultivations near large urban centers. The muzaraeh was basically a crop-sharing agreement according to which the allocation of the crop was based on khamseh ("five"). Under this system, the landlord or peasant got one fifth of the crop for each of the elements of production he provided. The five elements of production consisted of land, water, seed, animal, and labor. Usually, the landlord provided four of these elements: land, water, seed, and animal. The share-cropper usually contributed only his labor and received only one-fifth of the produce.

The origin of the muzare'eh relationship goes back to pre-Islamic Iran. Historical accounts give us a rough estimation that this pattern had existed during the Sassanids. Al-Balazuri (1967:

168) mentions that when the Arabs captured Azarbaijan, they patterned their relations with the peasants in that area according to the existing relations of muzaraeh. According to Ibn Hauqal (1966: 69), in the fourth century A.H. in Fars, the distribution of agricultural products between the peasants and the landowners was based on a two-fifths division.

The division of the shares in this system of surplus appropriation varied from one region to another, or from one time to another. However, in all cases, the share of the direct producer was never enough for more than living at a subsistence level. The peasants always struggled to change the division systems, and possibly to raise their share, in order to keep their living standard; but they were always faced with resistance from the government, the landlords, and their local representatives.

Not only were the peasants responsible for producing a considerable surplus, in order to provide a large share for the landowner, but they also had to produce enough surplus in order to be able to pay taxes and dues to the government. The taxes for the private farms were exacted not from the landowners, but from the peasants. Even if in some cases the landowners were to pay some taxes, they usually passed on this burden to the peasants by including the taxes in the costs to be reduced in the final assessment of the value of produce. In addition to regular taxes and dues exacted by the government, the peasants were required to perform various duties consisting of a kind of partial personal servitude. The kind and frequency of these services varied from region to region and from time to time. The most common service was

transporting the landowner's share of the harvest from the threshing floor to the granary. In some cases, the peasants had to pay different fees too. For instance, in Kurdestan, the landowners levied a fee called surareh as a permission for marriage. In other places during the New Year, another fee was charged called Nourouzi, basically a present that could take the form of sheep, hens, eggs, butter, and so on.

The peasants have been the main producers in the Iranian social formation throughout history; but they have also been the most oppressed people of this country who were always kept at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The observations of a European, who spent some time in Iran during the Qajar rule can be taken as a vivid recapitulation of this as well as a description of the conditions of Iranian peasants throughout pre-capitalist period:

... there is no class of men whose situation presents a more melancholy picture of oppression and tyranny, than the farmers and cultivators of the ground in Persia. They live continually under a system of extortion and injustice, from which they have no means of escape; and which is the more distressing because it is indefinite, both in form and extent, for no man can tell when, how, or to what amount demands upon him may, without warning, be made. It is upon the farmers and peasantry that the whole country finally alights.... Every tax, every present, every fine, every bribe, from whomever received, or demanded in the first instance, ultimately falls on them; and such is the character of their rulers, that the only measure of these demands, is the power to extort on the one hand, and the ability to give or to retain on the other. (Fraser, 1825: 173)

The landed class has always viewed the peasants as an unreliable element. The attitude of this class towards the producing class was one of suspicion and mistrust. As Lambton put it:

Broadly speaking, however, between the landowner as a class, no matter what his origin, and the peasant there is a wide gulf. In no sense is there a spirit of cooperation or a feeling of being engaged in a mutual enterprise. The attitude is on the whole, though not without exceptions, one of mutual suspicion. The landowner regards the peasant virtually a drudge, whose sole function is to provide him with his profits and who will, if treated with anything but severity, cheat him of his dues. It is widely believed in landowning circles that anything above the barest consideration of the well-being of the peasant would be taken by the latter as a sign of weakness and as a result would not pay the dues of the landowner. (1953: 263)

The world of the Iranian peasants was one of suffering and repressed dissent. The oppressive social relations imposed on the Iranian peasants by the landowners and the patrimonial despots, coupled with the harshness of the natural environment, caused them to look upon their situation with resignation. The exploitative relation imposed from outside turned these producers into passive subjects with fatalistic world outlook. Therefore, it is important to remember that their appeasement, pessimism, fatalism, and passivities are nothing but a consequence of the heavy demands put on their shoulder by the central and local authorities and the landowners. To quote Lambton:

... the dominant feature of the life of the peasant is insecurity, insecurity because of the frequent threat to crop failures due to natural causes, insecurity from the exactions of his fellow men. ... his [the peasant's] almost constant problem is poverty. This is true not only of the crop-sharing peasant, but also to a lesser extent of the peasant proprietor, and even more of the agricultural labourer. In such circumstances it is not altogether surprising that he should have developed a certain technique of fatalism to enable him to exist in an environment whose capricious nature must frequently impress itself upon him. (1953: 391-2)

6.1. Productive Social Relations in Pre-Islamic Era

Understanding taxation and land tenure is a necessary step in understanding the social relations of production because they are good indicators of the social classes involved in production and of the manner in which the relationships between these classes are organized. What follows in this chapter is a review of the general pattern of land tenure, taxation, and the situation of peasants in different Asiatic periods of Iranian history. Under the category of the landowning system description is offered of land tenure and taxation in different periods, their transformation, and the characteristics of dominant forms in which they have appeared historically.

Again, it should be mentioned that the study of patterns of ownership and productive relations in different historical periods and in different parts of the country is not an easy task because of the lack of hard data. Inquiries dealing with remote times often rely heavily on hunches, inferences, and hypotheses. It is only by establishing a general model that one can make sense out of scattered reports and historical accounts. The following description of the tenurial relations and peasant condition is guided by the model of the "Asiatic Iranian formation" and is not definitive in its details. It presents only a broad picture of land-holding and landownership in pre-capitalist Iran on the basis of available sources.

Finally, it should be noted that in describing the tenurial patterns and productive relations of the Iranian pre-capitalist

period, this work has framed its discussion according to the dynastic pattern of Iranian history. This dynastic sequence is used simply as a convenient methodological device because most of the historical accounts available to us are guided by this division. However, this dynastic periodization does not correspond to any historical periodization in terms of the relations of production. the model of the "Asiatic social formation" transcends the sociological and historical limitations inherent in the dynastic periodization.

6.1.1. The Achaemenids (550-330 B.C.):

The basic character of the social organization in the Achaemenian and Parthian dynasties was the institution of satrapy. The empire was divided into different provinces, satrapies, which were run by governors (satraps) assigned by the king. These satrapies (khshathrapan) were actually a continuation of the governorship (pakhata) of the Assyrians which was followed by the Medians, too. The satrapies were divided into smaller units controlled by local officials.

Theoretically, the kings owned all the land and people were regarded as their slaves (bandaka) (Frye, 1963: 107). There was no distinction between the king's and the state's lands. The central patrimonial treasury was regarded as the ruler's treasury. The king did not differentiate between himself and the state. According to Richards (1979: 149), "the Achaemenids regarded the state as being their personal household, and the national treasury being their

personal treasury." In addition to the king's land, there were also temple lands, or "land of the gods," which belonged to the temples. The revenues collected from these lands went to the priests who remitted part of it to the central treasury.

The king granted land to his officials and followers. This practice was called *qashtu*, meaning the division of land for the support of an archer. These grantees became absentee landowners whose agents managed the affairs of their land in the villages. These *qashtus* were controlled by the constitution of *hatru* (canton) which was in charge of managing their affairs. The slaves working on patrimonial estates were regarded as state property. The slaves apparently have had a more favored position than free laborers. It is reported that in both the Achaemenian and the Seleucid periods, free skilled labor was much cheaper than that of slave labor (Rizvi, 1980: 25).

The relationship between the king and his satraps was basically a tributary relationship:

The tribute system had its greatest development, however, in the Persian Empire under the Achaemenian dynasty. Darius I levied upon the twenty satrapies into which his empire was divided fixed graduated payments in money and commodities suitable for the needs of the empire. The total money collected by the Persian rulers, in addition to the very considerable payments in kind, approximated the value of \$ 17,000,000, representing a purchasing power many times that of contemporary gold currency. The Persian Empire, furthermore, surpassed the earlier empires in that its tributaries were levied according to a well-balanced plan which influenced the Orient and which in many of its features was incorporated into the tax systems of the Greek polis. (1)

The Achaemenian satraps collected the taxes, controlled the subject tribes, administered public affairs, and exercised judicial

authority in their assigned provinces; but they had no military authority. While each satrapy had its own provincial armed forces, the satrap had no control over the royal troops posted in his province and the strongholds those troops manned. The military forces positioned in each province were under the order of a commander directly responsible to the king himself. These satraps were overseen by the inspectors called the "Ears of the King." Any abuse of power or temptation towards separation or rebellion was reported to the central government and was treated very severely. According to Sykes:

To prevent the concentration of power in one man's hands, a Satrap, a General, and a Secretary of State were appointed in each province, these officials being independent of each other and reporting to headquarters direct. Under this system of divided powers, the three great officials would be hostile to one another and consequently most unlikely to organize a rebellion. As a further precaution, inspectors of the highest rank were sent out at irregular intervals, supported by strong bodies of troops and armed with full powers to investigate and punish any abuse and to report on the Satrap and other officials. (1951, I: 162)

The collection of taxes in provincial areas was assigned to the governing satraps. Taxes were paid both in kind and in money. As Herodotos reports, Achaemenids established a stable tax system according to which each satrapy paid "a fixed yearly amount in unminted gold or silver." (Frye, 1963: 102; Also Cf. Huart, 1927: 75) It is reported that the annual income raised through taxation of the various satrapies amounted to 14,500 talents (a talent was worth about 200 British pounds.). This was in addition to the tribute in kind (grain, horses, slaves, ivory, cattle, etc.) received from

each satrapy (Bausani, 1971: 22). As Sykes (Ibid: 163) reports, the lowest revenue was derived from the region known today as Baluchestan. Since the land in this area was poor and sterile, the revenue collected from it amounted to 170 talents of silver. Sykes states:

Babylon ... was assessed at 1000 talents, and Egypt at 700 talents of gold, and the total revenue in money was ... 3,708,280[British pounds]. (Ibid.)

The satraps who collected these taxes and tribute from peasants and artisans usually deducted their provincial expenditures from them, and then forwarded the rest to the central government. In collecting taxes, these satraps treated the peasants as they wished, so long as they remitted the share of the patrimonial center. Therefore, to increase their share, these satraps did not hesitate to overexploit the peasantry.

Darius developed a system of surveying the lands and measuring their yields. On the basis of this survey, the fixed yearly taxes were determined. The free Persians, i.e., nobles, were exempt from taxes. Their sole duty and honor was to bear arms and breed their cattle and manage the affairs of their peasants. The heavy taxes, coupled with the gifts to the king on different occasions, placed an intolerable hardship on the peasantry. When the king and his imperial troops travelled, the population of the area travelled through even had to provide rations for his troops --an additional burden on the shoulders of the peasantry.

It is reported that Gaumata, the Medean magus (moghan), rebelled against the intolerable burden put on the shoulders of the

toiling peasants by the heavy taxation imposed by Darius, the Achaemenian ruler. Gaumata is probably one of the first social reformers who achieved the support of the peasants in this struggle against the nobles. He remitted the taxes for three years and abolished military service for the subject people. In one of the Behistun inscriptions, it is mentioned that he deprived the "people" of their possessions. It is clear that the historians of the court regarded the nobles to be the "people." (Bausani, 1971: 20)

6.1.2. The Seleucids (312-250 B.C.):

Like the Achaemenids, the Seleucid rulers assumed the theoretical ownership of all the land in the country. Even the lands owned by temples were regarded as royal lands granted to the temple. When the Seleucid kings came to power, they left some of the lands owned by the old landowners intact, divided some others, and granted new ones to their officials, and even to their Greek friends. However, a new dimension was added to these grants by the Seleucids: the grant of land to cities or to military colonies (Frye, 1963: 136). The tenure for these lands (kleros, meaning "a lot") tended to become hereditary and the landed military officials owed allegiance to the central government and were subject to military service.

The Seleucid dynasty showed slight changes in their politico-economic organization of the society. Since this empire was affected by the Hellenistic culture, the relationship between the central government and its satrapies and governors was slightly

different. It seems that the satrapies had a greater autonomy to the extent that some of these local governments are spoken of as minor dynasties and vassal kings. In the latter part of the first century A.D., Pliny reports the existence of eighteen kingdoms, "eleven 'upper' and seven 'lower' kingdoms." (Colledge, 1967: 57) These so-called "kingdoms" really constituted the large "satrapies" within the empire and should not be viewed as governments with total independence.

To the east of the Euphrates river, there was a three-fold administrative division of eparchy, hyparchy, and the fortified village (statbmos). The satraps were in charge of collecting taxes and tributes. The land-tax was still fixed as had been established by Darius. The satrapies taxed the peasants on a community basis rather than on individual basis. The central treasury was also involved in collecting additional taxes.

6.1.3. The Parthians (250 B.C.-227 A.D.):

The Parthians were nomadic people who borrowed most of their ideas of monarchical rulership from their predecessors. They continued to manage the affairs of the empire through the system of satrapy, with its subdivisions of "eparchy" and "hyparchy" controlled by civil or military governors (Bausani, 1971: 44). Even these eparchies were sometimes divided into smaller districts in order to make the collection of taxes more managable. On some of the Greek inscriptions, the title of "satrap of satraps" had appeared which reminds us of the "king of kings" used for the

patrimonial despots (Frye, 1963: 183).

Despite these developments, the importance of the satrapy institution seems to be reduced in this period. There is some evidence that the marzbans (margrave) were ranked higher than the satraps. Below the satraps were the heads of "fortified villages" who were called the *dzypty*. It seems that during the Parthian rule, due to the lack of strong central authority, feudal relations were stronger and more prevalent than previous periods. However, the evidence is not conclusive. The nobles had a greater role in this period than they had in the previous dynasty; but this does not provide any basis for characterizing the Parthian system as that of a feudal system of vassalage. As Wittfogel argued against Christensen's view of Parthian feudalism, the evidence is not conclusive:

The Persian office land was not a feudal institution, nor did it inspire a feudal order among the Parthians. The big Parthian land-holders were not semi-autonomous fief-holders who spent most of their time attending to their personal affairs. Instead, and very much like their Persian predecessors, they were government officials. (1957: 282)

And further he argues in the footnote that:

Did the political order change when the monarchy disintegrated into several territorial kingdoms? This is, of course, possible, but it is by no means certain. On the basis of comparable cases, it seems that the smaller and later Parthian kingdoms were smaller Oriental despotisms, with certain leading families hereditarily holding the top-ranking positions in government and occupying very substantial tracts of office land. (Ibid.: 282-3)

Theoretically, the king still owned all the land in the country and could confiscate the property of anyone who did not pay his

taxes. The society was divided into two categories: freemen (azatan) and slaves. The former included the nobility, government officials, and influential families. The azatans were exempt from the poll-tax but not from the land-tax. They also had to pay taxes on the sale of slaves.

After every conquest of a new land, the Parthian either reinstated its previous king with new obligations and loyalties to their power or else appointed a satrap of their own called vitaxa. During this period, the nobility assumed a stronger position. Their council (synedrion) became so powerful that in some cases it even became involved in the ratification of the accession of the king. There were seven great noble families who were influential in managing the affairs of the country. These nobles owned the land in different parts of the country and each controlled huge armies.

As for the relationship between these nobles and peasants, we know very little because materials relating to Parthian times are very fragmentary and clouded by ambiguity. Nonetheless, it appeared that the institution of slavery became increasingly uneconomical and thus declined. This demise of slavery was accompanied by the increased importance of agricultural production, and thus, the development of the peasantry. Absentee landownership was prevalent and was one of the causes of the economic crisis of Parthia. The luxurious living of the nobles and absentee landowners led to the impoverishment and heavy indebtedness of the peasants. The taxes were heavy and included land-tax (tasqa) and poll tax (keraga). If a peasant could not pay taxes, he could sell himself or members of his family into slavery to a person who would pay his taxes (Frye,

1963: 187).

6.1.4. The Sassanids (227-651 A.D.):

In this period, satraps were replaced by the provincial governors (marzban meaning the waeden of morches). The provinces were further divided into districts (ostan). While each ostan was governed by a marzban, the local villages were left in the control of the dehqans (Bausani, 1971: 51). This practice was part of the Sassanid policy of centralization. Having experienced the semi-autonomous satrapies of the Parthians, Ardeshir (224-240), the founder of the Sassanid kingdom, decided to abolish that system and replace it with a strong central government. As Sykes 81951.II: 397) put it, "his system was that of Darius rather than that of Parthians...." Later this policy was changed by Anoushirvan who divided the empire into four satrapies.

The Sassanid society was a class society divided into five categories of people. The first category was the ruling aristocracy including the princes (shahrdaran), rulers of the border provinces (marzban), members of the great families (vaspuhran), the grandees (vuzurgan), the Iranian nobles (azadan), village owners (dehqanan), and heads of the small local administrative centers (katak-khvatayan). The second category consisted of the priests (asravan); the third were the warriors (arteshbaran); the fourth category was that of the administrators (dapiran), and finally the fifth included the common people including farmers (vastryoshan) and artisans (hutukhshan) (Bausani, 1971: 49-50). When the Zoroastrianism became

the state religion, these categories became severely fixed and developed into a caste system because according to the Avesta, the Zoroastrian holy book, the society consisted of three classes of priests, the warriors, the peasants, and the artisans --the last two making one class. This system of stratification closed all hopes of mobility for the lower classes. Any intermarriage between these classes was forbidden and class positions became hereditary.

The majority of the population were regarded as the common people. The largest sector of this class was comprised by the peasants who worked on the land. The *dehqans* were village heads, who inherited their title to local administration, and who collected taxes from the peasants as the representatives of the central government. The land they owned was not really large and their main task was to be good tax-collectors. The increase in the number of *dehqans* lowered the importance of the few great families such as the Karen, Suren, Varaz, Spahbadad and others. This change also counterbalanced the power of these families so much so that they almost lost all their power along with their lands. This decline in power of these families was accompanied with an increase in the power of the patrimonial authority in expanding its economic control over crown lands. The conquest of new territories in this period, especially in Western Iran, increased the size of crown lands and provided more economic support for the patrimonial household (Lukonin, 1967: 21).

The peasants (*barzigar* or *barzegar*) worked on the lands along with slaves and , in the later Sassanid rule when the feudal elements were gaining power, could not leave the land without the

permission of their landlords or the government representative. The peasant and slaves were not allowed to own or hold lands; they were obliged to serve in the army as footsoldiers --a service from which the townsmen were exempted.

The government's revenue was largely derived from the land-tax (kharag, from which is derived the Arabic term kharaj). The amount of this tax was based on the fertility of the land and the degree of cruelty or softheartedness of the local authorities. The tax usually ranged from a sixth to a third of the produce and was paid both in kind and in cash. The tax for each unit of land was one dirhem (the unit of silver coinage) plus one fixed unit of produce. Except the nobility, the military, administrative officials, dihqans, and the priests, who all were exempted from tax payment, every other member of the society between the ages of twenty and fifty had to pay a poll-tax determined according to his/her income. Payment of these taxes was made in three installments, at intervals of four months. The artisans also had to pay a personal tax (gezit) in addition to custom duties on their merchandize. To all these taxes should be added other taxes in the form of customary annual gift (ayin) and compulsory presents which were given in the Nour Rouz (New Year) and Mehregan (the beginning of autumn) festivals.

The heavy taxation and exactions created an unbearable situation for peasants. Furthermore, this heavy taxation was accompanied by cruel treatment of the peasants by the local landowners and government officials. For example, the peasants were not allowed to touch the fruits and other agricultural produce until taxation had taken place; thus if the produce went bad, due to the

late arrival of the tax collector, the peasants would lose all their livelihood (Huart, 1927: 157). We are informed that in many cases the taxes and additional exactions made by tax-collectors took up more than one-half of the peasant produce (Simkin, 1968: 60).

Under the rule of Khusrow I (531-579), the empire was in severe financial crisis. Khusrow decided to develop a stable tax system by which the government revenues would be fixed. He ordered a survey of all the lands and a census of date palms and olive trees. The taxes were assessed in a number of fixed categories according to the productive capacity of the producer. A detailed account of this taxation system is given by Huart:

By this system, the garib, an area equal to about half an acre, was taxed at a dirhem a year for wheat and barely, eight dirhems for vines, seven dirhems for lucern, which provided for horses, no doubt combined with the usual chopped straw, and five dirhems for rice. Dates and olives were taxed by the tree. (1927: 157)

In 607 A.D., under Khusrow II (591-628), "the yield of all taxes amounted to six hundred million dirhems." (Ibid.: 156)

This heavy taxation had great consequences for peasants who were faced not only with the shameful conditions of economic poverty, but also with a harsh natural environment. Despite the government efforts in the development of irrigation, water shortages created drought and starvation for most of the landless peasants who received no help from the government. These conditions created severe agricultural crises during the rules of Peroz (459-484), Kavad (488-531), and Khusrow I (531-579). It was in response to this crisis that Khusrow Anoushirvan (531-579) made some reforms and

provided the peasants with seeds, agricultural instruments, and animals in order to encourage them to increase their agricultural output (Sykes, 1951,I).

One of the most important events in the history of this period is the Mazdakite movement. In response to the exploitative measures and relations imposed upon peasants, in the sixth century a movement was organized by Mazdak. The Mazdakite movement called for the establishment of communal ownership of the land. In the latter part of the fifth century, Kavad (488-531) joined Mazdak's movement in order to undermine the noble's growing power. The Mazdakites succeeded and formed their own communes in northern Iran on the land expropriated from the legal owners. However, once Kavad's purpose was served, he turned his back on the Mazdakites. Kavad's successor, Khusrow Anoushirvan, suppressed the movement and defeated it by exterminating one hundred thousand Mazdakites.

Another related development in this period is the emergence of Manicheism in the third century, which advocated a negative attitude toward this world; this is interpreted by some scholars as a reflection of economic decline and class inequalities which existed in this period (Keddie, 1981: 3). (2)

6.2. Productive Relations during the Islamic Era

6.2.1. Arab Invasion and Umayyad Rule (636-759 A.D.):

When Arabs invaded Iran in 636 A.D. and defeated the Iranian army at Qadesiyya, they were confronted with an extended

bureaucratic organization for which they were unprepared. Since they found themselves unable to govern a bureaucracy such as that of Sassanid's in their own tribal way, they decided to adopt many of the Sassanid institutions, such as the system of taxation and the administrative system. Umar, the Arab caliph, decided that the local administrators should stay on and carry on their duties. To bring these administrators under his control, he appointed "a commander or governor (amir) with full powers, sometimes assisted by an agent (amil) responsible directly to [Umar]." (Vagleiri, 1970: 64)

At the time of this invasion, there were two categories of lands in Iran. First, there were the lands belonging to the king, the nobility, and the military men who were killed or disappeared. Second, there were the lands possessed by the dehqans. The former was appointed by Umar and regarded as the Caliph's share of the booty (qanima). The part of these lands whose owners were still alive were left in the hands of their cultivators on the condition that they would pay kharaj (land-tax) to the appointed trustees. The part whose owners had fled or could not be found were distributed as qata'i (plural of qati'a) among his senior soldiers who "deserved well of Islam" (Vaglieri, 1970: 64; Cahen, 1975: 311). The estates owned by the Zoroastrian temples were regarded as the property of the Moslem community (fai') and treated as the domains of the state. The land possessed by the dihqans were untouched provided that they would pay kharaj on their lands and jizya on their heads. Jizya was an extra tax collected from those who had not converted into Islam. These non-Moslems were called zimmi or

ahl al-zimma (protected subjects) and could exempt themselves from jizya by becoming Moslem. It is important to note that jizya and kharaj were really the same as the property-taxes and poll-taxes collected during the Sassanids. Under the Sassanids, the Iranian aristocracy was exempted from poll-tax and under the Arab rulers the Arab Moslem freemen (mukallaf) were exempted from jizya and had to pay only tithe (ushr) on their estates. The words of Yahya b. Adam al-Qurashi are instructive in this regard:

The Muslims, when they defeated the Persians, left the Sawad (southern Iraq), and those of the Nabat and dihqans who had not fought the Muslims, in the same position (as previously). They imposed the jizya on the heads of the men, surveyed the land in their possession and charged kharaj on it. Any land not possessed by anyone was seized as sawafi (state land). (Quoted in Frye, 1973:63)

The Arab caliphs dealt with sawafi lands as they pleased. Under Uthman and his successors much of these lands were given to patrimonial favorites (Frye, 1975: 64), many of whom leased the land from the government and sold it to others as private property.

After the Arab conquest, many of the great landowners became Moslem in order to avoid jizya exacted only from the non-converts. Many Iranian converts often attached themselves to Arab families as mawali (clients) and played an important role in the operation of the government bureaucracy. When the number of mawalis was increasing, the Umayyad state experienced a decline in its revenues. To prevent a diminution of state revenue, the Umayyads discouraged conversion and "often continued to exact payment of kharaj and jizya from the mawali, notwithstanding that as Moslems they should have been exempted from taxation." (Saunders, 1965: 97)

At the beginning of the Arab rule, Umar II advocated a policy of equal distribution of the conquered land among all Arab fighters (Ibn al-Jauzi, 1913: 88-9). Once the Arabs won the war, Umar realized that his old ideological claims could only serve the purpose of mobilization for war and their implementation after the war would be disastrous because adopting such a policy meant great losses to the treasury. Therefore, he decided to tax all the landowners, no matter who they were. Furthermore, he decreed that "after the hundredth year of the Hijra (718-19) no kharaj-paying land should be purchased by a Moslem, though he could rent it and continue paying the tax, and that should a non-Arab embrace Islam, his land was to revert to the village community, he himself staying on, if he desired, as the tenant." (Saunders, 1965: 97) It is even reported that the governor of Iraq, Hajjaj b. Yusuf, forbade the conversion to Islam (Frye, 1975: 70).

The mawalis were not regarded as citizens with full rights. They were required to participate in military expeditions and fight along with the Arabs, but they were not listed as salaried soldiers. If they participated in wars, they were offered either a meager share of the booty or none at all. In addition to all these, they had to pay the poll-tax which was seen as a token of inferiority (Ashtor, 1976: 29)

Generally, the conditions of life for Iranian peasants were very bad in this period. They were doubly exploited by providing revenues for the local administration, on the one hand, and by supporting the Umayyad treasury in Arab lands, which was badly in need of funds, on the other hand. Under the Umayyads, the zakat

(alm), which was a communal obligation to support the religious establishment, was collected from all the Moslems. The amount of this alm varied from one area to another, but it usually took an amount from two and a half per cent of total property upward (Frye, 1975: 105).

The collection of taxes and kharaj, as we read in Al-Kharaj, were always accompanied with plunder, looting, beating, and the torture of the peasants. The ruling officials used to employ all the coercive techniques they knew in order to get the largest possible kharaj or tax from the peasants (Qudama, n.d.: 61). The peasants who could not bear all these oppressive practices deserted their fields and flocks for the towns. The number of peasants fleeing from villages reached such an alarming porportion that al-Hajjaj, the Umayyad ruler, had to take drastic steps to stop it. To return these peasants back to their lands and secure the government's revenue, al-Hajjaj expelled all of them from the cities and tattooed their name and location on their hands.

6.2.2. The Abbasids (750-1258 A.D.):

The Umayyad oppression and corruption created a revolutionary environment within the Iranian Asiatic social formation. Iranian barzegars were taxed unbearably and Iranian converts (mawalis) were treated as inferiors who had to pay extra taxes too. This situation resulted in the revolt of 750 A.D. by Abu Moslem Khurasani. This revolt led to the formation of the Abbasid dynasty which owed the consolidation its power to the ruthless al-Mansur (754-775) and

Harun al-Rashid (786-809). It was Mansur who treacherously murdered Abu Moslem in 754 A.D. and brought an end to the original revolutionary character of the Abbasid rule (Shaban, 1970).

For awhile, the establishment of the Abbasid rule lifted from the back of the peasantry a heavy burden of taxes and services. However, it did not take too long for the new ruling elite to consolidate its power and resort to the old means of government control. Within the new structure, a new class of landowners emerged whose demands on the peasants were as exacting as the old ones. The Abbasid revolution simply replaced the Syrian mawali with Iraqi and Iranian mawali (Sourdel, 1970: 108).

The political structure of the Abbasid Caliphate was largely a replica of the Sassanid political administration. Al-Mansur was concerned with controlling all corners of his new empire with minute supervision. He established different secretaries (kateb = scribe) to organize the affairs of the country, among which the secretary of finance received special attention. Later, these secretaries evolved into that of the all-powerful ministers (vizier) who headed many bureaus (divans).

The Abbasid patrimonial state was highly centralized and maintained legal ownership and bureaucratic control over most of the lands. Being a theocratic state, the Abbasid state regarded itself as the "protector" of the land and water for the community of Moslems (ummah). As Lambton (1953: 24-5) has indicated, the Abbasid patrimonial rulers brought most of the agricultural lands under their own control, thus increasing the crown lands known as safavi.

Another important development in the direction of this

centralization of land control was the creation of the iqta whereby military officers were granted the right to collect taxes in specified districts where the revenue was approximately equivalent to officer's pay. It was al-Mutawakkil who began this new policy of granting land revenue only to the members of the ruling class associated with the patrimonial household. These iqta's were subject to taxes and part of their revenues were to be remitted to the central treasury. For instance, in the year 880 Harun al-Rashid granted the province of Ifrikiya to Ibrahim b. al-Aghlab on payment of an annual subsidy of 40,000 dinars to the Caliph's treasury (Saunders, 1965: 115).

Under the Abbasids, taxes were more stabilized. The distribution between the Arab and non-Arab Moslems (converts = mawalis) became blurred. In addition to kharaj as the land-tax, all people, whether Moslem or non-Moslem, had to pay a poll-tax. In the fifth century A.H., the zakat (alm) was extended to private domains too. Its collection was no longer in the hands of the state and it became a religious obligation for the Moslem (Frye, 1975: 105). The land-tax was collected by the salaried revenue officers (amel) and assessed variably according to the productivity of the land and the method by which it was irrigated (wells, streams, qanats, etc.). Many of these amils became themselves tax farmers or even obtained provincial governorship. In some cases, they simply allied with amirs (also called hakeem meaning military governor) and enhanced their position by presenting a strong front to the central authority of the Caliph. There were also many attempts by the amels to convert the lands granted to them into alienable and hereditary

ones. But in general, these efforts were not successful because if the land was granted by one ruler, it would be taken back by another later. The revenues collected by these amels

went into the central treasury, which from time to time pretended a distinction between the public treasury where the kharaj went, and the private treasury of the Caliph where money from caliphal estates and from the jizya went, for expenses such as the pilgrimage to Mecca and the jihad or 'holy war' on the frontiers. (Frye, 1975: 107)

The Abbasid rulers accumulated astronomical wealth from these taxes so that it is reported that when the empire was declining, al-Moqtader's private treasury had fifteen million dinars. These taxes were obtained through severe measures, especially during the rule of Harun al-Rashid who preserved his power through brutal policies and severe oppression. The luxurious living of the Abbasids required enormous sums of money. To this purpose, the confiscation of funds and lands, both private and those designated as public, became a universal phenomenon.

Most of the cultivation on private lands was based on share-cropping. Share-cropping became increasingly common in the late eighth century (Levy, 1962: 311-13). Private lands owned by merchants, governors, and other officials were subject to tithe (ushr) (Ashtor, 1976: 37). There were many cases in which these landowners did not meet the state requirement and their lands were confiscated. There were also examples of confiscation by the Caliph because of disloyalty, religious heresy, and other reasons.

In the middle of the ninth century, the state started to dole out the newly acquired lands to merchant revenue-farmers. The use

of a revenue-farming system (zamanah) was the easiest way for the state to increase its revenues. The outlying provincial lands were given to private individuals who assumed responsibility for the collection and return of a stipulated sum of taxes to the central authority. This policy led to the greater exploitation of the peasants as well as the dissatisfaction of the ruling interest in the countryside. Since these grants were short term, the merchant revenue-farmers who received them maximized their gains by demanding more surplus from the peasants while did nothing for the maintenance of the means of production such as qanats, animals, etc. The local interest groups in provinces, who could not tolerate the grant of their lands to some absentee merchants living in Baghdad, opposed this policy. During the rule of Mutawakkel, the political influence of these merchants was reduced and a larger share of power was given to provincial military leaders through granting iqta (Shaban, 1976: 72-5). This system of iqta was actually an alternate arrangement of revenue-farming because the army leaders were also to pay into the state treasury a definite annual sum (Kabir, 1964: 146).

Another important category of land in this period was waqf lands which were exempted from paying taxes to the state except the tithe. These were the religious endowment lands which were donated to the Islamic establishment by state and members of the landed class. The administrators of these lands (motevalli) were chosen by the Caliph. The revenue from these lands supported the Islamic clergy, financed religious schools (madresas) and mosques.

During the Abbasid period, there were many revolts, led by peasants, against the oppressive taxation imposed upon these

peasants. One of the most important revolts in this period is the slave revolt known as qiyam-e Zangian which broke out in southern Iraq and southwestern Iran in 869 A.D. Zangian were slaves occasionally employed for construction of roads, qanats, and buildings by the Abbasids. When the Abbasids became entrenched in power, the number of slaves increased and the slave markets flourished around the empire. In 869 A.D., these slaves (zanj) revolted against their masters and set up communities of their own which subsisted for fourteen years until the movement was suppressed by Muwaffak, the caliph Mu'tamed's brother, in 883 (Belyaev, 1969: 239-47).

Two other important revolts in this period were the peasant uprisings in Egypt, Azarbaijan, Kufa, and Syria. In Azarbaijan, this revolt was led by Babak Khorramdin. Babak's revolt was a very serious one and persisted for over two decades (816-837) and spread to the Caspian provinces and Armenia. Babak advocated communal ownership of land and property. His movement was suppressed too (Lewis, 1967). A similar movement, but more religiously inspired, was the Qarmatian movement which was also subdued.

6.2.3. Iranian Kingdoms (821-1186 A.D.):

Toward the end of the eighth century and at the beginning of the ninth century, the Abbasid Caliphs were in severe financial crisis in their capital Baghdad. A logical consequence of this fiscal crisis was to demand more taxes and a larger share of the surplus from the provincial governors. The efforts of the caliphs

to do so encountered fierce opposition by those governors who have had political, cultural, and ethnic differences with the Arab rulers in the capital. This opposition, coupled with the Iranian dislike of Arab domination, created a strong opposition to the Abbasids in different parts of the Iranian territories. Different revolts took place and the empire started to disintegrate. This opposition became widespread and escalated into a civil war involving various regional forces. When Caliph Harun al-Rashid (786-809) died, each of these centrifugal forces supported a different son of Harun as the legitimate successor to the deceased Caliph --a trend that contributed to the decline of Abbasid power. The disintegration of the Abbasid central patrimony led to the emergence of a number of smaller patrimonies known as "Iranian kingdoms."

The first of these kingdoms was the Taherid (821-873) in Khurasan. At the beginning, the Taherids paid allegiance to the Abbasid Caliph but later, when they became powerful, they transformed their power into a hereditary rule. In 872 A.D., the Taherids were defeated by Yaqub Ibn Laith, who led a rebel army in the province of Sistan. The Yaqub extended his rule from Sistan to Khurasan and became the founder of the Saffarid patrimony (861-900). The Saffarids soon gave way to the Samanids (819-999) who earlier were ruling in Bukhara in Central Asia. The Samanids were originally descendants of the Sassanid nobility. They were successors of the Sassanid ruling elements who fled the country at the time of the Arab invasion. Despite their Zoroastrian heritage, they had become strict Moslems who were always opposed by the Shi'a Moslems living in the northern part of the country. These Shi'as

wrested political control of western Iran and founded the Shi'a Buyid patrimony (945-1055). In the eastern part of Iran, the Samanids were defeated in 999 A.D. and their domain was taken away by the Ghaznavids (994-1040). Another semi-independent local patrimony which was established in this period was the Ziyarid (928-1042).

While all these autonomous movements took the ideological forms of anti-Arabism, ethnic revivalism, and religious clashes, they were basically different forms of class struggle between a foreign ruling class and indigenous tribal and political groups vying to exploit the natural and human resources of a vast territory. An important aspect of these movements is their economic effects on the economy of the country. During this turbulent period, the revenues obtained in Iranian territories remained in the country and did not go to a foreign land, as was the case during the Abbasids. The only exception to this was the Ghaznavids who remitted some of the surplus to their capital outside of the Iranian territories.

The period between the late eighth to the early eleventh century was a turbulent period in the Iranian social formation. The crisis of the Abbasid rule led to the development of disintegrative forces in different corners of the empire. The struggle between the central authority in Baghdad and the provincial authorities in various parts of the country can be characterized as a struggle between the Asiatic forces and the feudal elements. The old-established tension between the feudal mode and the Asiatic mode of production intensified. The outcome of this struggle was the ascendancy of semi-feudal tendencies for a short period of time.

The emergence of these small states tended to localize political aspects of their rule. This decentralization of political power meant a more direct control over the peasants' labour-power and agricultural surplus. However, most of these states gave recognition to the de jure authority of the Abbasid caliphate and their rulers often ruled under the authority of the Caliph in Baghdad. But their real desire was to free themselves from this control and establish their own independent kingdoms.

The patrimonial authorities residing in Baghdad used these feudal rivalries to their own advantage and were able to reestablish their rule over southern Iraq and most of western Iran, although they lost most of eastern Iran. In the early 880's, by allying with the Saffarids and receiving help from them, the Abbasid state successfully suppressed the Zangian rebellion. Soon afterwards, there was another alliance with the Samanids against the Saffarids (Shaban, 1976: 97-9). When they overcame the power of the center, these local semi-autonomous military rulers tightened their control over their subjects and each became a small patrimonial unit for itself. In the beginning, they could not increase their exploitation of the peasants greatly because they were dependent on peasant support vis-a-vis the central authority. It was through the ideological promises of equality and Islamic brotherhood that they could go against the wishes of the Abbasid central authority.

Another factor involved here was the fact that the Abbasid empire consisted of various people whose cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and economic backgrounds were different from one another. The call for semi-autonomous movements was colored by

national or religious sentiments which emphasized the religious and ethnic background of their people. The Buyids were Shi'a Moslem and had always dreamed of the establishment of a Shi'a state. Again, this was, of course, an ideological foil for the aspirations of the people who were economically exploited and denied political power. This general political and economic deprivation of the masses was accompanied with the political deprivation of the Iranian nobles and old patrimonial forces. The Taherids tried to show themselves to be for the Iranian cause against the Arab domination. The Samanids were Iranian nobles who had suffered a severe defeat from the Arabs earlier in Qadesiyya. Therefore, these rulers made every effort to satisfy their subject people, especially the peasants, in order to have their support against the central authority of Baghdad. In Zayn ul-Akhbar, Gardizi (1928) reports that Abdullah b. Taher wrote a letter to his officials asking them to provide the peasants with their needs. It is also reported that in 220 A.D., when the Hirmand River ran dry, causing a famine in the neighboring areas, the Taherids sent 300,000 dirhems to the religious leaders in Sistan to be distributed among the needy and poor. However, as Zarrin-Koob (n.d.: 69) has mentioned, the justice attributed to the Taherids was simply a pacification device to cool off the opposition. Despite the important reforms made by Abdullah b. Taher, such as fixation of taxes and the encouragement he gave to the peasants regarding agricultural development, the exploitative relations of production remained intact. All these reforms brought the peasants was a slight growth in their income through the enhancement of their lots.

The Saffarids (861-900 A.D.) were less exploitative than their

predecessors. Before coming to power, they promised financial changes and the protection of the peasantry from the oppressive measures of the landed aristocracy. They first allied with the non-aristocratic forces in Sistan. However, when they consolidated their power, they became disrespectful of the peasantry and alienated themselves from their support. They allied with the *dehqans* in suppressing the demands of the peasants for lower taxation. It was the dissatisfaction of the peasantry with the Saffarid rulers which contributed to the rise of Samanids, who had won their favor.

During the Samanid period (900-999 A.D.), the situation altered. The Samanids granted many lands in the form of the *tu'ma* or property assigned for life to an office holder. It is believed that many of these *iqta's* were supervised by the Sultan. However, there is some indication that in the late Samanid rule many of these *iqta's* became hereditary and the landholders started to treat the peasants as their own serfs and subjects. Ibn Houqal (1966) reports that the taxation in Transoxania was light and the population was prosperous. Against this assessment, Baihaqi (1945) informs us of the "limitless wealth and rich treasuries" of Bukhara in 990 A.D.

The Samanids developed a huge bureaucratic machine within which the two departments of finance (*divan-e al-Kharaj*) and of military affairs (*divan-e al-jaish*) were the most important organs of the state administration of taxes (Bosworth, 1963). The landed military class was the most prominent category of the social structure of this period. This class enjoyed a great deal of freedom in its treatment of the peasants. These military leaders rarely sent

tributes to the central treasury and frustrated all the efforts of the central government in the collection of revenues. This in turn created periodic deficits which caused the state or the local governors to increase taxes or introduce new ones. For example, in the last years of the Samanid rule, the local governor of the Baihaq district, the Amir Abulfazl Ziyad, attempted to introduce an inheritance tax as a source of new revenues (Ibn Funduq, 1938: 130).

As Saunders contends:

... the Samanids failed to keep the loyalty of their subjects. Their heavily bureaucratized despotism was expensive to maintain, and the burden of taxation alienated the dihqans, on whose support the regime depended. (1965: 143)

The Buyids (945-1055 A.D.) crushed the power of the civilian landlords, the big merchants, and the strong administrators who had been dominant under the Abbasids, and returned this power to the military aristocracy. The military leaders' pay was supplemented by the grant of iqta's which were to be returned if the government required it. Therefore, they could not be regarded as fiefs. The Buyids originally decided to restrict the grant of iqta in order to have the ownership and administration of lands. However, circumstances never allowed them to do so. The prevalent political instability in this period caused an increasing decline in trade activities. This decline gave rise to higher prices. The merchants started to hoard precious metals. The economic decline, in turn, reduced the state's revenues. On the one hand, this reduction of revenue forced the state to increase the grant of iqta's in order to obtain more revenues. On the other hand, military leaders, who saw

the importance of their role as the backbone of the regime in the midst of chaos, steadily acted as de facto owners of the assigned lands (Lambton, 1968). In many cases, these landlords even refused to send the stipulated tribute to the central government. For instance, on many occasions Mu'izz ud-Dawleh had to fight his military assignees in order to demand the stipulated payment. He once sent an envoy to Kafur, the de facto ruler of Egypt, demanding tribute, but his envoy was badly treated and driven off with empty hands (Miskawayh, 1921, II: 172).

Theoretically, like all other previous patrimonies, the Buyid muqta's had no juridical rights over their subjects. However, in practice, most of the time they ruled over their subjects as they wished. While this practical neglect of theoretical rights has been a recurring feature of the Iranian Asiatic formation throughout history, in this period, which was characterized by high tension between feudal and Asiatic forces, it became a prevalent mode of behavior among the landowners, governors, amirs, and muqta's. In addition to their functions as muqta's, in many cases the Buyid muqta's assumed the administrative duties and obligations of provincial governors too (Lambton, 1965). The Buyid military iqta's were controlled by the divan al-jaish or the military divan. This divan was not only concerned with military administration, but also with the fiscal value of each iqta (ibra), its characteristics and qualities, and its reassignment (Lambton, 1968: 233).

The relationships between the peasants and the military or administrative landholders took different forms in this period. In some instances, the farmers produced on a sharecrop contract. In

Ahvaz, there was evidence of revenue-farming (zamanah). Miskawayh (1921,II: 127-9) reports that when the peasants in Basra failed to fulfill this contract, Mu'izz ud-Dawleh sent his vizier, Muhallahi, to the peasants in order to find a solution. Muhallahi came to the area and asked the peasants about the reasons for such a failure. After hearing the farmers' views and complaints about the unjust taxation imposed by the Baridis family, Muhallahi declared these lands to be ushri (tithe-paying) as before. He did so, of course, after demanding the payment of 200,000 dirhems as arrears of earlier payments. Under the Baridis, a system of fixed money payment had been introduced according to which the farmer had to pay 20 dirhems per jarib (a unit of land measurement) of the land cultivated. This was an extremely heavy payment. The peasants could not afford this burden and started to abandon their lands and flee to other areas. When the Baridis saw their revenues reduced, they further increased this levy to 40 dirhems per jarib (Kabir, 1964: 150).

Lokkeggard (1950: 107-8 & 115) has classified the relationships between the peasants and landowners under the Buyids according to three systems of surplus appropriation dominant in most of the Islamic period in pre-capitalist Iran. These systems are muqata'ah, misahah, and muqasamah. In the muqata'ah, the large estates called diya were cultivated by the peasants who were to give some of the surplus to the landowners on the basis of a principle called ibrah (sample). The ibrah was the mean yield between the most and the least productive years. The misahah (literally meaning measurement) was basically used for small farming which was very common in this period. Here, the actual number of jaribs cultivated were taxed

according to crop grown. In the muqasamah (meaning division), the peasants gave variably a fourth or a third or even a half of the crops to the collector. The equivalent of this crop could be paid in part or in full in cash too (Ibid.).

In any of these systems, the peasants were usually sapped by the landowners. The rate of peasant runaways was high. Since the Buyids were faced with serious political and economic crises, they resorted to tax increases in order to overcome these crises. However, the increase in taxation led to the further exploitation of peasants resulting in mounting dissatisfaction with and opposition to the government; this in turn weakened the political and economic power of the Buyid rulers. The political and economic incompetency of the Buyids also made the country vulnerable to the nomadic invasion of the Saljuqs in the mid-eleventh century. Some of the most important factors which contributed to the weakening of the Buyid rule and made the country vulnerable to foreign invasion were: the increase in the peasant runaways from the villages, peasant dissatisfaction due to overtaxation and extraordinary extortions, the growth of unemployment in the cities, the decline in the trade economy, frequent shortages of food due to agricultural decline, frequent riots and lootings in the towns, and political and economic insecurities prevailing towards the end of the Buyid reign.

The Ghaznavid dynasty (994-1040 A.D.), which was centered in Afghanistan and controlled many surrounding territories, was a military state with expansionist tendencies. This military and territorial expansion meant that a regular and extensive inflow of taxes were necessary. The Iranian provinces over which the

Ghaznavids ruled provided them a rich source of economic surplus. When the Ghaznavids defeated the Samanids, they took over the Samanid crown lands in Khurasan and established a bureau for the administration of these lands and the organization of the financial affairs of the patrimonial household (divan-e vakalat). The land tax (kharaj) was often levied in the areas under direct control of the Ghaznavids. In places like the Caspian provinces where the Ghaznavids could not have a direct control over the population, they allowed local rulers, the Ziyarids, to manage their own taxes provided they would send an annual tribute to the central treasury. The administration of state lands and state finances was left to the divan-e vazir. The safe collection of government taxes was a responsibility of the vizier who oversaw the behavior of his ummal as the actual tax-collectors in different districts. The personal estates of the patrimonial household were managed by the wakil-e khass. Sometimes, this supervision of the crown lands was granted to subordinates. In addition to a land-tax, there were many other taxes which were collected regularly or irregularly. For instance, in some local areas a regular tax was exacted on food (as'ar) or when the Sultan and his army passed through an area, there was ad hoc imposition of additional levies and exactions called awarez.

The tax-collectors (ummal) treated the peasants very harshly because they saw "their tenure of office as an opportunity for living off their own pockets." (Bosworth, 1963: 80). Furthermore, they "were forced into oppressive measures by the relentless pressure of the Sultan, for he showed no mercy towards amils whose quotas fell short of the stipulated amounts." (Ibid.) The peasants

faced with this excessive taxation usually resorted to flight to the city as an ultimate means of survival. In Khurasan, this condition was aggravated by the lack of proper protection against the Turkomen raids. In many cases, the exasperated peasants exploded in jacqueries against the immediate authorities. There were many cases in which the tax registers were burnt and the amils were killed by the peasants (Baihaqi, 1945).

Since the Ghaznavids were faced with the constant military pressures of the Qara-Khanids and other nomadic groups in eastern Iran, they had to increase their military capability by expanding their army. This in turn meant the need for more revenue which was to come from the countryside. The state had no choice but to increase taxes. This overtaxation of the peasants, coupled with periodic nomadic raids on the villages, put the peasants in a disastrous situation, and they deserted the land. The fleeing of the peasants further aggravated the fiscal crisis of the state. The economic decline caused serious political troubles for the Ghaznavids and made them vulnerable to the Saljuq invasion in the third decade of the eleventh century.

6.2.4. The Saljuqs (1021-1157 A.D.):

The entry of the Saljuq Turks into Iran in the second half of the eleventh century introduces an important new aspect into Iranian history. The Saljuq Turks were nomadic people whose infiltration into the Iranian social formation, together with local brigades, made life insecure and created conditions for recurring political

strife. The entrance of the Saljuqs into Iran marks the beginning of the nomadization process which came to its zenith during the Mongol rule. Agricultural production declined and the nomadic and military life was expanded. Not only did the Saljuqs put an end to the political domination of the Arabs in Iran, but they also organized a united army which brought the country under their tight administrative hold. The Turks had already infiltrated the army from the early ninth century onward. The huge army established by the Saljuqs was extensive and expensive and required a steady flow of revenue to maintain it.

The Saljuqs could not satisfy the financial demands of the Turkish officers because external war was rare and booties nonexistent. To this purpose, the Saljuq rulers followed the policies of land assignment of earlier periods. They granted lands to military leaders as iqta. Most of these grantees (muqta's) were tribal khans or Turkoman chieftains who held the land in the name of their tribes. In the Azarbaijan and Khurasan, the pastoral nomads were granted collective grazing rights instead of iqta (Bosworth, 1968, V: 83-4). It is also reported that it was a common practice in this period to obtain loans on a draft on an iqta. This practice could usually free the muqta from the trouble of a long journey for collecting his revenues.

There were basically two types of iqta's in this period: (a) Iqta al-istighal was a grant of the usufruct right in order to remunerate for services. The recipient had only the right of use and administration, not ownership; (b) Iqta al-tamlik was a grant of ownership of a milk in order to extend cultivation. Here, the

recipient became the de facto owner of land but recognized its legal inclusion in patrimonial territory (Lambton, 1953: 60).

As Lambton (1968: 234) has mentioned, it is very hard to make a clear-cut distinction between the "military" and the "administrative" iqta in this period. The grant of administrative iqta's to maliks was very similar to those granted to amirs. As Lambton has indicated, the term iqta covered a variety of grants in this period. It was used to indicate: (i) A grant on the revenue or land for a) military service, b) in lieu of salary; (ii) The grant of a district, and jurisdiction over it to maliks, amirs, and others; (iii) A tax farm (what was also referred to as zaman); (iv) The grant of a) a personal estate, b) an allowance or pension.

The state derived its revenues from ordinary and extraordinary taxes. According to Lambton (Ibid.), the former included : (a) canonical taxes such as kharaj (land tax), mara'i (pasture tax), and jizya (poll-tax on protected subjects), (b) uncanonical taxes (mukus) such as those levied on merchandises, tolls and customs, and various dues (rusum). The latter were ad hoc levies made for specific purposes on different occasions. These were extremely burdensome taxes on peasants. The muqta's usually passed their taxes and other costs to the peasants. For example, during his reign, Malik Shah (1072-92) built a wall around Marv, which measured 12,300 paces, many ribats and caravanserais, palaces, gardens, madrasa (religious schools), the citadel of the town, and a fortress at nearby Dizkuh, where his armory and treasury were housed. The cost of all these constructions were derived from income acquired from muqta's, who in turn obtained it from the peasants (Bosworth, 1968: 85). The

madrasas were usually supported by the income derived from waqf lands. As Hodgson has mentioned:

It was in the Seljuk period that the custom of putting landholdings into the form of waqf, pious endowments, inalienable and not subject to government seizure, became common. The dedication of property as waqf, especially city rental property, served to support especially the new madrasahs, though naturally it supported mosques, hospitals, caravanserais, and all institutions of public service. It also increasingly was used for strictly family purposes.... It was chiefly in the guise of waqf that real estate effectively escaped the iqta system. (1974, II: 51)

The Saljuqs established an institution called atabegs (regents). Atabegs were the Shah's or Sultan's appointees to supervise the education and political training of the Saljuq princes. Since most of these princes were nominally assigned a province, the atabegs actually took the responsibilities of administering these provinces. In theory, the atabegs were to be the princes's counsellors; however, in practice they extended their powers and in some cases atabegs even established their own semi-independent patrimonies such as the Selghurids (1148-1270 A.D.) in Fars, the Eldiguzids (1137-1225) and the Ahmadilis in Azarbaijan and Arran, and the Zangids (black Africans, 1127-1222) in Mosul (Cf. Rizvi, 1980: 68).

It is important to remember that these decentralizing efforts of atabegs in the Saljuq era were simply desperate efforts at the time when the dynasty was experiencing its disintegration and did not represent any serious challenge to the dominancy of Asiatic features. All grants in this period were a matter of grace and could be abrogated at will by the sultan. The grant of

transferable, non-hereditary iqta and the right of collecting taxes by no means implied decentralization of power, which was characteristic of European feudalism. By the time the atabegs and muqta's began to establish a rigid control over the persons and property of the peasants, the Saljuq dynasty was almost on the road to its decline.

6.2.5. The Mongols (1256-1501 A.D.):

Generally speaking, in this period the forces of decentralization were stronger than the forces of centralization. Tribal leaders were continually fighting one another for the acquisition of more power and property. Local governors and authorities tended to assume unconditional claims on the lands they were granted in lieu of their salaries. Under both the Aq-qyunlu rule in western Iran and the Timurid rule in eastern Iran, the amirs and princes were involved in a constant struggle for power. The most devastating effect of these inter and intra-tribal struggles was the destruction of villages and towns. Each tribal khan used to destroy his opponents' domains and kill the people living there. As a result of these struggles, the productivity declined, the economy suffered serious blows, the peasants became impoverished, and famine and plague broke out throughout the country.

During the rule of the Mongol Il-Khanids (1256-1336), there were four categories of land: First, there were the divani or state lands the revenues of which covered the expenses of the state. Second, there were inju or khass inju lands belonging to the rulers,

the khans, or their relatives who had their income from their lands. Usually these kind of lands were held in the form of iqta. Third, there were vaqf lands belonging to the Muslim clergy. When the Mongols established their rule in Iran, they first confiscated most of vaqf lands. But later, with the conversion of the Mongols to Islam, Ghazan reversed this policy and helped the expansion of these lands (Petrushevsky, 1968: 515-16). The fourth category of lands was mulks which were owned privately by the individual aristocrats (Bausani, 1971: 114). Some of these private owners controlled huge tract of land in the country. For instance, it is reported that almost all the villages located in the northern part of Iran, covering an area from Maragheh to Hamadan, were owned by an amir known as Amir-Choopan.

The Mongol Il-Khans made a more specific use of the iqta. They assigned the right to collect taxes to amirs (military leaders); this was called tuyul. They also made grants which were usually immune from the extortions and extraordinary levies. This latter was called soyurghal. The condition under which the soyurghal was held were less precarious because soyurghal-holders were granted more permanent, or in some cases hereditary, rights to the lands. While the iqta-holder was more of an office-holder, who controlled some lands in lieu of his salary, the soyurghal-holder was a landlord, who expropriated surplus as his rent not a tax in lieu of his salary (Cf. Petrushevsky, et.al., 1967: 449).

The Mongols distributed the pasture lands or yurts mainly among the pastoralists. The assignment of iqta was meant to increase pastoral exploitation to which agricultural development was

peripheral. Tribal khans (ming-bashi meaning commander of thousands) who received the lands in turn divided them up in lots of 100 and put them under the control of lower chiefs (yuz-bashi meaning commanders of hundreds). Again, the latter gave the land out to their subordinates for pastoral use (Lambton, 1953: 89-90). Under the early Il-Khanids, the integration of the pastoral economy with the agricultural economy was weak, which, coupled with poor Il-Khans' administration, led to harsh exploitation of the peasants upon whose labor the military empire was established (Lambton, 1953: 82-9).

The taxes of this period included levies of fodder (ulufa), food (alafa), forced labor (bigary), forced guide service (alam), presents (pishkesh), and various other dues in kind and money (Lambton, 1953: 101-3). A document belonging to this period indicates that the government had abolished 42 different kinds of taxes in order to reduce the peasants' burden and to encourage increased productivity (Navaie, 1968: 16-7). This means that the number of taxes imposed previously had exceeded that number. Some of these taxes included: (a) the mal or kharaj, a land tax paid in kind or in cash in various rates in each region; (b) far', an additional tax consisting ten percent of the kharaj; (c) qupchur which was first applied only to the pastoral nomads consisting of one percent of the head of cattle owned. Later, this tax was applied to farmers and townspeople, especially Jews, Zoroastrians and Christians, in the form of a per capita payment in cash; (d) ikhrajat which was imposed on the peasant farmers for the support of the amirs, soldiers, officials, treasury messengers (ilchi), etc.

In addition to these, the farmers had to supply forage and provisions to the army (alafe and ulufe) and make special contributions of grain and beverages (tagar). In addition to all these, the peasants sometimes were subject to extra dues exacted by the tax-collectors for their own pockets (Bausani, 1971: 114). Many of these taxes were usually collected in advance of the harvest and this resulted in the impoverishment of the peasantry. Historical accounts indicate that the minimum rate of rent or taxes at this time was sixty per cent of the peasant's products. On many occasions, the Mongol amirs and khans imposed a number of new taxes under various pretexts. The taxes were heavy and were left to local officials, known as basqaqs, to be collected. These basqaqs usually extorted more taxes and products than they were supposed to and imposed many dues and levies upon the peasants. Lambton states that:

In most years they would demand the taxes in advance and when converting the share due in kind into cash so contrive the transaction that the loss fell upon the peasants and cultivators. Furthermore, the taxes were in many cases collected several times a year. (1953: 81)

The heavy taxation and levies the peasants were subject to, as well as the nomadic raids and plunder of the villages by Mongol pastoralists, resulted in their fleeing their lands (Rashid ud-Din, 1940: 249). They were always in a state of fear and terror. In Tarigh-e Mubarak-e Ghazani, Ghazan Khan's vazier, Rashid ud-Din Fazlullah, reports about the situation of peasants when the tax-collectors went to the villages. Lambton relates Rashid ud-Din's report in the following way:

Rashid ud-Din relates that anyone visiting the villages of Yazd would not find a single person to speak to or from whom to inquire the way. The few persons who had remained in the villages would appoint watchmen. When warned of the approach of someone they would hide in the kahriz (i.e., the underground water channels) or in the sand dunes. If any of the large landowners from Yazd went to see their villages, they would find them deserted. He tells a story of a landowner who went to Firuzabad, one of the large villages of Yazd, to see if he could collect something from the yield of an estate which he had there. For three days he tried in vain to get hold of one of the kadkhudas. All he found were seventeen tax-collectors with bills and drafts on the place waiting there. They had taken a dashtban [a watchman whose task is to protect the farms from damage and theft] and two peasants whom they had found in the fields, brought them into the middle of the village, where they had tied them up, and were beating them to induce them to produce food and to disclose the whereabouts of the other peasants. (1953: 83)

To stop this process of peasant outflow, decrees (yarligh) were issued and laws were passed establishing penalties for running away (Lambton, 1953: 99). Even in the cities, the peasants were not immune from heavy taxation, if they could find a job. Petrushevsky writes:

Peasants who had fled from inhabited and deserted villages granted as iqta' were ordered to return to their former habitations, unless thirty years had elapsed from the time of their flight, or unless they were included in the tax list (qanun) of other vilayats [province]. All were forbidden to shelter fugitive ra'iyyat [peasant]. Another decree of Ghazan prohibited the further movement of peasants settled upon land. (1968: 524)

Ghazan Khan also reformed the land supervision and integrated the pastoral communities into agricultural ones (Hodgson, 1974: 404-5). By using the iqta system, Ghazan Khan was also able to organize the agricultural and pastoral production around the needs of the

patrimonial military. These reforms resulted in a harsher treatment of the peasants. As Rashid ud-Din has reported, the peasants were in such devastating poverty that when the government provided them with seed for cultivation, they had to use it for food rather than sowing it (Lambton, 1953: 83).

During the Ghazan's reign, both peasants and town dwellers had "to do unpaid work for their Mongol Masters and were deprived by heavy taxation of a large proportion of their dwindling incomes." (Rizvi, 1980: 76) These brutalities and the imposition of heavy taxes created deep dissatisfaction among the peasants, artisan, and merchants and produced many revolts and mass uprisings against the Mongol rulers. For instance, we are informed of a mass revolt in response to heavy taxation around the mid-fifteenth century in Harat in the eastern part of the country (Petrushevsky, et.al., 1967: 444). A more notable revolt took place in the town of Sabzevar in the province of Khurasan. The spread of this revolt culminated into a movement, known as the Sarbedaran movement (1330's-1380), which led to the establishment of a republic in Sabzevar (Bausani, 1968,V: 546-47). Revolts like these, together with two centuries of inter-dynastic feuds and wars, resulted in the decline and, finally, the collapse of the Mongol rule.

6.2.6. The Safavids (1502-1736 A.D.):

During the Safavid period, the lands held in previous period under the name of tuyul were called ulka (olga). The permanent grant of land was almost abolished. Any grant was temporary and was

given in lieu of salaries. The holders of these lands were allowed to assess all or part of the extraordinary taxes and levies. There were two categories of tuyul: One was the grant of lands to the individuals entrusted with the administrative tasks in outlying areas, the other was a grant out of revenue assigned to some office-holders in lieu of salary. The main receivers of the latter were the qezelbashs (literally meaning "red heads" referring to their red sectarian headgear).

In the early Safavid rule, Turkoman tribal leaders were assigned to high offices of governorship and military command as amirs (Tadhkirat al-Muluk, 1943: 30). In return for their military and administrative services, they received a grant of land over which they had full administrative control (Braun, 1969: 188). The qezelbash chieftains were part of the government structure. In that capacity, they were involved not only in performing military service within their own tribes, but in collecting taxes and administering public wealth in their regions. In their military capacity, they were responsible for recruiting troops for service as qurchis (government troops maintained by qezelbashs) or as garrison troops (Reid, 1978a: 17).. The young Safavid dynasty was very much dependent on the military support of these Turkoman khans, so much so that they became a threat to the consolidation of dynastic authority and impeded the institutionalization of Safavid reforms.

The relationship between the Safavid patrimonial despots and these qezelbashs can be best understood as dialectical. These relationships constituted a unity of opposites. While the newly formed patrimonial rule of the Safavids could not tolerate

qezelbashs' challenge and go along with all their demands, it could not also maintain effective control and win the wars it had to fight without them. Each was a threat as well as a means of survival for the other. At last, the new despots decided to consolidate the power of their patrimony. During his long reign, Shah Tahmasp I (1524-1576) realized the disruptive power of qezelbash tribes and removed some of the more troublesome tribes from military positions (Tadhkirat al-Muluk, 1943: 30). Later, Shah Abbas I (1587-1629) decided to disband these tribes and replaced them with a newly constructed army composed of Georgian, Caucasian, and Armenian slaves loyal to his sovereign. He also appointed some of the more trusted and talented slaves (ghulams) to positions of provincial governorship.

The deliberate effort by Shah Abbas I to curtail the power of qezelbashs led to a balanced relationship between the pastoralists and agriculturalists. The two systems of production intermingled and adjusted to one another after a long period of Mongol nomadic interruption. However, at the end of the sixteenth century, this cooperation became loose and led to the new process of change in "uymaq" dynasties --the Afshars, the Zands, and the Qajars --which characterized the seventeenth century Iran. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Safavid institution of uymaq was experiencing a breakdown. While Shah Abbas I depotentiated strong uymaq chieftains, those same chieftains were competing with one another for more control and property.

As Chardin has informed us, there were four categories of land in Iran at this time. Based on Chardin's observations, Minorsky has

outlined these categories :

(a) the state lands, which were the majority; they were in temporary possession of the governors, who assigned a part of them to their own staff; (b) the demesnes, i.e., the Shah's own lands; of them some formed the appanage of certain charges and the others were assigned to the members of the Private Household and the troops maintained by the Shah; (c) the lands belonging to the Church, i.e., the endowments (vaqf) of the Shahs or private persons; (d) the lands "belonging" to private persons. (Minorsky, 1943: 195)

Interestingly, the last category, i.e., the lands owned privately, were not private lands because their holders had only the right of usufruct. Minorsky goes on:

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. On most of these lands the Shah levied a small annual rent ("tribut"), amounting to 40-50 sols per jarib, while some lands were free even from this contribution. (Ibid.)

Based on Chardin's observations, Minorsky concludes that the idea of absolute property ownership was unknown in Iran. F. Mochaver also has observed that "under the Safavids 'usufruct' held the place of private property." (Minorsky, 1943: 196; also Cf. Lambton, 1953: 115)

While all the lands were theoretically considered to belong to the patrimonial despots, their administration was separated into two distinct forms of land-holding: the mamalik and khassa. The former was granted to provincial governors such as qezelbashs and ghulam amirs under the supervision of a special ministry, called divan-e mamalik (Savory, 1977: 416). These governors did not have any

hereditary right to these lands or even to their offices. The regulations for taxes and policies regarding the affairs of the estates were all set by the State. They were allowed to keep some of the taxes they collected as their salary as well as the salary of the tribal soldiers under their command. They were denied any judicial right and could be removed from the office at the wish of the patrimonial despot. The administration of kassa lands was held by the crown and worked for the benefit of the patrimonial treasury from which the royal expenses were derived. The crown lands were divided into the categories of khalessa and khassa. The former consisted of khassa lands located in state provinces (mamalik) and the latter basically included all provinces which were entirely owned by the Shah. The khassa provinces were governed by viziers under the direct subordination of mostoufi khassa (the Shah's delegate in crown provinces).

In the Safavid period, the theory of "the ruler as the sole landowner," as Lambton (1973) argues, became more definite. The Safavid rulers regarded themselves as the sole owners of the lands. In fact, Shah Abbas was the biggest landowner in the country. The Safavid Shahs gradually converted as much of the land as they could to the crown (khassa). Under the rule of Shah Safi, the province of Fars was converted into a "crown" province. Most of these lands were transformed to khassa between 1624 and 1686. This rapid increase in the size of crown lands was necessitated by the establishment of a huge bureaucracy and military organization which had to be financed. For instance, when Shah Abbas I first attempted to centralize the military, he reduced the number of the mamalik

lands and converted them into the khassa. This was accomplished for two purposes: depriving the qezelbash leaders of their political and economic bases, thus weakening them; and increasing the patrimonial revenue to supply the ghulam and native Iranian regiments (Savory, 1977: 416-7). This practice was followed by Shah Abbas II (1642-66) and his successors to the point that by the second half of the seventeenth century the provinces and cities of Fars, Esfahan, Gilan, Mazandaran, Qazvin, Kashan, Yazd, Kerman, Khurasan, Lar, and Azarbaijan were all incorporated into khassa lands controlled by the Shah and administered by patrimonial officials (Lambton, 1953: 108; Kaempfer, 1971: 112; Savory, 1980: 228).

Since the income realized from these lands was tremendous, the exploitation of the peasants was also tremendous. The comptrollers, who were assigned to collect the revenues in these khassa lands, treated the peasants very harshly and squeezed all they could out of the peasants' pockets. Their main concern was to remit the maximum amount of money and produce to the patrimonial treasury in order to win the favor of the Shah as well as to increase their own share of the surplus. As Lambton discusses this arbitrary taxation:

Lands thus assigned for the payment of salaries were not subject to the inspection of the shah's officials The grantees treated the inhabitants as they pleased. (1953: 110)

This practice brutalized the peasants in that there was no regard for the prosperity of the producers or the land itself. Based on the information provided by Chardin, Minorsky argues that the conditions of peasants working on mamalik were better than those of

peasants working on khassa lands. Whenever a land was transformed into khassa, the situation of the peasants working there worsened. For instance, when this transfer took place in Fars, the new conditions were so bad that the population of the province declined by 80,000 (Minorsky, 1943: 26).

In this period, there was no uniform tax system. The rates, rules, and procedures of collecting taxes varied according to the types and terms of tenure, the climate and geographical conditions, the irrigational arrangement, and the time. Taxes were usually paid in kind, but the practice of collecting them in money was not rare either. According to Minorsky's tabulation, land-taxes provided the state with 61 percent of its revenues (Banani, 1978b: 100).

Peasants were overtaxed and the tribal leaders pocketed whatever could be gained from the peasantry. Peasant complaints were usually dealt with in a "carot and stick" manner. Sometimes, they were given some tax relief and sometimes they were responded to with military suppression. This situation was particularly common under the rules of Shah Isma'il (1502-1524) and Shah Tahmasp I (1524-1576). The former was always at war, continuously needing money to run his army. To save his treasury and run his army, he continuously raised taxes or introduced new ones. Shah Tahmasp I followed this same policy after the death of his father. Through taxation, he was able to amass great wealth. When he died, he had 380,000 tumans worth of gold and silver coins, in addition to 6,000 kilograms of silk, in his treasury. It is reported that he did not pay full dues to his soliers for 14 years! (Petrushevsky, et. al., 1967: 488)

In this period, the vaqf lands also increased because of the theocratic nature of the state. It is reported that in 1607 Shah Abbas I consecrated all his private estates (amalak) and personal property into ouqaf for the "Fourteen Innocents" (the twelve Imams, Muhammad, and Fatima). He also vested the tawliyat (the office of mutavalli or administrator) of these ouqaf in himself, and thereafter in his successive rulers (Savory, 1980: 185). The value of these lands approximated 100,000 tuman-e shahi-ye Iraqi and their net revenue per year was averaged at 7000 tumans (Lambton, 1953: 112).

Most of the time, the members of the ulama, especially the mujtaheds and sayyeds, were appointed as the administrators of these lands (mutawallis). Due to these developments, the ulama achieved a very important political position in the society. Some of the members of the ulama even started to buy or acquire lands and constituted an important portion of the landowning class (Savory, 1980: 185). Chardin has mentioned that the Safavids granted many of the vaqf lands as soyurghal to eminent religious families who could bequeath them to their children (Chardin, 1811, VI: 65, quoted in Lambton, 1953: 115).

Many of the individual landowners also transformed their private estates into vaqf and vested their administration in themselves. This transference, while expressed in religious terms, was a political action with important economic ramifications. By designating their lands to be a part of ouqaf, they gained a measure of immunity from the confiscation of their lands by the patrimonial authority. They also exempted themselves from the taxes and dues

because the lands belonging to ouqaf were exempt from taxation. Finally, a far more important result of this religious protection was that when the owners vested the administration of these lands in themselves, they still could continue to have the use of the revenue derived from these lands.

The land tenure system used in this period was basically that of share-cropping based on the "avamel-e panjgana" (five elements). The share of the peasants from the product varied according to the types of land and crop, region, and time. D'Alessandri, a sixteenth century visitor to Iran, describes the share-cropping system in practice at the time of his visit in the following way:

... king ... has a sixth part of the produce of the land, of corn and other plants; on vines and grass lands, for one thousand archi of ground an annual payment of sixty-six pieces of gold, which is rather more than four sequines of gold. Archi are a measure of which ten go to an ordinary field, so that one pays less than half a ducat for a field and houses pay five percent on their rent. Christians in some regions pay five, in others seven and eight ducats per house, according to the goodness and wealth of the country they inhabit. And on animals, for every herd of forty sheep he [the Shah] receives a tribute of fifteen bisti a year, which makes three ducats... for every cow they paid the sum of two ducats a year.... These make up the income of the king, which is said to amount to three millions of gold. (1873: 226, quoted in Navidi, 1977: 128)

According to the observations of Kaempfer (1971: 112), during the seventeenth century in some regions the Shah received two-third of the produce of wheat and barley. The peasant also had to pay more than two percent of the value of these products in cash. In the khassa lands, the Shah normally provided the peasants with water and seeds and received three-fifth of the produce of rice and melons.

6.3. Endnotes

(1) Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, New York, 1934, Vol. XV: 102-3.

(2) Mani (216-276) is the founder of a religious movement the members of which were prosecuted by orthodox Zoroastrian ruling elites. Mani himself was killed in 276 A.D.

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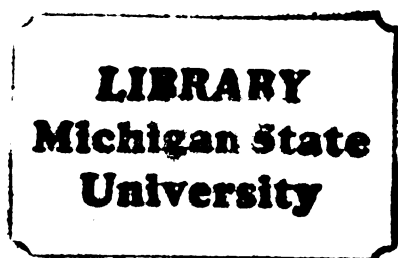


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CHAPTER VII

THE CRISIS OF THE ASIATIC FORMATION AND THE ASCENDENCY OF THE FEUDAL MODE OF PRODUCTION

In Chapter III of this work it was argued that with the collapse of Safavid state, the Iranian Asiatic mode lost its dominance and the developments occurring during the late Safavid period gave way to the ascendancy of feudal mode of production within the Iranian social formation. This chapter discusses some of the general causes of this change and the reasons for the breakdown of the Safavid state as well as the political and economic patterns and structures which contributed to the collapse of such a strongly centralized Asiatic state. Furthermore, attempts will be made to look at the various effects of this structural change on the patterns of landownerships and on the relationships between the peasants and the landowners.

7.1. The Crises of the Asiatic Formation During the Safavid Era

Chardin, a seventeenth century European observer, who visited Iran during the reign of Shah Sulayman, is quoted as saying: "When this great prince [Shah Abbas I] ceased to live, Persia ceased to prosper!" (Quoted in Lockhart, 1958: 16 & Savory, 1980: 226) This

statement exemplifies the typical explanations which see the individual personalities behind the rise and the fall of states, dynasties, and empires. While recognizing the importance of individual character structure and its effect on social events, an adequate understanding of historical events looks beyond these individual factors and searches for structural conditions under which those personalities emerge. This chapter intends to go beyond this psychological, individualistic explanation and attempts to find socio-politico-economic factors which contributed to the breakdown of the Safavid Asiatic state. These structural factors, include: wars with foreign powers, increasing inter-uymaq contradictions, the overpopulation of military leaders capable of holding portions of the patrimony, the low level of agricultural production and economic decline, the political ascendancy of the religious stratum, and the disintegration of patrimonial in-group cohesion. The following is a discussion of these factors under five themes of inflation and monetary crisis, the qezelbash institution and land control, the autonomous power of religious stratum, excessive patrimonialization, and war with foreign powers.

7.1.1. Monetary Crisis and Inflation

In 1636, the English East India Company captured the market of silk production in Bengal --a superior quality silk which had a cheaper price in the world market. The production of silk by Bengal inflated the silk market at the international level, thus bringing down the prices of, as well as the demand for, Iranian silk

(Glamann, 1958: 116-19). The reduced demand for Iranian silk meant reduced revenue for the Safavid state. At the beginning, this decline did not have a serious effect on the economic viability of the Safavid state because the peace treaty signed between Iran and Turkey in 1638 reduced the need for excessive war expenditures which had been a burden on the state for more than eighty years. However, in the second part of the century, this decline of revenue, which was steadily aggravated by the continuing decline in demand for silk, had a serious effect on the economic viability of the Safavid state.

An important economic factor contributing to the crises experienced by the Safavid state in the second part of the seventeenth century was world inflation created by European trade and the importation of enormous amounts of silver and gold to Iran from the Spanish colonies in South America (Davis, 1970: 193). During the late fifteenth and sixteenth century, Asian trade circled the African continent through India, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire reaching Europe through the Mediterranean commercial axis. By the seventeenth century, this trade route was shifted to the sea along the Asian seacoast from the Persian Gulf to the China sea. The bulk of commercial transactions through this route was controlled by European Atlantic merchants such as the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English (Kelly, 1968: 3-7). These powers established trading centers in the Persian Gulf and dominated the East-West trade. Through this trade, a great amount of silver and gold entered into Iran and provided the Iranian merchants a steady supply of hard cash with which to purchase foreign goods (Davis, 1970: 193). The inflow

of these precious metals to the Iranian economy, coupled with a concurrent loss of trade, created a constant inflationary tendency, which in the long run disrupted the Iranian economy and hurt Iranian merchants.

This economic hardship was further exacerbated by the European inflation which began late in the sixteenth century. Since the Iranian economy had partially become dependent on and integrated into the world capitalist system, it could not be unaffected by this trend. World inflation raised the prices of imported and luxury goods and adversely affected the operation of the Iranian economy. The first but minimal effect of this inflation was a decline in the government's revenues which brought the patrimonial state into a financial crisis.

This inflationary trend affected not only the Iranian bourgeoisie, but also the bureaucratic class which lived on fixed income. To compensate for their economic deterioration, the bureaucratic class increased taxes and dues which, in turn, meant the further impoverishment of the peasantry. The tax increase also enhanced the power of the peripheral tribal leaders in taxing local agriculture. The strengthening of these leaders intensified the crisis in the form of the fragmentation of the country. The state found itself unable to respond to this challenge, partly because of its structural condition and partly because of its leadership. Due to the decline of revenues from trade, the state also became increasingly dependent on the agricultural periphery. This provided the peripheral magnates with a good basis upon which they could force the state to allow them more freedom of action in their

provinces. Once the center collapsed, these governors seized political autonomy and eventually entered into feudal rivalry.

7.1.2. The Qezelbash Institution and Land Control

During his rule, Shah Safi (1629-42) instituted the practice of directing all provincial revenues to the patrimonial treasury (Hodgson, 1974, III: 57). This meant less income for the local military and civil administration and led to the dissatisfaction among the provincial governors and local officials. This practice was continued by later Safavid rulers who converted most of "state lands" into crown.

The conversion of "state" provinces (*mamalik*) into *khassa* (crown) also had a negative effect on both the political stability of the state and on the economic welfare of the agricultural producers. Originally, this conversion was designed to increase revenues necessary for the development of an independent patrimonial army. This, however, led to a greater degree of control and exploitation of the peasantry in the countryside (Lambton, 1953: 110). The higher exactions from the peasantry in the new *khassa* lands resulted in a steady flight of peasants from the villages. As Chardin has observed, after the conversion of the province of Fars into *khassa*, the population of the city diminished (Cf. Lockhart, 1958: 24). Most of these peasants resorted to brigandage on the roads or returned to a nomadic life which insured some freedom from state control. The subsequent increase in both the nomadic life and brigandage destabilized the commercial economy through raids and

attacks on commercial shipments. This trend had a double effect: on the one hand, it further reduced state revenues by contributing to the decline of trade; on the other, it bolstered nomadism which, in turn, contributed to the erosion of the power of state.

This conversion of the ownership of state lands also contributed to the degeneration of the provincial administrative structures because "the administrative infrastructure of the two systems of government were different and it was not possible to switch from one to the other overnight." (Savory, 1980: 228) As a result, the last seventy years of Safavid rule were characterized by administrative instability.

This practice of converting the mamalik into khassa also led to the dissatisfaction of the military elite and, as Minorsky (1943: 19) has argued, it became one of the main causes of the Safavid decline. Shah Abbas I designated the non-Turkish and non-Persian men as important elements of the civil and military administration. These men, known as ghulaman, were appointed governors of the crown (khassa) provinces (Savory, 1974: 195-6). From the 1590's, the qezelbash chiefs' involvement in and control over many business ventures were removed and reserved for those groups who were directly under the supervision of the patrimonial center. This practice curtailed and reduced the power of the qezelbash chieftains and brought their revenue sources under a more centralized control. This upset the qezelbash elite because "lesser uymaqs and household," as Reid (1978: 285) discusses, "began to supplant the immense holdings that had formally belonged to the qizilbash chiefs of the highest status." The control of different provinces was

taken away from these qezelbash chiefs and was given to non-qezelbash leaders of lesser status. This reduced the wealth of the qezelbash elite and became an important source of tension within the qezelbash uymaq organization. The competition for control of provincial holdings and positions brought the institution of qezelbash uymaq into a continual crisis. As Reid has stated:

The wealth belonging to these groups was divided and subdivided again and again. Chieftains belonging to the same tribe eradicated one another in a fury of destruction that was just as violent as struggles between opposing factions. Where there was a survivor in these wars, he was destroyed or exiled to a distant post by the shah, who could now deal effectively with the debilitated survivor. (1978: 293)

The endless appointment and reappointment of the qezelbashes to different positions by the patrimonial state impaired their strength, made their incomes unstable and, consequently, inspired their dissent --a precondition of their break-up with the patrimonial center.

The great uymaq chiefs, whose power was weakened, remained a source of dissension and prepared themselves, in many ways, to become an alternative to the Safavid rule. Many of them rebelled against the central government but were successfully suppressed by it. These revolts represented the constant tension which existed between these forces and the patrimonial authority at the center (Cf. Reid, 1978: 311-12).

Shah Abbas' policy of creating a standing army independent of the qezelbash forces helped him, for the time, to overcome their feudal tendencies. However, in the long run it reduced the power of

the state (Savory, 1980: 226). While the qezelbashs themselves supported large households of slaves, their continual dispersal and division led to their inability to be accessible at the time they were needed. As Reid has shown:

Qurchi troops, nominally in the service of the central government, were often given over to the service of chieftains to make up for an undersupply of troops. Special units of retainers or auxiliaries composed of Pazuki, Kalhur, or other Kurdish soldiers were also allotted to the qizilbash. After 1610, refugees from the unsuccessful rebellion of Kalendar-oglu, a Kurdish Jelali, poured into Safavid territory. They entered the service of several qizilbash chiefs in turn, but they were so unmanageable that eventually came into conflict with their new overlords. The consequence of this shortage of good troops was that the chieftains were placed in a militarily weak position in relation to the central government, which possessed not only slave troops in its direct service alongside qurchis but the collective forces of all the uymqs. It was difficult, if not impossible, for qizilbash chiefs to remain independent for long under such circumstances. (1978: 300-301)

The further development of this centrifugal tendency of the qezelbashs at the end of the seventeenth century coincided with the disintegrative processes which characterized the Safavid state and, subsequently, led to the breakdown of the Asiatic state and contributed to the strengthening of feudal relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When the Safavid solidarity disappeared at the center, there disappeared with it all checks on the centrifugal tendencies of the qezelbashs. In the late seventeenth century, these uymaq groups came back to leave their print on the social structure of Iranian formation. They assumed political power by challenging the center. Many of them even began to establish links with the British that Shah Abbas I had initiated.

7.1.3. Autonomous Power of Religious Stratum

Facing a decline in their economic fortune in the late seventeenth century, the Safavid Shahs resorted to harsher taxation and excessive exactions from the peasantry. These policies eroded state legitimacy and resulted in political opposition among the populace. To compensate for this loss of political and economic legitimacy, the Safavid patrimonial authority increased its reliance on religious legitimacy. The later Safavid Shahs brought a number of prominent religious leaders into the court and incorporated their function into the structure of the state. This situation provided the religious stratum with a golden opportunity to assert its power and formalize its influence.

During the rule of Shah Isma'il I, the office of *sadr* (the highest religious post) was a state functionary under the direct control of the Shah. This situation continued until the rule of Shah Abbas II. Shah Abbas asserted his position as both *padeshah* (king) and a spokesman for the Hidden Imam. However, in the seventeenth century, neither were the *ulama* willing to grant the Shah that status nor were the successors of Shah Abbas I able to militate against the *ulama* as strongly as the earlier Safavid Shahs did. The increase of *vaqf* lands during the rule of Shah Abbas I was prelude to the growing power of the institution of *ouqaf*. This meant an increase in the power of the *ulama* who were in charge of handling the affairs of this institution --an institution from which they also derived their income. With the succession of Shah Abbas

II, the office of sadr was left vacant for eighteen months and the ulama's power vastly increased. During the rule of Shah Sulayman, the political role of this office was taken over by the leading ulama known as Shaykh ul-Islam and the ulama became an actual contender political power. This gave the ulama, such as Allameh Majlesi, an enhanced opportunity to exert their power and to influence the political and social policies of the state. As Savory notes:

Under weak and ineffective shahs, the 'ulama tended to reassert their independence of the political institution. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that they were at the height of their power during the reigns of the two weakest Safavid shahs, Sulayman and Sultan Husayn, who together ruled for fifty-six years, from 1666 to 1722. During this period, the mujtahids fully reasserted their prerogative to be the representatives of the Twelfth Imam and thus the only legitimate source of authority in a Shi'i state. (1980: 238)

The power of the ulama became so strong that, according to Banani, there was even "some suggestion of a direct religious rule by means of a concourse of mujtahids above the monarch." (1978b: 87)

The increase in power of the ulama also led to an increase in religious factionalism and intolerance throughout the country. Some religious leaders even waged jihad (holy war) against various non-Moslem groups living in Iran at the time. As a result of this religious factionalism and of the Shi'a dominancy, the Sunni Afghan and Kurdish tribes to the east and the west were subjected to an increasing prosecution and pressure for conversion. This religious intolerance and prosecution provoked the Afghan forces to invade Iran, thus contributing to the overthrow of the Safavid dynasty

(Savory, 1977: 406-7).

7.1.4. Excessive Patrimonialization

Another factor contributing to the breakdown of the Safavid state was the excessive patrimonialization of the state power. In making decisions, the later Safavid shahs relied very much on the wisdom of the members of their own patrimonial household rather than on political advisors and political elements associated with ruling class. For instance, during the rule of Shah Sulayman (1666-94), the actual control of political affairs was in the hands of the court eunuchs (Cf. Tadhkirat al-Muluk, 1943: 111). Shah Abbas' aunt had a crucial role in selecting the new Shah when her father died. She was a person with a vast network of influence who had almost absolute control of the state bureaucracy. She also was influential in the succession of her brothers, Shah Isma'il II and Mahammad Khudabandeh, to power (Cf. Efoushtey, 1970: 12).

In the latter part of sixteenth century, the earlier policy of sending princes to the provinces for political and military education was neglected and the princes mainly stayed in the central palace. These princes lived in the court and were mainly in communication with the members of the patrimonial household. As Sanson, a European visiting Iran around 1683, noted:

Shah Solayman's sons do not see any place except the royal palace ... only one of his sons who after the Shah becomes king will see the world outside the royal palace. The new king will immediately kill or blind his brothers. (1967: 37)

This lack of proper political socialization, coupled with the influences exerted by the eunuchs in the court, contributed to the deterioration of the quality of political leadership --an important factor in the breakdown of the Safavid Asiatic dynasty. Savory writes:

... the policy of incarcerating the royal princes in the harem may in the short term have relieved the ruler of the fear of polis against him, but in the not so long term it resulted in the marked degeneration of the dynasty; it also led to the undue influence of the women of the harem, and of the court eunuchs and other officials associated with the harem, in political life and in succession problems. (1980: 228-29)

The harem (referring to women affecting the Shah's private life such as his mother, sisters, wives, etc.) became so powerful that affairs of the state were basically controlled by it. This was a serious defect of the state, especially during the weak and corrupt rule of Shah Sultan Hossein, a ruler appointed by the harem.

As a result of this excessive patrimonialization of state control, and of the factionalism within the patrimonial court, the state became a weak apparatus incapable of developing consistent policies. In the last half-century of its existence, the Safavid state was dominated by incompetent despots who were steeped in pacifism, corruption, fanaticism, and cruelty. As Perry put it:

... for the last half century of its political existence, the Safavid state was little more than a hollow corpse, devoured by contrasting excesses of debauchery and piety, cruelty and pacifism, propped up only by the monumental achievements of its founders.... (1979: 1)

For instance, most of Iranian merchants in this period, who actually consisted of religious minorities such as Armenians, Jews, and

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Zoroastrians, had to pay lavish bribes to members of the patrimonial household in order to receive protection against religious persecution by the religious faction of the ruling class. But there was no guarantee that protection received from one faction or layer of the patrimonial household would bring safety from other factions who demanded their own share. The government officials in provinces proved even more corrupt and ineffective than those living at the center close to the court. These corrupt and cruel practices planted the seeds of dissatisfaction among the population and provoked their opposition to the regime. Under Shah Sultan Hossein, rebellion and uprisings loomed on many provincial frontiers. These uprisings and struggles against the ruling patrimonial class prepared the ground for the overthrow of the state.

7.1.5. War With Foreign Powers

Intermittent wars with the Ottoman Empire to the west and the Ozbeg tribal forces to the northwest greatly contributed to the decline of the Safavid patrimony and the disintegration of the Safavid state. Throughout the Safavid rule, Iran was faced with recurring attacks by Turkey. The religious revival during the Safavid reign and the spread of religious factionalism and intolerance in this period extended far into the Ottoman territories and stirred up refractory forces in the border regions under dispute. These religious clashes, coupled with other politico-economic factors, provoked Turkish incursions into Iranian territories. In most of these incursions, portions of Iranian land

were taken away by the Turks and besieged by Iran later. Although these wars did not result in major territorial losses, they nonetheless put considerable military and financial burden on the Iranian state.

In 1630, the Turks entered Kurdestan and moved into Iranian soil as far south as Hamadan. In another attack in 1635, they captured Eravan and Tabriz. Three years later, the Turks captured Baghdad (Sykes, 1951,II: 208-11). These losses were accompanied by the loss of Qandehar, which was captured by the Moguls (Savory, 1980: 228). In 1730, when the country was suffering from disintegrating crises, the Turks captured several of the north-western provinces again and even agreed with Russia to partition some of these provinces --an agreement which was never implemented. In 1775, Karim Khan drove the Turks off Basra and regained the control of this area again.

Another foreign threat to Iran came from Russia. Peter the Great, who always dreamed of the diversion of the silk transit trade from Syria and Turkey to Russian lands, seized upon this golden opportunity, provided by the weakening of the power of the state in Iran, to attack Iran. Between 1722 to 1724, Russia advanced into Iranian territory and, under the pretext of helping the decaying Iranian state to keep Turkish invaders out of her border, conquered the regions laying along the entire western and southern coasts of the Caspian Sea. The real objective of the Russian Tsar was to divert Iranian silk trade to the waterways of Russia (Williams, 1970: 223).

In 1722, the Tsar sent more than 100,000 men to the west coast

of the Caspian, moving southward as far as Darband. In 1723, the Russian forces captured Baku and landed in Gilan province. In June, 1724, Russia and Turkey signed a treaty which asked for the partition of the Iranian north-west provinces. In 1726, the Ottoman Turks brought some 60,000 men to north-west Iran in order to establish their control. Although the dismemberment of Iran resulting from this agreement was short-lived, it had serious consequences for the collapse of central authority in Iran.

The foreign threat to the Safavid state became more serious during the weak rule of the later Safavid rulers. These rulers were corrupt and indifferent to the political and economic affairs of the country; they simply had no foreign policy, let alone an effective one. As a Carmelite wrote in 1685:

Many ambassadors are coming here from the Christian princes to stir up the king to make war against the Turks, but in vain, for he rather shows displeasure at the defeats of the latter, besides which his object and world is nothing else than wine and women. (Quoted in Savory, 1980: 241)

In 1698/9, when Kerman was attacked by Baluchi tribesmen, Shah Sultan Hossein remained so indifferent and unremoved that he basically did nothing to prevent further attacks of this sort. In 1706, he took his harem, his court, and a retinue numbering 60,000 on a nearly year long pilgrimage to various religious cities. Four years later, the Baluchi forces penetrated eastern frontiers and deprived the Safavid ruler of these major strongholds (Savory, 1980: 243).

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the

political and military power of various provinces and peripheral regions became so weak that from 1705 onwards, the Afghan forces started to penetrate the provinces of Kerman and Khurasan (Ibid: 228). About the year 1717, Oman was wrested from Iranian control. In 1720, a few other Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf fell into the hands of the Arab leaders in that region. Lack of a strong, clear, and effective foreign policy, together with the low morale of the Safavid armies, was a striking feature of the late Safavid state which provoked these foreign incursions. This demoralized character of the Safavid army was partly caused by the continuing wars the army had to fight and the neglect and indifference of the patrimonial authorities succeeding Shah Abbas I (Lockhart, 1953: 22).

This military weakness invited an intensification of Ozbeg raids on the northern frontiers. Then the Abdali and Ghilzai Afghan tribes of Herat and Qandehar revolted and gained total independence. In 1717, Mahmud, who had defeated the Abdali Afghans, was appointed by Shah Sultan Hussein to the governorship of Qandehar. In 1719, Mahmud, who had no allegiance to the Shah, moved some 11,000 of his men to Kerman and by 1721, he captured that city. From there he moved to other cities and by 1722 he marched to Esfahan, the capital of the country at that time, and sacked that city. Shah Sultan Hussein surrendered the city and paved the way for Mahmud to nominally ascend the throne and put an ignominious end to the Safavid rule.

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7.2. The Ascendency of the Feudal Mode of Production

The overthrow of the Safavids marked the beginning of an era in which feudalism gained ascendancy and became a dominant mode of production in Iran. As discussed earlier, the internal factors which weakened the late Safavid state, also made the country vulnerable to invasions from outside --invasions which further intensified political strife within the country. With the Afghan invasion of Iran and the destruction of the Safavid rule in 1722, Iran started a long period of political and economic instability, the effects of which were long-lasting and consequential. This invasion, along with the Russian and Turkish incursions, aggravated the political and economic chaos existing inside the country. With the collapse of the Safavids, the country went through constant tribal war which continued until the emergence of the Qajars as a dominant tribe on the political scene.

The disintegration of the country began in the 1720s. The subsequent Afshar and Zand patrimonies were not able to recapture the framework laid down during the Safavids. Their abortive attempts were each followed by the seizure of more autonomy by the various regional and tribal khans who assumed virtual independence. The rise of Nader Shah was one of the most prominent centripetal attempts in frustrating these centrifugal forces, integrating the country, and saving it from foreign domination. However, the position of power spoiled Nader so much so that his national policies and taxation became oppressive and put another burden on

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his subjects who soon wished for his overthrow.

With Nader's violent death, the country was back again in social, economic, and political chaos caused by feudal and dynastic wars. The patrimonial state lost its hold over powerful khans and governors. In the struggle between these feudal khans and the patrimonial despot --a struggle which expressed itself through reform policies for the centralization of state power --the earlier Asian village organizations and village autonomy were totally destroyed. On the one hand, the feudal khans fought one another over the power and control of their offices; on the other, they struggled with the government over the control of the revenues they obtained from the lands they controlled. This rivalry ruined the country and created economic decline and political anarchy throughout the most of the eighteenth century.

Nader was succeeded by Adel Shah who was himself overthrown by Shah Rukh. It was Karim Khan who was able to end these dynastic rivalries among various Afshar leaders and seize the power. Karim Khan's reign was supposedly an exception to the prevailing historical trend in this period. Karim Khan's regency in western and northern Iran, except Georgia, brought the country some temporary peace. His rule was accompanied by a short economic resurgence and a relative political stability. But Karim Khan's efforts had limited success. Georgia fell away and finally went under Russian protection in 1783. In the east, the Abdali tribal forces established the kingdom of Afghanistan. While the Abdali leader Ahmad Khan (1747-1773) made himself suzerain of Khurasan and Baluchestan, Khurasan was divided by local feudal lords.

In general, for Iran the eighteenth century still remained a "time of troubles" and feudal rivalry, which meant increased insecurity and excessive taxation of peasants. The wars Iran had to fight were costly and devastated the Iranian economy. Famine became a normal fact of life and the population of the country was markedly reduced. The increased cost of the army meant increased taxation for the peasants.

When Karim Khan died, Agh Mohammad Khan, a Qajar noble, attempted to overthrow the Zand rule. He defeated Lutf Ali Khan Zand (1789-1794) and in 1795 established the Qajar dynasty in Iran. The Qajar rulers attempted to centralize the power in the country; but in this they were only theoretically successful. As Abrahamian (1975: 135) described this, the Qajar rulers "were despots without the instruments of despotism." While the Qajar army was effective in suppressing popular demands in many major cities and towns, it proved both incompetent and inept in facing foreign invasions and autonomous tribal forces. The Qajars attempted to establish an extended bureaucracy in order to bring different corners of the country under their control. However, this attempt was not adequately realized because of the entrenchment of the landed khans in different political, economic, and strategic positions and the intervention of the Western imperial powers in the politico-economic life of the country.

7.2.1. Productive Relations During the Feudal Period

This political ascendancy of feudal lords was actually a reflection of the feudalization of social relations of production started in earlier periods. In terms of land tenure, the historical background to this feudalization process can be found in the development of soyurghal under the Mongols. Soyurghal was a transformation of the iqta system of land-assignment around the second half of the fourteenth century. Soyurghals were often hereditary and this established a basis for the privatization of land independent of the government control. During the Safavids, the extent of soyurghal-holding was greatly reduced, but it was not eliminated. Private individuals were still allowed to perpetuate their right to the possession of lands and collection of their taxes, if, and only if, they did not break the formal allegiance to the Shah.

When the Safavid state showed signs of collapse, the old and new bureaucratic and tribal elites in control of the provinces started assuming ownership of the lands previously assigned to them. They regarded these lands as their own private property and even tried to expand them through tribal wars. The precarious relationship between the government representatives and the peasants was transformed into the relationship of arbab and ra'yyat, i.e., into one of landlord and peasant/serf. The government-owned, communally farmed lands became the private estates of khans, urban merchants, and state officials. As a result of this feudalization of the society, the contradiction between the ra'yyat (the peasant).

and arbab (lord) or ashraf (the nobility) became distinct and salient.

During the feudal period, the Shah still retained his theoretical right to confiscate his subjects' property. However, this became more limited and most of the time it was exercised only over the government officials. For instance, during the Qajar rule, the officials were more often subject to fines rather than their properties being confiscated. In 1858, I'timad ud-Saltaneh's father was fined 100,000 tumans upon his dismissal as farrash-bashi (major factotum). Or when the grand vizier, Mirza Aqa Khan I'timad al-Dawleh was dismissed from his official position, his son who was vazir-e nezam (the army treasurer) had to pay a fine of 40,000 tumans (Sheikholeslami, 1975: 175). The confiscation of an official's property was widely practiced upon their deaths. In these cases, the deceased's house was routinely sealed and guarded by the government (Ibid.: 178).

The relationship between the landowner and the peasant was often cemented by a formal or an informal contract specifying the terms of tenure, which strengthened the old sharecropping system. For the most part, the period of contract was not determined and the decision to terminate the contract was more or less left to the landowner. On the basis of these agreements, the landlord commonly supplied some elements of production, such as land, water, seed, and animals, and in return received up to four-fifth of the crop depending on the number of elements he had provided. If the peasant contributed his labor as his only available element of production, he would receive one-fifth of the harvest. The peasants usually

ended up receiving less than the share they had invested. Since the surplus was extracted on a community basis, the production community (boneh) had to pay for the services of the village blacksmith, carpenter, miller, shepherd, barber, bathman, and even in some cases water regulator (mirab), the field watchman (dashtban) and kadkhuda.

The number of elements provided by the landlord and peasant varied according to the time and place. The following exceptions can demonstrate the extent of variation and change. In parts of north-west, when the landlord provided land and water (sikut), he would take one-third of the produce; and if he provided four elements of land, water, oxen, and seed (sikut-e-makus), he would receive two-third of the produce. For unirrigated lands, the landowner traditionally received one-fifth (panj-yek). In Kermanshah, the division between the peasant, who provided labor and seed, and the landowner, who paid also for reaping, was equal (nesf-e kari). Where the landowner only contributed his land for production, the peasant received five-sixths. In most of the southern districts, the division by thirds were very common. However, in Kazerun, where the peasant paid all the expenses, including the government taxes, the landowner received only one-tenth of produce. In some instances, peasants had to lend a part of their share of the crop to the landowners in order to renew the cycle of production. For instance, a European observer notes that in the late nineteenth century the seed required for the next harvest was usually excluded from the gross product before dividing it (Stack, 1882). There is some evidence suggesting the continuation of this practice down to the mid-twentieth century.

Finally, another factor contributing to the variation in the distribution of produce was the kind of crop. For instance, the arrangement for the cultivation of opium has been usually different because its production involved special procedures.

Whatever the arrangement between the peasant and the landowner, it was through this mechanism that the landlord drained off surplus produced by peasants and left them in poverty-stricken conditions. The five-factor division of produce between the landlord and the farmer is basically a general characteristic of the feudal relationship in Iran both in Asiatic and feudal periods. As Petrushevsky (1968: 525) has mentioned, no trace of this practice can be found in the medieval sources. Demin (1971: 222) maintains that the system is "inherited from the Safavids."

Under the conditions of monopoly of the means of production by the landowner, as Demin (1971) has shown, this system, on the one hand, presupposes the separation of the peasant from the means of production and, thus, transforms him into a hired worker; on the other hand, it provides the landowner with "a leeway for maneuver" and allows for "tying the peasant to the soil." This system of sharecropping was a smoke screen for masking the merciless exploitation of peasants which, as will be discussed later, also hindered the development of capitalist relations in the Iranian countryside (Ibid.) The exploitative nature of this system becomes more evident when one considers the fact that agricultural elements (avamel-e zera'ati) were often each given an equal weight in the distribution of the product. The peasant's labor was given the same value as livestock or seeds; thus no matter how hard the peasant

worked, a major portion of his share of surplus was to be transferred to the landlord. Furthermore, most of the time the landowners undermined the sharecroppers' cultivating rights by practices such as allotting them the least fertile land, denying them the means of production through the gavbands, excluding them from boneh through the authority of mubasher, and reducing their bargaining power by recruiting landless laborers (Kazemi & Abrahamian, 1978: 273).

During this feudal period, agricultural surplus was extracted not on an individual basis, but on a community basis (bunicheh). As Fraser put it:

... the proprietor has nothing to do with the individuals of the property; he has to treat with each village collectivity, (1825: 208)

As a matter of fact, this collective nature of the relationship between the landlords and peasants goes back to the Asiatic period.

As Lambton has stated:

... it is clear that government policy in the early centuries of Islamic rule fostered such communal organizations, since administrative convenience demanded that their relations should be with communities rather than with individuals.... In any case, whatever the motive, the tendency in early Islamic times was for the village to be treated as a corporate unit, and this tendency continued down to the twentieth century A.D. (1953: 3)

Even in case of share-crop division, the produce was not divided between the landlord and the individual peasant, but between the landlord and the village production community (boneh).

In this feudal period the performance of services or the

provision of labor service (bigary) (1) was also a normal obligation of the peasants. These services actually constituted dues to the government during the Asiatic period. Most of these landowners were the successors of the old governors who had levied labor service on the population in the area under their jurisdiction in their capacity as the local representatives of the government who later became feudal landowners (Lambton, 1953: 330). This labor service did not dissipate until the reforms instituted by the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) took place. As Lambton has explained:

When the status and nature of the landowning class began to change at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the custom of paying officials by grants of land or its revenue was abolished, and public services such as road-making were taken over by the central government and were no longer a charge upon the local landholder in the person of the tuyuldar or grantee, labour services died out in some areas; in others the landlord continued to levy it on his own behalf. (1953: 330-1)

While the villagers, faced with unfavourable socio-economic conditions, had to work hard to produce more for the landlord, the absentee landlord showed little or no interest in improving their socio-economic life. For landowners, even though their income from land was considerable, in absolute terms, it constituted but a small fraction of their total income. Thus, for these landowners, crop failure caused them hardly more than an inconvenience. But for the peasant, who lived in "abject poverty" (Lambton, 1969: 30), the land was the only source of income, and a drought or any other natural disaster could cause them to suffer many privations or starvation.

A great scourge of village life was peasant indebtedness. Since in many cases the peasants' share of crop was barely

sufficient for their subsistence, and there was also the inevitable occurrence of lean years, these peasants were often short of food before the upcoming harvest. Thus, they were forced to borrow either from their landlords or from money-lenders at an exorbitant interest rate (Keddie, 1960: 5). We are informed that in the late Qajar period the interest rate on these loans ranged from 24 to 40 percent. Since their chances of being able to cover their debt was nil, these peasants were usually drowned with further debt without ever being able to get out of this situation. This indebtedness reinforced the peasants' dependency on the landlord and gave the latter greater control of the process of production. For many small-holding peasants, this situation required that they either sell their plots to the money-lenders or the landlords, or become their sharecroppers (Cf. Lambton, 1973: 379-92).

To get a better picture of the relationships between the landlord and peasants as well as of the plight of the latter, a more detailed description of the socio-economic conditions of the country regarding the tenure relations follows. It should be noted that it is very difficult to provide an accurate picture of the tenure relationship in these two centuries because the information concerning this issue is insufficient. Facts presented and views advanced by various contemporary and non-contemporary writers are often conflicting and the exact picture of the reality is hard to come by. Therefore, our attempt is based on a conceptual reconstruction of social relations of production, that is , a historical approximation to these relationships.

7.2.2. The Afsharids (1736-1747 A.D.):

The reign of the Afsharids is regarded as a period of chaos and military occupation. Nader Khan's militaristic and expansionist policies furthered the decentralizing tendencies which were generated in the later Safavid period. This decentralization was an unintended consequence of Nader's policies and stands in contradiction to his attempts to centralize political authority in the country. To expand the political and economic power of the central state, Nader even tried to expand the crown and state lands at the expense of private estates (Tadhkirat al-Muluk, 1943: 147-8). Nader was determined to take back many of the iqta lands granted earlier by the Safavids and overtaken by the muqta's as private property later. He confiscated many private estates and brought them under his control. To reduce the power of the ulama, which had grown large under the Safavids, Nader also tried to confiscate Shi'i waqfs on a large scale to the economic gain of his regime. This was a necessary act not only because of his centralization policy, but also because there were many Sunnis in his armies who were intolerant of Shi'i domination. All these policies were intended to expand the power of the patrimonial center; however, the results were to the contrary.

What Nader really did was to substitute various tribal leaders with members of the patrimonial household. Nader Shah basically ran the country through members of his own family, each as beglarbeks (Governor-General of the Province), was assigned to one province and given total authority to manage the affairs and rule the subjects:

Nader's son, Reza Quli, was in Khurasan; his brother Ibrahim controlled Georgia and Azarbaijan areas; his nephew, Ali Quli, was in charge of Herat; and his friend Taqi Khan governed Fars. To quell rebellious tribes, Nader Shah resorted to the ancient policy of displacement. By uprooting the tribal forces from their strongholds, Nader changed the whole tribal map of the country. Some 12,000 Afshar families and 38,000 families of other Turkoman tribes were moved out of Azarbaijan to Khurasan; six thousand Abdalis were brought to Damqan and 13,000 Bakhtiyari families were forced to go to Khurasan.

On his return from India, Nader Shah promised a three year remission of taxation. But when he saw himself in need of money to pay his military campaigns, he cancelled his promise and resorted to harsher taxation. The peasants and merchants were taxed and plundered by a series of freebooters who wanted to raise funds and supplies for their armies. For instance, "during his campaign of 1755 in Gilan, Mohammed Hasan Khan imposed a levy equivalent to 150,000 rubles (approximately 8,000 tumans), requisitioned millet stores in Rasht, and plundered all property in Qazvin; as a result, peasants fled to the forest, and trade at the port of Anzali came to a standstill." (Perry, 1979: 227) The extortionary taxes imposed by Nader, accompanied by his cruel treatment of his subjects in the last years of his reign (1743-1747), created unbearable conditions for peasants and artisans to the point that members of his own family were asking him to change his intolerable policies (Lockhart, 1938: 259-60). As Perry put it:

In 1745, Nader Shah had reestablished the Georgian monarchy with Taymorez over Kartli and his son Erekle over Kakheti. Excessive taxation produced constant insurrection, and Taymorez himself was on his way to Mashhad to petition for a reduction when the tyrant was assassinated. (Ibid.: 210)

This extortionary taxation and cruel treatment of the peasants and artisans led to many uprisings and revolts. In Georgia, Taimurez and his son Irakli prepared for armed resistance and in Azarbaijan, "the exasperated populace" revolted against Nader's policies. Many other cities and provinces, like Sistan and Khurasan, were the scene of uprisings and revolts (Lockhart, 1938: 258-61). Most of these peasant, artisan, and tribal revolts were brutally suppressed by Nader's armies. As illustrated in Kerman, the peasants' revolt was met by brutality. A Russian delegate who was in this city at this time reported that he had seen "two lofty towers of heads there." Upon Nader's death in 1747, the country was plunged into inter-patrimonial, feudal, and tribal rivalries, from which Zand tribal forces, led by Karim Khan, came to achieve an upper hand in establishing their central hegemony.

7.2.3. The Zands (1751-1795 A.D.):

When Karim Khan Zand came to power, he tried to quell the tribal powers around the country, especially those in Bakhtiyari lands. After establishing his rule, he demanded regular tributes from all the tribal forces in the country. There was resistance to his demands and Karim Khan responded by force and massacred many opposition forces and appointed new governors to all the provinces.

It is often reported that when Karim Khan established his rule, he organized the scale of taxes and specified the tax return of each governing official from beglerbegi to kadkhuda and his administrators, i.e., mostoufi or mohassel. At the beginning of each year, all the officials were asked to sign an undertaking (eltezam-namcha) stating that they would not demand more from their subjects than the stipulated amounts. They were warned that for every extra dinar they collected, in addition to being beaten, they would be mulcted twice (Perry, 1979: 231-2). The supervision of the administration of taxes was given to the vazir who also managed the affairs of state lands. Under vazir's authority, the mostoufi ("trustee") was in charge of fiscal affairs of the state, such as tax collection, expenditures and so on.

The Zands derived their revenues from five categories of regular taxes (maliyat) and five categories of irregular supplements (avarez). The five statutory taxes included: (a) the rents from crown lands (khassa) and state lands (khalessa) which consisted of 30 percent of yield. There was no clear distinction between crown and state revenues; (b) land tax from private estates (arbabi) as well as from religious endowments (vaqf) ranging from 15 to 20 percent and payable mainly in produce; (c) property or poll taxes assessed per family and paid in cash or kind. This tax was applied mainly to tribes and religious minorities; (d) custom dues levied on goods; (e) tribute (baj) from vassal lords, presents (pishkash) from tribal khans, government officials, governors and so on. The irregular supplements included: (a) ad hoc confiscations as a fine or indemnity (mosadarat); (b) provision of food and forage for the

army (olufa); (c) forced labor or corvée (qalan, bigar) used in public works, fortifications, transport, etc.; (d) provision of beaters to drive game for the patrimonial hunt (shekar); (e) forced sale or purchase (tarh). Frequently, the Shah's agents bought goods in the market at a cheap price, hoarded them, and brought them back later and sold them at a substantial profit. It is reported that Nader Shah had been able to equip his army with money acquired in this way (Perry, 1979: 227-8).

Private ownership of land was an important feature of the Zand period. The prominent Zand khans and families were themselves big landowners. Despite the control measures established by the court for prevention of abuses, the peasants were harshly treated and were heavily overtaxed because the government representatives, in many cases, were themselves the owners of the lands on which they were to collect their taxes and dues. There are reported instances which reveal the oppression to which the peasants were subjected. To take one example: when Ali Mardan took Shiraz in 1750, he took away whatever he could put his hands on. He collected the taxes for three coming years on the spot, together with 4,000 tumans worth of "presents," which were forcefully acquired. He extorted as much as 6,000 tumans of raw manufactured goods and sent his agents to the southern and eastern provinces to demand taxes. In Lar, he demanded 300,000 man (a unit of measurement) of grain to supply his army which was swelled by thousands of local conscripts (Perry, 1979: 29). When Azad Khan Afghani, one of the feudal warlords with a strong army, attacked Esfahan during the reign of Karim Khan, he imposed new levies on the population and reduced the economic state

of people in the area to one of abject poverty (Ibid.: 52).

7.2.4. The Qajars (1796-1925 A.D.):

In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the power of the Shah and his amirs was reduced. The administrative machinery of the country was divided into two segments --the central and the provincial administration. The central government consisted of the ministerial offices, headed by the office of Sadr-e Azam (Grand Vizier). The provincial government was controlled and run by the Governors-General who were feudal nobles representing the Shah in his respective domain. The stronger the central government, the more the provincial khans acted as they wished; however, the weaker the Sadr-e Azam became, the stronger and more independently the feudal governors became (Cf. Avery, 1965: 85-6; Shamloee, 1968: 815-18).

The patrimonial court in this period was steeped in conspicuous consumption. The luxurious living of the court members, as well as their neglect of the economic conditions of the country, led to a fiscal crisis which in turn aggravated the court finances. When the court was short of revenues, Naser ud-Din Shah decided to sell the state lands --an act which was justified on the ground that these lands formerly had been leased at low rents and their management was poor. Hence, the Shah argued that the outright sale of these lands was to bring greater prosperity for peasants and to improve agricultural production.

Most of these lands offered for sale were bought by the big

landowners who owned and controlled most of the land in this period. The latter owned huge tracts of land known as arbabi (belonging to the lords). Many of these arbabs (lords) were basically tribal and urban khans, some of whom owned the lands of five to twenty-five villages in one area. All the lands of the villages were privately owned and the peasants had to buy a lot in order to build a house for themselves (Nweeya, 1910: 148-9). Peasant proprietorship was relatively insignificant and usually limited to the less fertile lands of remote areas of the southeastern and southwestern borders of the central desert (Lambton, 1953).

According to Vali (1980: 26), the peasants in this period consisted of four distinct groups: (a) Rich peasants, such as gavband (oxen-owner), mubasher (bailiff), and kadkhuda (headman) whose income "usually exceeded the amount necessary for the reproduction of their household and themselves." These peasants often employed the landless rural laborers to work on their lands. This group constituted the smallest portion of peasant proprietors. (b) There were middle peasants who "possessed just enough land and means of production to be able to reproduce the condition of existence of the household." (Ibid.: 27). These were the peasant-owners who worked on both their own land and on the landlords'. The size of this group of peasants was relatively small. (c) There were poor peasants "who owned no land at all but enjoyed the right to use the landlords' land in return for a specific share of the crop or a fixed rent in kind or in money." (Ibid.: 28) This group included the largest number of the rural population. (d) Lastly, there were the landless agricultural laborers "who owned no land, signed no

contract and had no right to use the land." (Ibid.: 29) These laborers lived through the sale of their labor-power, either in kind or in money, to rich peasants or landlords.

Generally speaking, the size of peasant holdings was too small. These holdings functioned as household productive units. Those households who had small plots and could not support their members had to supplement their income by casual labor. The situation of the share-croppers was not better than the latter because they did not have any security of tenure (Stack, 1882). Their plots could be appropriated at the whim of the landlord, especially after harvest. In many cases, after the appropriation of their lands, the share-croppers were pushed out of the village too. There were also many cases in which the landlords periodically confiscated the land and redistributed it among other tenants (Lambton, 1953). By the end of the nineteenth century, as a result of these developments, peasant ownership fell drastically and landownership became a dominant feature of Iranian feudalism.

Another major development in this period was the involvement of the merchant class in landownership and agricultural production. The international market demanded more Iranian agricultural products, especially cotton and opium. This international pressure encouraged merchants to turn their attention to the land and the production of agricultural products. As the nineteenth century progressed, more merchants purchased lands and attempted to meet the demands of the world capitalist market. The increasing demand for agricultural products put on Iranian merchants by international capital in turn led to more exploitative pressures on the peasants.

The merchants asked for more surplus to export and, therefore, the landlords demanded more surplus from the peasantry. Some of the rich peasants gained some benefits from this increase of export crops (2), but in general this trend contributed to an increase in the gap between the rich landowners and the poor peasants who could not make the necessary investments. Furthermore, this increasing demand put on Iranian agriculture had other harmful effects. This response to international demand meant a change of agricultural production from subsistence crops to export crops. This meant a transition from subsistence production to cash-crop production --an introduction of capitalist relations in agricultural sphere (Vali, 1980: 48; Nowshirvani, 1975: 45). This productive change made the peasants' income more susceptible to price fluctuations in the world market. In times of export deficiency, these peasants could barely stand the decrease in their earnings because they were very much dependent on it for buying food stuffs --something which they used to produce themselves and had the least worry about it in the past. The vicious famine of 1869-72 and subsequent famines were partly caused by the increase in production of opium for the world market (Keddie, 1981: 28).

But the rush to purchase land and to control agriculture was not limited to the merchants and landowners alone; government officials were also involved. Since the politico-economic relations of production were feudal, land seemed to be the basis of power and in many cases it literally was equated with power too. It is not at all clear, as Keddie has argued, "whether it was more frequent for already rich and powerful courtiers, tribal leaders, ulama, and

merchants to add to their power and security by purchasing land, or alternatively for powerful landlords by virtue of their landed wealth to enter into positions of influence." (1981: 28) The landowners made every effort to increase their local political and economic power by resisting pressures from the central authority (Ibid.: 1960: 6). For instance, the governor of Fars, Prince Mu'ayyed al-Dawlah, complained to the Shah about his inability to collect taxes from the local magnates. Another prince-governor of the same area had a similar complaint when he wrote to the Shah that:

The problem of Fars is that there are no peasants [directly under the government authority]. All authority rests in the hands of the landowners. The landowners are the ones who are supposed to pay the taxes. And they are all notables, ulama, and sayyids. All respectable people. And their custom has always been to misbehave and not pay their dues. (Quoted in Sheikholeslami, 1978: 229)

The real rulers of the country in this period were local khans and governors. Tribal khans of the Bakhtiyari, the Kurds, and the Qashqais, on whom the patrimonial authority depended for military contingents, were, to all intents and purposes, independent rulers. Some of these forces even entered into negotiations and contracts with Great Britain and Russia without the consent of the central authority (Cf. Wilson, 1912; Saldanha, 1906).

Connected with this feature was another important aspect of the Qajar administration. This is the sale of offices --a practice stemming from the earlier practice of granting iqta and having parallels in much of pre-modern Europe. Offices in different parts of the country and at different levels of the bureaucracy were sold

in lieu of presents (pishkash) and stipulated revenue. Some of these offices, like those of central and regional treasurers (mostoufis) tended to be hereditary. The more the patrimonial state needed revenue for buying arms and goods from the West, the more often government offices and posts were put up for sale to the highest bidder. In turn, each purchaser sold his offices to his subordinates in order to increase his mudakhel (receipt or perquisite). Even in case of lands, many of the crown and vaqf lands were leased to renters in lieu of a fixed payment. In this case, the renter functioned between the landlord and the peasant --a function assigned to the kadkhuda in other cases. In many cases, the office holders forced the small land-owning peasants to relinquish their property and to become sharecroppers. Through this practice, some of these officials became big landowners. For example, when Mohammad Shah (1834-48) appointed Haji Mirza Aqasi as his grand vizier, Mirza had no property worth mentioning; but ten years later, when he was dismissed from his post, he owned 1438 villages, farms, and qanats around the country (Alipour-Fard, 1971: 25).

The effects of this system of revenue collection was devastating both for the peasants and for the economy of the country. As Keddie stated:

This system, which had the advantage of giving the ruler or governor ready cash in advance, had the greater disadvantage for national prosperity of encouraging officials to overtax, since they were not sure they could hold their posts and hence were not concerned to leave the peasants enough to maintain fertility, investment, and productivity. (1981: 27)

The sale of the offices led to corruption and tyranny on the part of the office-holders who saw their offices only as a source of revenue and nothing else. As Sykes has mentioned, "in some cases the Governor ordered his minions to manufacture crime, and in others even sent out bands of men to rob for his benefit." (1951,II: 384) To compensate for the expenses of acquiring their positions, the office-holders went much beyond collecting the regular taxes and tried to collect as much money and crops as possible. The peasants could not rely on the government specification of taxes because they usually had to pay levies and taxes beyond those stipulated in laws. The structure of taxation was very much dependent on the collecting agencies and local notables. In Khuzestan, the Shah's representative reported that "no one knows how much taxes the local governor of Hawaizeh collects." (Quoted in Sheikholeslami, 1978: 230). Sykes also cites a similar example occurring in 1905 in Khurasan. He mentions that there were five types of taxes in Khurasan which amounted to 137,713 British pound sterling in cash and 21,778 tons of grain (wheat and barley) in kind. As Sykes describes:

A large proportion of the grain was given to pensioners and troops, leaving only 1160 tons to be sold.... The Governor-General through the Vizier collected about 30,000 [pound sterling] above the estimate. Out of this, 14,000 [p.s.] was paid to the Shah and 6,000[p.s.] to the Grand Vizier as pishkash. This left 10,000[p.s.] profit, to be divided between the Governor-General and the Vizier. (1951,II: 386-7)

However, this was not all that the Governor-General received. This revenue was supplemented by a further sum derived from: "(a) Levying

a percentage on all cash pensions and mixing at least 20 per cent of
earth in the grants of grain. (b) Profits from 'justice'.... (c)
Profits from the sale of minor governorships and other posts. (d)
Sending special officials to inquire into complaints, real or
invented. (e) Windfalls, such as the death of rich men.... "
(Ibid.) This system of taxation, as Curzon observed at the time,
"instituted an arithmetical progression of plunder from the
sovereign to the subject, each in descending scale renumrating
himself from the unit next in rank below him, and the helpless
peasant being the ultimate victim." (1966,I: 443)

In Azarbaijan, as Shuster observed in 1911, most tax collectors
(mostoufis) had tax books (ketabcheh) of their own which were
"written in a peculiar Persian style...." These books were vaguely
written in order to make it difficult "for any ordinary Persian to
understand them" and could be understood only by the mostoufis
themselves. The most important problem in using these books was
that they were out of date and did not provide a just basis for the
levying of the duties. As Shuster speaks of these books:

Most of them were prepared over generations ago, and since
that time many villages which were prosperous and populous
have become practically deserted, the people having moved
to other districts. Yet the kitabcha are never changed,
and a few hundred inhabitants remaining in some village
which has before harboured a thousand or more are called
upon to pay the same taxes which were assessed on the
entire community when it was three or more times as large.
In like manner, a village which, when the kitabcha were
prepared many years ago, had only a few inhabitants, is
still called upon to pay, so far as the Central Government
is concerned, only the amount originally fixed in the
kitabcha, although the agent who collects the taxes in the
name of the Government never fails to exact from each man
in the community his full quota. (Shuster, 1912: 278-81)

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The taxes were collected in cash and in kind. Additionally, the peasants also had to pay military taxes. For instance, when Amir Kabir, Naser ud-Din Shah's early chief minister, decided to establish a strong, modern standing army instead of the old structure of the irregulars, he found no source of finance available to him but the villagers. He tried to tie the military draft to the tax structure. Each production unit (boneh) within the village had to provide the state with a certain number of soldiers. The soldiers were to receive their salary from the villagers. The implementation of this plan led to the development of a standing army, known as sarbaz-e bonechah, paid by and drawn from the villages (Sheikholeslami, 1978: 213). The peasants were forced not only to pay these taxes and dues to the government officials, but also were forced to pay different dues to non-government forces such as shaykhs or sayyeds (religious functionaries). Those shaykhs who were associated with the patrimonial court became involved in fiscal functions and accumulated a great deal of wealth for themselves. For instance, the Shaykhs of Bani Taraf collected between 25 and 30 percent of the produce of peasants worth 60,000 tumans at the time. From this amount, they only turned over 18,000 tumans to the state (Ibid.: 228).

The amount of tax on agricultural produce varied from place to place. Malcolm, who was sent to Iran on a political mission by the East India Company in the early nineteenth century, maintained that the rate of taxes varied from 5% to 20% of the produce depending on the water supply. He estimated that the sum of ordinary and extraordinary revenues amounted to three million pounds sterling

each. According to Curzon, at the end of the century, the land tax was around 25% of produce on average overall (Keddie, 1972: 63-4).

Since trade was declining, the government raised the taxes in 1884. A picture of this tax increase may be gleaned by looking at the tax increase in two different regions of Gilan and Khurasan for which information is available. From 1866 until 1893, the changes in land tax in Gilan were as follows:

1866-67	179,137 tumans
1874-75	158,500 tumans
1892-93	202,100 tumans

The increase in total amount of taxes collected in Khurasan was 512,588 tumans in 1892-93 as compared with those collected in 1867-68 (McDaniel, 1974: 30).

As the above figures indicate, taxes in this period were high and unjust. In addition to taxes named above, the peasants had to pay an annual tax on their houses and their domesticated animals. For instance, it was not until before his assassination that Naser ud-Din Shah abolished the special tax on bread and meat. In Azarbaijan, a special tax was collected known as i'anahyah-e sultaniyah and in Tehran people had to pay tax on the nightingales (Sheikholeslami, 1978: 233). In different regions, the peasants were variably required to provide the khans with chicken, eggs, and a certain amount of timber for fuel. Since most of the villages were dry and barren, in many cases the villagers had no timber at all and they had no choice but to buy timber in order to give it to the khans. The khans even asked for a fee on marriages in the

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villages. In addition to all these, the government taxes were heavy and constituted an additional burden for producers. At the time of the famine in 1757, the Qajar's exactions forced the people of Esfahan and Julfa to sell their children to buy bread. They were so impoverished and starved that they hunted wild animals, and picked cotton-seeds for food (Perry, 1979: 227).

In addition to the ordinary taxes, government representatives and other officials levied extra taxes to cover their own expenses and those of their staff in the divans (government bureaucracies). This additional levy was called tafavote 'amal and, as Lambton mentions, in the course of time it was added to the original tax. With the new rates in use, still further dues were imposed to defray the expenses of the local divans. Lambton writes:

In this way the peasant were often reduced to penury and unable to pay the demands which the divan made upon them. An example of this is the following. The original tax of Shamsabad near Qumm had been 600 tumans. This was increased by the addition of various taxes until the assessment finally reached 3,550 tumans. This ruined the peasants and the estates were eventually confiscated for arrears. Similarly, the revenue assessment for the cultivated land of the five districts (ayalat) of Qumm watered by the river and gardens, apart from Sarajeh, made by Mirza Aqa Baba Muhammad Ashtiani in the reign of Fath Ali Shah, amounted to 12,014 tumans and 3,000 tumans and 4,582 kharvar in kind. Subsequently, an additional assessment was made every year for the expenses of the administration. This in the course of time was included in the assessment until finally it rose from 12,000 tumans odd to 25,000 tumans. In a similar way many of the villages in the neighbourhood became ruined and deserted. (1953: 144-5)

On every occasion, the government and its representatives, i.e., the hakems, asked for presents (pishkash), bribes (reshva) and gifts (hadiya). As Malcolm observed at the time:

If an addition is made to the army; if the king desires to construct an aqueduct, or build a place; if troops are marching through the country, and require to be furnished with provisions; if a foreign mission arrives in Persia; if one of the royal family is married; or, in short, on any occurrence not ordinary, an impost is laid, sometimes upon the whole kingdom, and at others only on particular provinces. (1815: 479-80)

In Fars, the governors were so oppressive, and implemented such harsh tax measures, that peasants were forced to leave their land and go to Basra and India (Fasai, 1972: 389). Yet, it is not a general pattern of the feudal era in Iran that peasants left the land. As Fraser observed:

In Persia, the seduction of peasantry from one district to another is held to be a deadly crime.... All such attempts therefore are put down, where possible, by force, and bitter quarrels are often the consequence. (Quoted in Kazemi and Abrahamian, 1978: 294)

The peasants were ruled by the arbitrary decisions of the government officials, landlords' representatives, and the landlords themselves. Fraser provides a clear example of one such situation:

Only a few months ago, Kaussim Khan Kadjer, the King's son-in-law, a turbulent and insolent noble, passed this way to Sheeraux, with about a hundred and fifty attendants; and intending to halt at this village, dispatched a messenger before him, to demand soorsaut, of a nature and to an extent which these poor creatures could not possibly provide; sherbets, sweetmeats, and delicacies of a like nature formed part of this demand; the intention of which, as in all similar cases, was but to raise a sum of money, by offering a compromise of part, for a payment in cash. The villagers declared that they had no such things, never had heard of them; but so far was the excuse from being admitted, that the demand was aggravated by a requisition on the part of the shatir himself, who carried it, for ten tomauns as service money: the nazir or steward of the household, insisted upon ten more, and other officers in the same proportion. The people appalled at

demands they had neither the means of satisfying or resisting, fled in terror from the villages; and Kaussim Khan, in a fury, sent his people into the place, pillaged it, destroying by fire or water all the corn he could find, burnt several of the houses, and otherwise ravaged it, as if it had been the town of an enemy given up to plunder. (1825: 115)

For peasants subjected to these impossible demands there was no choice but fleeing. However, no peasant family "could move to any distance without permission from government." (Fraser, 1825: 116) In most cases they accepted their fate unwillingly and hid their resentments. Despite their "apparent acceptance of feudal authority," they resented the very conditions imposed upon them. During the Constitutional Revolution, the peasants participated in some of protests against high taxes in the cities of Yazd and Rasht, and the Caspian town of Talesh. Nonetheless, their participation remained scattered and limited (Kazemi and Abrahamian, 1978: 294).

In the final years of the Qajar rule, especially prior to the First World War and during the war, the country was in political turmoil and administrative control was nil. This turmoil provided an additional opportunity for the landowners, tribal khans, and absentee landowners to arrogate to themselves additional privileges and immunities. In their relations with the peasants, they felt no constraint and treated the peasants virtually as they wished (Lambton, 1953: 181).

7.2.5. The Pahlavi Era: Pre-Land Reform Period (1925-1962):

After the Constitutional Revolution the ownership of the land

was basically divided into three categories: (a) arbabi (private), (b) khaleseh (state-owned), and (c) moquofeh (owned by religious establishment). Most of the cultivated lands in this period were held in the form of khaleseh or arbabi. Arbabi lands or melkiyats were held in full private ownership in accordance with shari'a, i.e., Islamic law. According to this law, land ownership was based on two basic principles: *asl-e taslit* (complete control) and *asl-e la-zarar* (no harm). According to the latter principle, the owner of a land might hold full control of his land as long as he did not do harm to that land, or as long as his ownership of that land did not do harm to the others' rights of ownership. The ownership of these lands was divided into two types: those held in large blocks (*umdeh-maleki* = large ownership) and those held in small units (*khurdeh-maleki* = petty ownership), either in the form of individual producers or of communal ownership by the village community.

Arbabi lands were held either in the form of *sheshdangi* or *dangi*. Legally, any real estate, irrespective of its size, was divided into six parts known as *dangs*. *Sheshdangi* (meaning six *dangs*) refers to the ownership of an entire village by one landlord, including the theoretical ownership of the residential area and its houses. *Dangi* refers to the ownership of one to five share of the village. *Khurdeh-maleki* or petty ownership usually refers to the joint ownership of less than a *dang*, i.e., less than one-six. These villages were usually held in one of the two forms of ownership known in Islamic law as *mosha'* or *mafrooz*. In *mosha'* ownership, while the value and amount of *dangs* are known, the object of ownership is not designated. For instance, the villages held in the

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form of mosha' are not divided into specific share and the owner's right is collective. In mafrooz ownership, the object of ownership is designated and the owner of each dang or dangs knows the specific portion or portions of the land he/she owns.

The statistics available on landownership in this period in Iran are ambiguous and confusing. Various categories developed to group forms and sizes of ownership are vague and inconsistent. However, none of these statistics contradict the fact that land ownership in this period was very concentrated. As Lambton observed:

In the country as a whole, the dominant form of land ownership was that of the large landowner. In areas with difficult irrigation problems, as for example much of Kirman, where the qanats were long and the cost of their upkeep heavy, the land was mainly, if not entirely, in the hands of large landowners. This was also true of the wheat-growing areas of western Persia. (1969: 24)

Some owners even possessed over a hundred villages and most of the land was owned by few families. The 1960 statistics show that in East Azarbaijan only 17.99 percent of farmers owned their own lands. While 69.9 percent of the landless peasants had to work for landlords as forced laborers (on 17.5 percent of the lands), the remainder either rented the landlords' lands or worked on the land as rentier and share-croppers (Research Group, 1968: 1515). A 1949 survey of 1,300 villages near Tehran showed that while 60% of the rural families possessed no land at all, "the 1% owning 20 hectares and over, possessed 56% of the land; 0.2% of the families possessed over 100 hectares each, that is, 34% of the total land. The top 5% owned 83% of all the land." (Agah, 1958: 171) According to another

study, of 4,016 landowners, 3,008 (75%) of them owned only one village, 644 of them owned two villages, and 342 of them owned three to five villages. In one case, one owner possessed 215 villages (Behnam & Rasekh, 1969: 231-2). According to another estimate, prior to the introduction of the Land Reform Law of January 9, 1962, fifty-six percent of the land in the country was owned by one percent of the population (McLachlan, 1968: 686-7). Some of the provinces were almost entirely owned by one or two landowners. For instance, as Behrangi (1969: 243-4) has reported, Assad Khan Assef, a feudal lord in Azarbaijan, owned sixteen villages around Maraqeh.

The moquofeh holdings included those lands which were dedicated to the religious establishments. The vaqf or moquofeh lands were of two kinds: (a) vaqf-e 'am were those lands held in trust for religious and educational purposes, and (b) vaqf-e khass which were endowed for specific groups or private persons. The income from the latter was devoted to a particular cause or given to specific groups. The extent of control over the revenues from these lands by the religious establishment has always depended on the relative power of the clergy vis-a-vis the patrimonial institution of monarchy. Most of the vaqf lands were inalienable except by judicial sanction.

The khaleseh lands were divided into two categories of (a) crown lands, known as khass, injo, saltanatî, etc., and (b) state lands, known as divanî, khaleseh, etc. The former were regarded as the personal property of the patrimonial despot and the latter supposedly belonged to the state. The extent to which one can distinguish between the two is not all clear. In many cases, the

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management of the former was left to the government representatives and their expenditures were paid from the state treasury. Since the iqta system was abolished by the Constitution of 1906-1908, the khaleseh became less significant in this period. However, during the rule of Reza Shah, most of the crown lands were acquired through the patrimonial confiscation of individual properties.

During his rule, Reza Shah confiscated large tracks of land from tribal and non-tribal leaders. He tried to monopolize the finest estates of the hinterland for himself, especially in the northern belt of the country which had the most fertile lands. Some believe that these lands, known as amlak, covered approximately sixty percent of the land in the country (DeVilliers, et.al., 1976: 46). When he died, Reza Shah was the biggest landlord in the country. Since his patrimonial interests coincided with those of the land-owning class, he took no action against this class. When he was deposed, 20,000 of the best agricultural villages in the country were owned by 37 families; whereas 60% of the peasants were landless. In 1949, the Royal estates consisted of 1,677 villages, covering an area of 300,000 hectares, which were valued at \$ 100 million at the time. These lands were usually leased out either to wealthy landowners, in block, who in turn rented them to small cultivators, or to petty-producers in the villages. When Reza Shah abdicated, according to an estimation, he bequeathed 750,000 acres of imperial land and over 1,670 villages, which he had confiscated, for his son Mohammad Reza.

After World War II, the public pressured the young Shah to examine the legality of his father's ownership of these estates.

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When the courts began their procedures, the outcome of hearings proved so revealing and embarrassing to the patrimonial family that the Shah ordered the courts to be suspended. To calm public outcry and to win some public support, Mohammad Reza Shah declared that the lands his father had confiscated would be put to public use. This move was a political ploy to quiet the cries of those real owners who were demanding the return of their lands. The transfer was not complete and took place only on paper. Officially, the control of these lands was handed to the government but the actual transformation of the lands or its revenues was not to take place until the final ratification of the decree. Eight years later, the decision had not been made. In 1949, the Shah demanded their return into his title. These lands remained the Shah's private property until Dr. Mossadeq requested the Shah to return them to the state. However, they were taken back again and remained the Shah's private property until the coup d'etat of August 1953. After his reinstatement to power, engineered by the American Central Intelligence Agency, the Shah decided to sell these lands to the public. These lands were sold to the public on the condition of paying installments spread over twenty-five years. Interestingly, the debenture bonds were cashed in a sum in the Bank-e Melli-e Iran without any interest! Furthermore, as Keddie (1981: 149) reports, on the basis of her interviews with officials involved in a village survey in Iran, a third of these lands were given to members of the royal household and ruling class members.

During the rule of Pahlavi, land-holding became "a means of investment of wealth with associations of social prestige and

political power attached." (Sunderland, 1968: 625) In 1950, crown lands were estimated to be about 2.4-4.0 million hectares, plus four-fifths of the forests and ranges. The vaqf lands were estimated to amount to 15% of the total. These lands were often controlled by large landowners who were to spend the revenue derived from them on specific charities. Lands privately owned amounted to over half of the country's arable land. The owners of these lands often controlled and managed the state and vaqf lands too. Considering this fact, we see that about four-fifths of the total land is controlled by big landowners. The lands belonging to small-holders amounted to 20% and those owned by the peasant-proprietors were only one-fifth of the total land in the country.

An ownership survey carried out in six provinces in 1956-7 reveals that the pattern of ownership varied over the country. As Table 3 in the next page shows, in Azarbaijan, Kurdestan, and Lurestan the majority of villages belonged to individual owners (one whole village belonging to one owner). In contrast, in Esfahan and Tehran most villages consist of small-holders (owners holding less than one-sixth of the whole village). In Khuzestan, 40% of the total villages were owned by the state. Earlier in 1930, a survey had indicated that state lands amounted to 3,668 villages in the country, that is, nearly one-tenth of the total.

It is important to note that the category of "small landowners" (khurdeh malekin) is a deceptive one because it includes not only peasant proprietors, but also kadkhudas, minor absentee landlords such as merchants, clergymen, and civil servants. More importantly, it also includes those big absentee landowners who owned

Table 3

Patterns of Land-Holding in Six Provinces in
1956-57

	No. Shah- restan	State	Vaqf	Single -Owner	Several -Owner	Small- Holder	Mixed	Total Villages
Tehran	10	68	83	1,410	253	1,658	518	3,990
Azarbaijan	13	361	40	3,018	814	1,667	883	6,783
Esfahan	7	-	36	285	127	3,243	234	3,925
Lurestan	8	8	74	1,230	255	1,172	779	3,518
Khuzestan	8	805	-	461	247	318	79	1,910
Kurdestan	3	2	22	724	198	541	221	1,708
Total	49	1,244	245	7,128	1,894	8,599	2,714	21,834
%		5.7%	1.2%	32.6%	8.7%	39.4%	12.4%	100.0%

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, First and Second Report on Village Surveys, Tehran, 1958

small parts of numerous villages (Kazemi & Abrahamian, 1978: 269).

Generally, peasant proprietorship was not a significant category of ownership in this period (Lambton, 1953: 280-1). The lands owned by these peasants were usually too small, too barren, and too remote.

As Lambton put it:

Small landowners tended to be found in the less fertile districts round the towns. Peasant proprietors were on the whole confined to remote areas in which agriculture offered a low return, as, for example, mountain areas or the edge of the central desert. (1969: 24)

The villages located in the northern part of the country were the richest villages because of adequate water-supply. Most of the petty-landowners were located in this area because the availability of water and adequate rainfall reduced the peasant's dependence on the landowners. Due to this high rainfall, settlement in this part of the country has been dense and, historically, peasants have shown a capacity for collective organization and have taken many actions

against the large landowners. Such is not, however, the case in the central desert, where village communities were more sparse and the peasant population historically have shown fewer collective tendencies for organized change (Cf. Kazemi & Abrahamian, 1978).

During the rule of Reza Shah, a few superficial attempts were made to distribute the state lands, but these efforts were ill-formed and did not bear any positive effect. These efforts resulted simply in the usurpation of state lands by the big and influential landowners. In most cases, the peasants received no land, or land of little value, and when they were given some land, they were forced to sell it. Most of these landowners were living in large cities and did not show any interest in running everyday affairs of their lands by themselves. An official survey carried out in November 1956 showed that 79% of villages in the Karaj area, near Tehran, were wholly or partly owned by absentee landowners. (3)

The codification of civil law and the legalization of landownership during the reign of Reza Shah somewhat redefined the legal forms of ownership, but did nothing to change the essential fact that most of the agricultural lands were owned and controlled by large-holding proprietors. Attempts were made in surveying the lands and establishing some order in the registration of land-holdings for tax purposes. Some preparations were also made for tenancy reforms and the establishment of a more organized and secure relationship between the landlords and the tenant farmers.

Modernizing activities carried out by the government in this period, indeed, were not directed toward the agricultural sector. From the coup d'etat of 1921 by Reza Shah to his abdication in 1941,

he paid little attention to agricultural improvements. While the general share of agriculture in Government expenditures included 1.6% of the 1939-40 budget, this same share was reduced to less than 1% in the period after coup d'état.

On November 16, 1937, the Land Development Act was introduced in order to encourage the optimum use of the land. The Act was doomed to failure because, on the one hand, the implementation of the Act was entrusted to the landowners and, expectedly, they did nothing to enforce it. On the other hand, those landowners who wished to go along with the Act faced opposition from peasants because from their standpoint an increase in productivity, without any corresponding change in the tenurial relations, would have benefited only the landlords and have intensified the exploitation to which they were subjected. But why did the landlords oppose an act which would bring them higher benefits? Again, the reasons for landlords' reluctance could be found in the socio-economic relations between landlords and tenant farmers. As Banani stated:

The latter [tenant farmer] pays rent that is fixed not in terms of money but as a portion of the gross yield. The proportion varies according to the custom of the particular area and depends upon which party owns the water, which owns the plow oxen, which supplies the seed, and so on. On the average, a rent of 50 per cent of the crop is collected. This very large income of the landlord is partially responsible for his lack of incentive to invest in development. He is also sensitive to possible social and economic dislocations that might occur if significant improvements are made in the subsistence-level standard of living of the tenant peasant. (1961: 123)

On September 16, 1939, the Majles suggested the examination of the sharecropping system and a possible reform in that system. But this

was "a belated gesture" which did not generate any action (Ibid.). Based on political expediency, on August 15, 1946, a decree was issued requiring the landowners to give, after the division of the crop, an additional 15% of the output to the peasants. But the measure was never carried out and the government had no intention of implementing it.

Development measures taken by the government of Reza Shah did not reduce the injustices to which the peasants were subjected. Reza Khan's efforts intensified the previous exploitative relations and reinforced the system of land-holding substantially by changing the composition of the landed class. Military officers, civil servants, usurers, and speculators turned their energies to economic activities based on land-owning. By establishing governmental bureaucracies like the National Statistics and Registration of Personal Status Department, the Notary Public Office, the Gendarmerie and Public Prosecutor's Office, the Courts of Law, and so on, Reza Khan was able to legalize and protect the ownership of the land and water. Furthermore, this process of legalization, together with those developmental measures, helped to change social relations of ownership from a traditional feudal form to a more modern legal social relations. As Hadary put it:

Practically none of the benefits of modernization and change and economic growth have reached the peasant, but he has had to share its costs by direct and indirect taxation. (1951: 181)

The so-called modernization program launched by Reza Khan, indeed, worked against the lot of the peasants. Since the tenure system did

not change, the introduction of farm machinery deprived the village women and agricultural laborers of their traditional jobs and some of their traditional rights. Speaking of Reza Shah's agricultural modernization in the rural areas, Banani stated:

The presence of mechanical piece of equipment often has a disquieting effect upon the peasant. The tenant who owns his oxen, and therefore receives a higher share of the crops, is rightly fearful of losing his distinction. In Iranian villages women have the customary right to pick the grain left over in the fields after the harvest. This may provide a peasant household with up to six week's supply of bread, and sometimes spells the difference between subsistence and sinking deeper into debt. The mechanical harvester in its relative efficiency is irritating to the peasants, for it leaves not enough behind. In some areas all poultry, their care, and their products also belong, by custom, to women. But above all, the greatest difficulty in the introduction of machinery arises out of the relationship between the mode of production and the socio-economic pattern of land tenure. In all their efforts for the promotion of agricultural mechanization the officials and modernizers of the Reza Shah period displayed no evidence that they properly understood this relationship. Without a commensurate program of land-tenure reform the little mechanization that was introduced tipped the already uneven scale further to the advantage of the landlord and thereby added to social tension in rural Iran. (1961: 126-7)

In many cases, the developmental projects and programs formed in this period did not even reach the rural areas. Most of these programs were designed for urban areas and village life remained mostly intact.

During this period, the landlords became the absolute authority in the village, not tolerating any other sources of power within their domains. They saw their lands as legal territories for which they could decide what form of life was necessary (Vadiei, n.d.: 188). Iranian economic histories dealing with the socio-economic

conditions of Iranian peasants during this century are full of stories indicating the plight of small peasant owners in the villages who had to either sell their lands to landlords or give up their property to escape the intimidation and harrasment of the landlords' agents (Cf. Behrangi, 1969: 232).

Labor service (bigary), a remnant of the Asiatic period, was not a universal practice any more, but it still existed in many parts of the country. In places like Kurdestan, Azarbaijan, Khuzestan, parts of Fars and Kerman, and in the eastern part of the country farmers were required to perform a certain amount of labor for their land-owners. A new form this practice took was corvee. As Lambton has discussed:

Thus, if the landowner wants his land ploughed, or the harvest reaped, or any other agricultural work performed, it is done by corvee. Food is provided for those taking part but no other payment is made. This levy, which is taken in certain other parts of Kurdistan also, is known as gal, and is in addition to the peasant's liability to perform free labour on a fixed number of days per annum. (1953: 331-2)

Due to harsh measures imposed by the government and the landlords, the peasants' economic conditions were disastrous. Most of these peasants had to sell their crops before the harvest in order to earn some money for their subsistence. For instance, in a 1960 report on the Dez Irrigation Project, we read:

It appeared that practically all farmers in the Gheblei district are indebted.... In other words, more than 2/3 of the farmer's share of the rice crop has already been sold, of course against a low price, before harvest time.

All and all one may say that the farmer pays 25%-75% interest and sometimes even more. (Nederlandsche

Heidemaatschappy, 1959: 1-3)

The severity and ubiquity of indebtedness is one of the issues which appeared in most of the research conducted by a research group at the University of Tehran in 1960's, published in the economic journal of Tahqiqat-e Eqtesadi.(4) Burdened with debt and the loss of up to 80 percent of their crop, the peasants had no incentive to improve their lands and no means by which they could increase their production. This lack of incentive was also due to the fact that a great part of any increase in their production would go to the landlord anyway.

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(1) Some other names given to this phenomenon locally include: hashar in Sistan, gara in Dezful, qalun in Kerman, shekarteh in Arab areas of Khuzestan and so on.

(2) Generally speaking, those peasant proprietors who grew cash-crops and had some access to the city markets were relatively better off because of their ability to supplement their income.

(3) Ministry of Interior, Report on the Karaj Census, Vol. I, Government Publication, 1957: 60.

(4) Cf. Tahqiqat-e Eqtesadi, University of Tehran, Nos. 3 to 20, 1964-70.

CHAPTER VIII

The DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALIST SECTOR AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALIST CLASS DURING THE SAFAVID PERIOD

During the early Safavid rule, especially under the reign of Shah Ismai'l (1501-1524) and Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576), the socio-politico-economic conditions of Iran did not differ very much from those characterizing the last Mongol rulers. The very social relations governing the period of disintegration were still dominant in the period of reintegration. Peasants and artisans were still exploited. Productivity was low and the country lacked the adequate infrastructure for socio-economic development (Bastani Parizi, 1969: 18). To these deteriorating conditions should be added the tribal wars and conflicts for control of the new state.

It was in 1587 that this situation came to an end. The ascendance of Shah Abbas I to the throne marked the beginning of another stable and centralized government. After 1587, the state revived its old tradition of vigorous interventions into economic affairs. State intervention into economic life, especially into commercial activities became more direct and regulated. The economic intervention of state led to a relative increase in productivity, the expansion of trade activities, and the development

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of infrastructural projects in transportation, commerce, and irrigation. The government constructed many new roads, ports, and carvansaris which were conducive to the development of commercial activities. Many of these roads and highways were guarded by rahdars (protectors of roads) who received their salaries from tolls and dues collected in mid-way carvansaris (Cf. Steensgaard, 1973: 68). In agriculture, greater emphasis was put on the development of irrigation facilities, especially in the provinces under the control of the Khassa administration which was headed by mostoufi khassa.

The most important aspect of these developments was the expansion of the commercial sector of the economy. The pastoral and agricultural economic base of society, despite some sporadic reformatory measures, became the victim of new economic policies as well as of the excesses of wars which the country went through in that period. Shah Abbas I changed the commercial silk routes which traditionally passed through the Ottoman Empire. This rerouting of the silk trade enabled the Safavid government to defy the commercial blockade imposed on Iran by Ottoman government. The Safavid government maintained its mercantile revenue beyond the reach of the Ottoman Empire. Between 1513 and the 1620s, Bursa, which was the international market place for raw materials, especially silk, received less and less of the supply of Iranian silk (Inalcik, 1970: 209-215). Iranian silk and other trade items were exported through the Caspian Sea to Astrakhan. Whereas until the late fifteenth century the main external demand for Iranian products had come from neighboring countries and Indo-China, during the Safavid period there was a rapid growth in European demand for Iranian

exports. By 1634, Iran was exporting 200,000 pounds of silk only to Europe (Furber, 1976: 245). In addition, Iran provided India and the Far East with brocades, carpets, precious stones, dried fruits, and horses. Most of these imports and exports were conducted through Astrakhan by Armenian merchants. The Armenians, who were a professional class of merchants in the international trade of that time, gained control of this trade and became the main trade agents (Braudel, 1972: 50-51).

The Safavid state saw trade as a dynamic sector and an important source of surplus. It encouraged transit trade and protected it very vigorously. Shah Abbas I encouraged the development of many industries such as carpets and textiles, which reached an almost incredible perfection in this period. In addition to substantial changes in the patterns of trade and surplus circulation, many civil and economic laws and rules, favorable to commercial activities, were established. In some areas, agricultural production was reorganized to enhance productivity. Merchants of various religious bents, especially Jews and Armenians, were allowed more liberty to partake in the profits of trade. A large colony of Armenian artisans were forcefully moved from Azarbaijan to the city of Esfahan and to the silk-growing Caspian provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran. After this forceful resettlement, these Armenian merchants were encouraged to act as the Shah's commercial agents in international trade. As the most organized merchant community, these Armenians centered in the flourishing suburb of Julfa on the south bank of the Zayandeh Rud at Esfahan. They maintained a monopoly over the trade in cloth, which

was perhaps the most plentiful Iranian product. They were in frequent contact with the communities in Armenia. Their pervasive influence in ports throughout the East Indies was a constant feature of mid-eighteenth century trade in the Persian Gulf (Furber, 1976: 25; Ferrier, 1973: 40).

Under the sponsorship of the patrimonial household, the cities of Kashan, Tabriz, and Esfahan prospered, as did the lesser mercantile cities of Qazvin, Hamadan, Yazd, Mashad, and the ports of Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf and Barfrush on the Caspian Sea (Ashraf, 1970: 317). Manwaring has reported that the bazaar at Qazvin was three times as big as the Exchange in London (in Savory, 1980: 189). While realizing the significance of silk as the keystone of his economic policy, Shah Abbas I made some attempt at the diversification of the Iranian economy because it enabled him to retain a competitive position in its economic transactions with the foreigners. It was through this policy that Shah Abbas was able to outbid the Dutch in securing the trade distribution of Chinese porcelain. He put a greater emphasis on the development of the porcelain industry. For this purpose, he brought 300 Chinese technicians, with their families, to Iran to train the local craftsmen in the porcelain industry (Wulff, 1966: 149). It was the result of these economic policies that in the seventeenth century Isfahan became the capital of industrial arts in Iran. Skilled workers in textiles and metals, leather, wood, and ceramics were brought from the neighboring countries of the Near East and India (Krader, 1975: 76). However, this important policy of economic diversification was ignored by Shah Abbas I's successors and again

the economy was mainly organized around the production of commodities which could sell high in foreign markets.

A major question arises here: given that the Iranian capitalist sector was expanding, productivity was high, and the economy came into contact with growing European mercantile capitalism, then why did Iran not develop into a capitalist mode of production? Why did the presence of such a large number of merchants and the growing contact with the Western capitalism not help the development of an independent mercantile class which could pave the way for the development of a capitalist economy in Iran? Why did the *asnaf* (merchant guilds) not function in the way their European counterpart functioned in Europe? Why did the European model of capitalism not aid the development of a capitalist class and economy in Iran? Having an extended capitalist sector and an extended relationship with the European economy in this period, it seems the Asiatic mode should have given way to a capitalist mode of production. How is it that an Asiatic mode in full interaction with the international mercantile capital does not develop into capitalism?

The answer to these questions is that the structural transformation of a pre-capitalist society is only partly determined by the existence of commerce and merchant capital. It is also partly determined by the nature of the pre-capitalist mode of production. As Marx maintained:

Commerce, therefore, has a more or less dissolving influence everywhere on the producing organization, which it finds at hand and whose different forms are mainly carried on with a view of use value. To what extent it

brings about the dissolution of the mode of production depends on its solidarity and internal structure. And whither this process of dissolution will lead, in other words, what new mode of production will replace the old, does not depend on commerce, but on the character of the old mode of production itself. In the ancient world the effect of commerce and the development of merchant's capital always resulted in a slave economy; depending on the point of departure, only in the transformation of a patriarchal slave system devoted to the production of immediate subsistence into one devoted to the production of surplus value. However, in the modern world, it results in the capitalist mode of production. It follows therefrom that these results spring in themselves from circumstances other than the development of merchant's capital. (Marx, 1967, III: 331-32)

The reasons for the historical immobility of the Iranian socio-economic structure in this period have to do with both the Asiatic nature of the Iranian social formation and the set of constraints emerging out of the growth of world capitalist system at this time. Mercantile developments within the Iranian social formation in this period coincided with those occurring in the European countries: the mercantile upsurge of the Iranian capitalist sector in the Safavid era became contemporaneous with the capitalist expansion of the European mercantilism overseas. This, coupled with the specific character of the Iranian Asiatic formation, had far-reaching effects on the development of capitalism in Iran. The following discussion is directed toward the effects of both these internal and external forces on the development of an independent capitalist class in Iranian Safavid society.

8.1. The Internal Causes of the Underdevelopment of Capitalist Class

While discussing the structure of pre-capitalist formations, Marx argued that the transformation of these economies to a capitalist mode of production is contingent upon the existence of three pre-conditions: freedom of the peasants to leave the land, the development of independent urban centers, and the development of a capitalist sector (Marx, 1964: 46). Three times in Iranian history the conjunction of some aspects of these three phenomena have existed, but only in the last one did it lead to the development of primitive capital accumulation --and that was, of course, under the dominance of the world capitalist system. In the pre-Saljuq period, all the above-mentioned three factors were present but were militated by politico-economic factors created by the Turkish tribal invasion and subsequent tribal rule in Iran for four centuries. The bureaucratic land tenure relations of iqta, the diffusion of the land-holding class, the patrimonial nature of political rule, and the predominance of the pastoral nomadic social structure undercut the potential forces of historical transformation in the Iranian Asiatic formation. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, these same factors, plus the devastation of war with foreign countries and the emergence of centrifugal tendencies, which led to political instability and the development of feudal economic relationships, counterbalanced the tendencies towards the development of the capitalist sector grown during the Safavid rule. In its second chance to develop into a capitalist mode, the Iranian

Asiatic mode lost its momentum to the feudal relations of production which became dominant in the next two centuries. The feudal mode of production developed in the eighteenth century reinforced the archaic elements of the agri-pastoral economy and militated against the diversification of the socio-economic structure. The Turkoman tribes developed powerful military aristocracies. They seized the lands and brought the peasantry under their total control. The bourgeoisie, which was in control of overland commercial activities, "functioned primarily as adjuncts to the local economies."

(Halfgott, 1973: 37) It is at the beginning of the twentieth century that all the three pre-conditions of capitalist development come to bear a fruitful combination --an issue which is beyond the scope of this work. What follows is a discussion of the historical obstacles to the development of capitalism during the Safavid period.

As previously argued, the first prerequisite for the development of capitalism is the uprooting of the peasants from the land. Although the Safavid mercantile economy was relatively developed, it still operated within a pre-capitalist Asiatic social formation. As Terray (1972: 147) has argued, mercantile production can become capitalist when it merchandizes labor. To meet this condition, the pre-capitalist rural structure should have been flexible enough to allow a significant segment of the peasantry to leave the land and enter the urban area as "free-laborers." This, however, was not true of the the Safavid Iran. First, the Iranian economy was primarily based on agriculture. The main productive activity was centered around agriculture and even the bulk of Iranian export in this period was an agricultural product, i.e.,

silk. Non-agricultural activities were relatively small and had secondary importance. Second, the bulk of Iranian producers consisted of peasants and a relatively small group of "free-laborers" who, while involved in some craft production, remained attached to an agrarian economy. While according to Shari'a (Islamic law) these peasants were regarded "free men," at the same time they were all the subjects of the patrimonial Shahs. These peasants never became "workers" in a capitalist sense of the term. Here, the wage-labourers as well as the landless peasants were all subordinated to the despotic rule of patrimonialism. Various strata of artisans, working in the state manufacturing workshops (buyutat-e khass-eye sharifeh), lived in towns and organized their own guilds (asnafs). These artisans were responsible for carrying out corvees for the patrimonial authority and, as will be shown later, remained under the surveillance of the state (Minorsky, 1943: 20-21). Petty-producers who owned their own shops and tools still remained dependent on the patrimonial authority for raw materials (silk, metals, wool, and cotton). Very few of these artisans could obtain these materials from merchants because these merchants, whether Armenian or Persian, were themselves commercial agents of the court. These producers often became commissioned employees (Saleh, 1978: 104).

The second precondition for capitalist development is the existence of relatively independent towns which provided the newly formed class of free laborers with the opportunities for acquiring a job without the permission of the landlord or other ruling elements of pre-capitalist society. This condition was not totally present

in Safavid Iran either. In Safavid Iran, manufacturing was still an activity attached to agricultural production; and the cities, as discussed earlier, were not totally autonomous entities outside of the control of the land-holding class. The cities were, borrowing Marx's phrase, in an "indifferent unity" with the countryside and there was no major conflict to pit them against one another.

Finally, the emergence of a capitalist mode of production is contingent upon the emergence of a relatively independent class of merchants whose mercantile activities contribute to the process of primitive capital accumulation. In other words, the social formation should contain a capitalist sector resulting from usury and trade. The position taken in this work is that while the capitalist sector of the Safavid social formation became relatively developed, it did not lead to the emergence of a "genuine capitalism" in Iran because of the nature of the patrimonial state and the nature of its interaction with the world capitalist system. The historical accounts of this period indicate that the development of independent merchant capital was not a strong component of Safavid state. Chardin has mentioned the existence of few private "masters" who employed a number of "apprentices" as wage laborers (in Penzer, 1927: 251). However, these small capitalists constituted a minor portion of the capitalist class and their entrepreneurial activities represented a primitive form of the capitalist mode of production. Not only did the Safavid mercantile capitalism lack, in terms of its methods of accumulation and of ideological motivation, what Weber (1958) called "entrepreneurial spirit," but it also lacked the structural stimuli which gave rise

to capitalism in Europe. This was partially due to the patrimonial economic policies undertaken by the Safavid state --policies which inhibited the open and free accumulation and investment of capital. The following analysis attempts to substantiate this view.

In the Safavid period, most of the trade and industrial activities discussed earlier were controlled by the patrimonial household. The government intervention in the merchant activities reached to the point that during the seventeenth century the Shah had actually monopolized control over the most important mercantile activities in the country. The production and sale of the most important item of export in this period, i.e., silk, was controlled by the state. Shah Abbas monopolized the sale of this product and did not allow its exchange except through the patrimonial court:

When purchases other than from the Royal treasury were made, however, 12 tomans per load had to be paid in duty on the silk bought for export and 4 tomans per load on the silk brought for processing in Persia. (Steensgaard, 1973: 381)

The state assumed the role of supreme economic organizer to the extent to which some historians have mistakenly characterized the Safavid state during Shah Abbas as "state capitalism." (Cf. Savory, 1980: 188) (1) During the rule of Shah Abbas, every aspect of economic life became subject to regulation and no form of economic activity escaped the controlling eye of the patrimonial state. The Shah was so central to the economic affairs of the country that historians have associated the periods of prosperity and/or decline with the existence of a just or unjust Shah.

State intervention into the economic affairs had both negative

and positive effects on the development of capitalist activities in this period. On the one hand, it contributed to the development of a mercantile class whose existence had been jeopardized by the dominance of tribal forces. Shah Abbas' socio-economic reforms provided this class with increased security, which in turn led to the growth of the handicraft trades and industrial activities in the urban centers. The handicraft workmen organized into guilds (asnaf) and played an important role in the development of mercantile urban economy. On the other hand, this intervention put a curb on the free and independent development of these merchants into a genuine capitalist class. For instance, as Reid has argued:

... after the 1590s, the qizilbash chiefs were singularly eradicated from taking any part in a majority of business ventures, which were reserved for the special supervision of groups that were directly dependent upon the Safavid shah. Their forcible separation from the majority of commercial ventures left the qizilbash and their successors in a weak position until the end of the seventeenth century, when they began to assume the links with the British that Abbas I had initiated. (1978b: 121)

The only commercial group which can be truly identified as a capitalist class were the Armenian merchants. These merchants "constituted a separate group, a commercial elite, with their own distinctive cultural traditions and religion, residing in their own community physically and nationally apart from the Persians." (Ferrier, 1973: 40) However, these Armenian merchants constituted an isolated merchant class who was involved in international trade and did not have any organizational basis within the local economic structures. Furthermore, by their mere religious affiliation, they were excluded in the organization of the bazaar and merchant guilds.

And finally, during the rule of Shah Abbas I they were forced to act as the Shah's agents and did not have independent commercial operations. And even when this monopolistic state control of trade diminished by Shah Abbas' successor Shah Safi, and Armenian merchants gained more freedom in trading, they still remained on the margin of the Iranian economy because they basically operated at the international level. Most of the time these merchants kept their capital away from Iran because in Iran their money would find its way into the patrimonial treasury or remain idle.

During most of the Safavid period, the ability of merchants and asnafs was limited by the Safavid policy of incorporating all social and economic entities into the patrimonial framework. The leadership of these guilds, the kadkhudas or the rish safids (white-bearded elders), were chosen by the Shah or his local representatives. This changed the function of the guilds as a body representing the interests of its members (i.e., merchants) to an entity representing the interests of the state (Ashraf, 1970: 319). Chardin observes that these asnafs were responsible for controlling the quality of crafts and helping to recruit workers for state factories (in Penzer, 1927: 250-51). The asnafs themselves were also subject to corvees as well as to a tax, called bunicha, collected through the kalantar. As Saleh has argued, these guilds

... had none of the autonomy or power of the guilds of the Medieval West. In fact, it is impossible to determine whether these guilds were ever set up as internal protective organizations or whether they were set up by the State to control the activities of the craftsmen in view of their long history of political-religious agitation. (1978: 105-6)

This government intervention in the internal politics of asnafs restricted their ability to act independently of the patrimonial authority (Cf. Tadhkirat al-Muluk, 1943: 20). As a result, Iranian merchants and artisans remained under the domination of the patrimonial state and had no existence independent of the state.

Autonomous development of merchant class would have required a relatively high degree of control over economic resources by this class. But merchants of the Safavid era did not have sufficient control over socio-economic resources. It was the state that controlled and monopolized the natural as well as social and human resources. The most important productive units of the economy were owned or supervised by the patrimonial household, either through their dependent agents, e.g., Armenian merchants, or through state regulations and the appointment of a prominent merchant as *rais al-tojjar* (head of the merchants). Within the agricultural sector of the economy, most of the land was owned by the patrimonial household in the forms of state lands, crown lands, and *moqoufeh* lands. The practice of converting most of the provinces into *khass* lands reduced the size of private hereditary holdings in the country and contributed to the lack of private control of these lands by the capitalist class (Cf. Lambton, 1953: 105-8; Minorsky, 1943: 19).

In the area of industry, the Safavid rulers founded a number of royal workshops (*buyutat-e khass-ye sharifah*) as state-owned factories. According to Chardin's estimation, in the 1670s, when the Safavid state was experiencing economic difficulties, the patrimonial court owned 32 workshops in Esfahan alone, each having

an average of 150 workers recruited from the top craftsmen in the town (Quoted in Minorsky, 1943: 30). These workshops provided the patrimonial despots with virtual monopolies over specific commodities such as silk. As noted by Hodgson (1974, III: 39), the most significant industrial investments in the country were made by the patrimonial court and its affiliates. In the city of Neyriz the Shah had a monopoly over the soap factories. The Shah also controlled the issuing money and, thus, exercised tight control over the monetary resources of the country. Minorsky (1943: 14) characterizes Shah Abbas as the biggest capitalist of his time.

Not only did the patrimonial state monopolize all industrial and mercantile activities in the country, but, by exerting its prevalent control and framing trade activities, it also denied the merchants opportunities for investing their capital in productive activities. Referring to the Armenian merchants, who became the pioneers of capital investment in Russia, Poland, and the Baltanic region at this time, Banani (1978b: 94-5) argues that the "repressive" economic policies of Shah Abbas I discouraged their active capital investment in Iran because "whatever they did not pay in high royal tribute for strictly controlled manufacture and export of silk, they could not invest in other productions. In the end, they either hoarded the capital or bought land."

This centralized intervention was expanded into all spheres of the social, political, economic, and even cultural life. An example of this centralizing effort by state is the urban development of the city of Esfahan. As a part of his centralizing economic projects, Shah Abbas I decided to unify the urban economy of Esfahan and bring

it out of the control of the qezelbash tribal leaders. He transformed and displaced local markets in the city, which more or less were under the control of local leaders, and brought them "into a more unified and coherent whole by connecting the markets of the various sections of the isolated urban unit into one continuous bazaar." (Reid, 1978a: 139; Also Cf. Golombek, 1974) The implementation of this project resulted in more than a morphological change in the social structure of the city. This was a politico-economic intervention of state into the economic life of the city --

an effort in the centralization of the economic system. The Safavid economic policies were basically informed by the principle of economic concentration and commodity specialization. The patrimonial authority attempted to concentrate commercial activities and economic production in a few localities in order to maintain effective control over the movement of goods and the customs duties it levied.

One major source of surplus extraction for the Safavid state was the transit trade on land. The patrimonial state was able to secure a large territorial unity necessary for the overland trade. The relationship between the state and the traders achieved a mutually reinforcing character. The patrimonial state provided the political stability and the security needed for the conduct of trade which provided the state with the necessary revenue to support its administration. This relationship had another important advantage for the patrimonial despotic state. It was through this source of revenue that the state was able to establish its centralized army and administration without being solely dependent on the revenue

extracted from agriculture. This provided Shah Abbas with leverage in facing any political challenge from peripheral qezelbash powers. This also contributed to the lack of the development of an independent aristocracy within the Iranian Asiatic formation. The Asiatic revenue structure of the Safavid state made possible the creation of a huge state bureaucracy, the organizational form of which was determined by the patrimonial structure, and blocked the rise of an independent aristocracy. The revenue derived from the state factories and mercantile activities "were partly wasted by the cumbersome bureaucratic management and partly hoarded in the royal treasury." (Banani, 1978b: 93)

Most of the societal wealth was controlled by the court men. A close look at the figures found in Tadhkirat al-Muluk (1943: 105-7) illustrates this fact very succinctly. Total revenue at the end of the Safavid dynasty, according to this source, was 785,623,8809 tumans. Total expenditure for the same period, as Navidi (1977) calculated, was 625,273.6 tumans. The difference, i.e., 160,350.28 tumans, was transferred to the Shah's treasury. But what is interesting is that the figure for total expenditure included all the expenses of the Shah's private household too. Thus, we see that two third of the total social surplus is devoted virtually to the patrimonial state and the rest was channelled to the Shah's private treasury, and consequently out of circulation. The figures of the court expenditures indicate that more than ten percent of the total expenditure, i.e., 266,666 tumans, consisted of the expenses for the Shah's harem. Around 200,000 tumans were spent on the private kitchen of the patrimonial household. This is only one major

portion of the wasteful consumption of the court. The magnitude of the problem is realized when account is taken of the spread of this mode of life among the governors, state bureaucrats, and military and tribal leaders (Ibid.: 99-101).

Another important reason for the impotency of the mercantile class in this period was the nature of Asiatic patrimonial mercantile production. Economic production as well as economic circulation was basically geared towards consumption. As Marx maintained, in pre-capitalist modes of production, if the circulation of commodities by merchants is substantially directed toward consumption, "the sale of products at their value is of secondary importance," because "... the principal owners of the surplus-product with whom the merchant dealt, namely, the slave-owner, the feudal lord, and the state [for instance, the Oriental despot] represent the consuming wealth and luxury which the merchant seeks to trap"(1967,III: 331) The Safavid bureaucratic control of the economy was aimed at a distribution of surplus among the ruling elements of the society and at the regulation of consumption. This control had an organizing character and was devoid of any productive quality. As Banani (1978b: 93) has observed:

Upon closer scrutiny, on the basis of comparative studies of historical developments, most of Abbas I's reforms may be regarded as structural manipulations calculated to enhance his immediate power and wealth. Compared with contemporary economic changes in Western Europe, Abbas' reforms of the Persian economic structure lacked altogether the dynamic element of capital investment necessary for greater production. As a matter of fact, they propelled the Persian economic institutions in the opposite direction.

Shah Abbas' support for higher productivity in agriculture and an

increase in commercial activities was more for the sake of acquiring additional revenue for his ambitious projects such as military campaigns and the development of Islamic art. Out of the thirty-three workshops of the buyutat founded by the state, only a small number of them, such as textile-weaving, carpet-weaving, dyeing, and the smiths, had potential for productive developments (Banani, Ibid.: 98). Safavid investments in military weapons was aimed at the development of the government's military capacity and not at the production of weapons for sale in foreign markets. (2) State manufacturing activities, as Banani (Ibid.) has noted, were basically "directed toward the production of luxury items for court consumption."

The economic orientation of the patrimonial household and of its patrimonial bureaucracy was centered around private, lavish, and conspicuous consumption of socially produced surplus. Social surplus product was disposed of in natural form, i.e., in the form of use value or unproductive consumption. Safavid rulers, especially those ruling after Shah Abbas I, had no interest in increasing production beyond the level necessary for the reproduction of their luxurious life. As Navidi (1977: 45) put this:

... the major orientation of economic activities was towards individual consumption. Productive consumption was almost completely neglected mainly because mercantile activities were never supported and/or combined with important marketable and exportable production of commodities.

Based on this non-productive consumption, goods were produced and exchanged for the sole purpose of consumption. The "exchange value"

of the "goods" were subordinated to their "use-value." Great carpets were woven in the royal carpetshops for either the patrimonial court or the grand mosques. The textile industry was sponsored by the court because its products "were destined for costumes to be worn at the royal court." (Wilber, 1976: 116)

As already mentioned, the Safavid Shahs were interested in the expansion of trade as long as it could help them to pay for the expenditures of their armies and state bureaucracies. Shah Abbas' economic relationship with European merchants was primarily politically motivated, although the growth of foreign trade increased the flow of revenue into the patrimonial treasury substantially. He entered into commercial interaction with the European traders not entirely for economic gains but for political gains, strengthening his position against the Ottoman's threat. This is not to say that he had no economic interests in dealing with Europeans, but that those economic interests were primarily subordinated to the political policies of the Safavid state. Trade with European merchants provided the patrimonial authority with munitions and luxury goods which, in turn, served to reinforce the patrimonial privileged status vis-a-vis that of the tribal chiefs and the urban bourgeoisie. Therefore, it is not far from the truth if we agree with Banani's characterization of the Safavid economic policy as that of a "quasi-mercantilism" which "measured wealth in hoarded bullion and encouraged exports." (1978b: 89)

8.2. The External Causes of the Underdevelopment of Capitalist Class

As far as the question of the international mobility of capital and its effects on the Iranian economy is concerned, it can be argued that the early integration of the Iranian economy into the world capitalist system, in the early sixteenth century, did not result in the transformation of the Iranian Asiatic mode of production into a capitalist one. Rather, it intensified the contradiction between feudal and Asiatic modes --a contradiction which was resolved by the consolidation of the feudal mode and its articulation within the world capitalist system. The argument presented by Frank (1969), which assumes that early capitalist penetration into the pre-capitalist societies transforms those societies into a capitalist mode, is fallacious. Such an argument is based on an erroneous equation of capitalism with commodity production (Laclau, 1971). As Chapter III demonstrated, long distance trade and commodity markets had long existed in Iran from the early pre-Islamic period and, therefore, it cannot be concluded that capitalism has existed in Iran in those early periods.

Furthermore, sixteenth century European capitalism was based on mercantile and not industrial capital. European capitalism itself was in the process of being shaped. The expansion and widening of the labor and market bases were a requirement for the early development of merchant capital. The necessary surplus for the expansion of capital could only be achieved by widening this labor base. However, this labor base could be expanded only through the

reinforcement of pre-capitalist relations of production. At this stage of development, merchant capital was unable to do without pre-capitalist modes of production. The rapid destruction of pre-capitalist forms of production would have been detrimental to the reproduction of the labor force and the provision of raw materials - hence, impeding the normal functioning of capital itself.

Therefore, the penetration of European mercantile capital did not generate a capitalist mode of production in Iran, though it contributed to the development of the capitalist sector of the economy. This penetration had both uneven and combined effects upon the Iranian social formation. It was uneven because it contributed to the development of certain social institutions at the expense of other institutions and spheres. It was combined because the transfer of resources from the Iranian peripheral economy to European capitals, and from Asiatic village communities to urban centers, created a series of inequalities which not only depleted those areas, but also reinforced their pre-capitalist structures and relations of production. While the expansion of capitalism creates a unified world-wide economic system, it affects various people differently and treats various regions unevenly. The uneven nature of this treatment of people and regions is based on a global division of labor in terms of both productive resources and processes. Each of these peripheral regions are assigned different tasks and roles, various types and rates of economic growth, different levels and kinds of production and consumption patterns, and differing degrees of "gains and losses" in their relationship with the capitalist centers.

The contradictions inherent in the articulation of these various forms of social relations within the Iranian Asiatic social formation were manifold: First, while the growth of foreign trade and export, as well as the increase in the volume of imports, directly benefitted the Iranian patrimonial despots and served to reinforce their political and economic status, they increased the oppression and exploitation of the peasantry and artisans --a development which created political and economic crises for the state: the serious political repercussions from this ultimately threatened the very existence of the Safavid state. Second, while the monopoly of foreign trade and strategic imports, such as arms and munitions, served to strengthen the power of the patrimonial center, the excessive monopolization limited the capacity of the state to control the vast network of commercial interactions across the whole Persian Gulf region, thus providing an opportunity for provincial governors such as Imam Quli Khan, the overlord of the regions bordering upon the Persian Gulf, to take advantage of the presence of foreign traders and establish independent political and commercial relations with foreign powers --a process which in the long run contributed to the development of feudal relations and the overthrow of the Safavid central patrimony. Such activities strengthened the provincial and tribal leaders' power base and thereby weakened the patrimonial state --both politically by developing independent military capacity for which they now had adequate economic resources, and economically by withholding tributes and taxes gained through these trades which would have otherwise fed the patrimonial treasury.

Finally, the presence of European capital in the Iranian market had serious negative effects on indigeneous capital. The mobility of foreign capital in the peripheral economy leads to the immobility and/or slow growth of autochthonous capital. The concessions granted to international traders and the exemptions of foreign products from custom duties in this period discouraged Iranian merchants and industrialists whose commodities could not compete with foreign products. These imported goods paid no tariffs and, since they were basically luxury goods, had a higher and attractive quality. This had a negative impact on the Iranian handicraft production which suffered disastrous dislocations at the early stages of its development in this period. In return for exports in this period, Iran received predominantly luxury goods and munitions and --later in the century when manufacturing began to develop in Europe on a larger scale --factory produced commodities which reduced the sale and production of indigenous production as well as the position of the Iranian artisans and petty-commodity producers.

8.3. Endnotes

(1) Amin Banani argues, as reported by Savory (1980: 188), that Shah Abbas' policies of "state capitalism" prevented capital accumulation during his rule. Savory finds this view unjustified and believes that "there is plenty of evidence that individual merchants, particularly Armenians, became very wealthy indeed," (Ibid.) and that there were non-state-owned manufactories which contributed to the overall growth of the economy.

(2) The Safavids employed British and French officers and technicians to train and modernize their army as well as to build factories for ammunitions.

CHAPTER IX

THE EARLY INCORPORATION OF THE IRANIAN ECONOMY INTO THE GLOBAL CAPITALIST SYSTEM

Europe's colonization of the world was neither a chain of crimes nor a chain of beneficence; it was the birth of the modern world itself.

Herbert Luthy (in Edwards, 1961:9)

The modern history of capital began with the creation of commerce and trade between the two worlds in the sixteenth century.

Karl Marx, Capital.

A commercial relationship between Iranian traders and European businessmen was not a new event in the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Throughout the centuries, Iran was in trade with India, China, Italy, and many other countries in Europe (Cf. Sykes, 1951, I: 483). Well before Marco Polo's adventures in the thirteenth century, Iran was a trading link between different civilizations. The Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century brought Iran into contact with Europeans. Commercial relations with Europeans extended to the point that, for instance, in the late fourteenth century the Mongol ruler Timur sent a letter to Henry IV of England proposing commercial relations. In 1364, the Italian traders had two offices in Tabriz, "one for silk, Chinese spices and furs, the

other for Persian, European and Egyptian textiles." (Ashtor, 1976: 275) Here, in this northern city raw silk from Iran, silk fabric from China, pearls from the Persian Gulf, Indian articles and spices were all exchanged and transported in and out overland. At the other end of the trans-Persian land-route, Hormuz was an important harbour through which Oriental and European goods were imported and exported.

Due to the international expansion of European trade in the sixteenth century, Iran's economic relations with Europe were intensified and acquired a new significance. The importance of these relationships can be well understood when they are put into the larger context of the development of European capitalism at this time. This chapter will try to detail the expansion of European trade into Iran and discuss the process of early integration of the Iranian economy into the world capitalist system. This concern with the details of the commercial activities of both individual and corporate trade in this chapter demonstrates the pervasive nature of the foreign presence in the economic life of the country and show the extent to which foreign trade affected Iranian trade history. It should be remembered that studying this historical process has many difficulties --difficulties which arise less perhaps from the complexity of the problem under investigation than from a lack of the sources and adequate, unbiased, historical documentation necessary for a full understanding of this question.

9.1. The Development of European Mercantalism and the Early Incorporation of Iran into the World Capitalist System

By the time the Portuguese reached the Persian Gulf and came into direct contact with Iran in 1507, the transition from feudalism to a capitalist mode of production in Europe was already well under way. The rivalry of European powers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for control of the Iranian market and silk production marked the beginning of the process of incorporation of the Iranian economy into the emerging capitalist world system. The next three hundred years witnessed the underdevelopment of the Iranian economy under the direction of world market tendencies and trends. The feudal relations emerging out of the crises of the Asiatic formation were reinforced and exploited in service to the needs of an expanding world economy. The surplus extracted from the indigenous producers served to speed the primitive accumulation of capital in Europe as well as to maintain the complex class structure of the Iranian social formation.

Discussing the world capitalist economy of the sixteenth century, Wallerstein (1974: 301) argues that Iran, as an economic unit, existed outside of the world capitalist system.⁽¹⁾ This thesis challenges such an approach and tends to disprove this assessment. If this economic unit was producing for and in extensive interaction with the emerging capitalist world system, then why should it not be regarded as a functioning part of this system? Iran in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was highly entangled in the international trade and European economic transactions. It produced silk and cotton, not for internal consumption, but for exchange in the

capitalist market. Production of silk in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and of cotton in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was integrated into the world market through the intermediary of the traders. The production of silk in Iran was based on the demands of the sixteenth century mercantile international market. The Safavid state became so dependent on the sale of silk to this foreign market that the slightest fluctuation in world silk prices could have drastic effects on its fiscal policies and structures. The decline of silk export revenues during the rule of Shah Abbas II, due to the production of cheaper and better silk in Bengal, resulted in serious fiscal problems in Iran. Furthermore, the vacillations of this market also affected the production and consumption of this product in Iran, thus affecting the whole economy.

The early European commercial activities in Iran brought about a radical transformation in the productive sector of the Iranian society, not so much in how production was carried out as in what was produced and where it was destined to be consumed. For instance, during 1846 to 1866, the value of the Gulf trade multiplied from 500,000 3,000,000 Pounds as estimated by British Officials at the time. (2) This increase was partly due to a worldwide cotton boom, triggered by a supply cut off caused by the American Civil War, which, in turn, caused a shift in the productive structure of the Iranian economy. As a result of this change, production of cotton was expanded in Iran in order to fill the demands of Lancashire's mills. From 1861 to 1865, imports of cotton from the Persian Gulf rose 300 times (Saldanha, 1905: 107). This

economic boom bolstered the economic fortune of local merchants in the Gulf area. However, when the American Civil War ended, this commercial boom collapsed and the subsequent recession drove a large number of local seamen, shipbuilders, weavers, and merchants out of business.

Another example of the European impact on the Iranian economy is in the wool production and carpet-weaving industry. Early in the seventeenth century, the Dutch, French, and English were involved in exporting wool from the Iranian city of Kerman (Lockhart, 1938: 286). In the late seventeenth century, the British and French owned factories in this city --factories which were producing carpet for export to Europe. They also established direct commercial transactions with the Inallu Afshar chiefs for wool (Jean Chardin, 1927: 100ff). Thus, as early as the seventeenth century, the city of Kerman was producing carpets for the world market. In the late nineteenth century, Europeans became familiar with Kermani and, in general, Persian carpets. By the early twentieth century many European firms established offices in Kerman. This brought the Iranian carpet industry under European control (English, 1966: 29). By the 1920's, the carpet industry was at its peak, with an estimated five thousand looms, and it became "the single major activity of the city." (Ibid.)

It is important to note that while the Iranian economy came into contact with the early European capitalism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and subsequently became integrated into the world capitalist system, it is in the last decade of the nineteenth century that world capitalism plays a decisive role in

transformation of the Iranian feudal system into a capitalist mode. It is in this latter period that monopoly capitalism established an international division of labor which brought about socio-economic changes of great importance in underdeveloped countries like Iran. Sixteenth century European contact intensified mercantile capitalist relations within the womb of the Iranian Asiatic formation but it did not change the Iranian mode of production into a capitalist one. It was the eighteenth and nineteenth century European penetration that laid the ground for a transformation of feudal mode of production into a dependent capitalist one. It may be useful here to follow up with a theoretical discussion of this penetration into, and subsequent integration and transformation of, the Iranian socio-economic system.

As Marx argued, the expansion of capitalism into the New World does not necessarily imply the automatic transformation of these new countries into capitalist modes. Such a transformation depends very much on the dynamics of the pre-capitalist social formations in those societies. As he put this:

It must be kept in mind that the new forces of production and relations of production do not develop out of nothing, nor drop from the sky, nor from the womb of the self-positing Idea; but from within and in antithesis to the existing development of production and the inherited, traditional relations of property. (Marx, 1973: 278)

In the sixteenth century Iran, the dominant form of labor was still Asiatic with some less developed forms of feudal labor. For the capitalism to be able to transform the mode of production in a colonized society, it is necessary, though not sufficient, to create an adequate basis for the development of wage-labor. As Marx

elaborated:

If within one society the modern relations of production, i.e., capital, are developed to its totality, and this society then seizes hold of a new territory as, e.g., the colonies, then it finds, or rather its representatives the capitalist, finds that his capital ceases to be capital without wage-labour." (Marx, 1973: 278)

Wage-labor alone is not a necessary and sufficient pre-condition for the existence of "mercantile capital," just as capital alone is not a pre-condition for the existence of wage-labor. This is exemplified in both the slave colonies based on a capitalist mode of production, as well as in the serf-labor of Latin American colonies (Cf. Beckford, 1972; Laclau, 1971). The essential feature of the system which emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was that of commodities production geared towards the world market and the continuous realization of surplus value. This is not to suggest that the existence of capital and wage-labor is not a pre-condition of capitalist development. Both capital and labor are necessary pre-conditions, but not sufficient in themselves, for the development of capitalism.

After the eighteenth century, a large portion of the Iranian productive system was regulated by the "law of value." However, this happened under the domination of the world capitalist system. The course of the concentration and accumulation of capital in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries was basically guided by the "law of dependent capitalist accumulation" --a tendency created and imposed on the underdeveloped countries by the world capitalist system. This subordination of the accumulation process to world capitalism led to the distortion of Iranian

development and resulted in the dependency of Iranian society on the world capitalist system. The roots of Iranian socio-economic underdevelopment and political and economic dependency are partially to be found in this universal domination of European capitalism.

The following section will describe the peculiar historical process of incorporation of the Iranian economy into the world capitalist system. It demonstrates that the historical development of Iranian society in the past three centuries cannot be regarded as an independent historical development. This development, despite its own dynamic, has been a part and parcel of the historical development of world capitalism. European trade adventures in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries marked the beginning of this integration. The early years of the sixteenth century marked a significant change in Iranian history because they saw the beginning of the transformation of Iran into a periphery of world capitalist system.

9.2. The Colonial Division of the World and the Portuguese Entrance into the Persian Gulf

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 marks the beginning of a drastic change in the political and economic life of both Eastern and Western countries. The Ottoman's victory over this part of Europe rendered unsafe the old land routes connecting Iran and other Eastern countries to the West. This stimulated the efforts of mariners to find a sea route to Iran, India, and China. The profits of the lucrative spice trade in these countries were not as insignificant as to be neglected. The commercial land routes were

almost closed when the Ottoman Turks conquered Egypt in 1517.

In 1493 Pope Alexander VI Borgia issued a Bull which regulated the colonial discoveries and domination of European colonial pioneers by generously dividing the world between Spain and Portugal. Spain and Portugal fixed a line through the Atlantic Ocean running from north to south. According to this scheme, "everything west of a line 370 leagues west of Cape Verde Islands was to belong to Spain, while everything to the east of the line was to belong to Portugal" (Davies, 1928: 402). The signing of this treaty marked the beginning of European adventures in the East.

To capture Eastern markets, and to destroy the transit trade of the Moslem countries, the Portuguese had to find a new trade route. During the reign of Shah Isma'il, European merchants began to look for new routes to capture the trade in West Africa and India. The only possible route was the long sea voyage which almost circumnavigated the coast of Africa. As a result of this structural change in trade routes, trade activities shifted from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. In 1497, the Portuguese sea-captain Bartolomen Dias sailed round the Cape of Good Hope. Ten years later, Vasco da Gama followed this route and reached the western coasts of India. For opening this water route, the Portuguese assumed the title of "Lord of the Conquest, Navigation, and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, and India." This was the beginning of the colonial adventures of the Portuguese in Asia and in the area known today as the Middle East. It was at this time that European mercantile capitalism turned its attention to the Asian region. Some of the early mercantile powers, such as the

Portuguese and later the English, the Dutch, and the French, entered the Persian Gulf and started their economic adventures in this region.

In the early sixteenth century, Portugal perceived Iran as a society engaged in extensive business with the Ottoman Empire which lay "out of the European system of international law and conduct." Southern Iran lay open to 'ocean sea.' The Portuguese sought to pioneer in control over the sea route to which Iran was exposed and to include this country within their imperial trading preserve. In the summer of 1507, the Portuguese sailor Alfonso d'Albuquerque came to the Persian Gulf and conquered many coastal cities in the area including the island of Hormuz. The Portuguese converted the island into a colony by subjugating its governor and forcing him to pay his annual tribute to the Portuguese. This angered Shah Isma'il who sent an envoy to Hormuz and demanded a Portuguese departure. In 1508, the Portuguese left the island with the hope of coming back when they could find a better opportunity. In 1513, Albuquerque sent an envoy, Miguel Ferreira, to Shah Isma'il and demanded the return of the island to the Portuguese. Having been defeated at Chalduran a year earlier, Shah Isma'il found himself in a weak military position and concluded a treaty with the Portuguese which accepted the occupation of Hormuz as a fait accompli (Savory, 1980: 106). In return, the Portuguese promised to help the Shah in recovering the Bahrain islands from the Arab Jabrid dynasty and in suppressing piracy on the coast of Baluchestan and Makran. Also, they agreed to work in cooperation against Turkish power in the region. Political relations and commercial interactions between

Portugal and Iran flourished to the extent that, in 1551 and 1574, the Portuguese sent many embassies to Iran and continued to send special gifts to the Shah.

Originally, the Portuguese presence in the Persian Gulf and their capture of Hormuz angered Shah Isma'il but it did not have a serious effect on the Iranian economy because the Portugues simply took over a trade which for a long time had been conducted by Arab merchants (Cf. Steensgaard, 1973: 154-8). In 1548, the Portuguese came to the help of Shah Tahmasp by providing him with cannons and men when Sultan Suleyman invaded Iran for the second time.

The Portuguese established a firm position in the Persian Gulf and set up trading posts in Hormuz, Bahrain, Sohar, Qatif, and Muscat. For the next one hundred years, they remained a supreme force in the Persian Gulf by monopolizing trade in this region. They had complete control of all vessals sailing up the Gulf and exacted tolls to allow them to pass. As Hodgson noted:

They were troublesome pirates and in some areas, notably on the Swahili coast and the coast of 'Uman, they exacted tribute from all the cities of area and tyrannized them. (Hodgson, 1974, III: 48)

The spices and peppers brought by Portuguese to this area captured the market here and dominated trade in other products. The value of their trade in this area exceeded that of trade in Amsterdam and Antwep. The Gujerati merchants, who botained the license from the Portuguese for trading in this Gulf, became busy traders in this area. The advancement of Portuguese trade in the area made the Iranian harbor of Hormuz the greatest spice market in the world (Ball, 1977: 142-43). This was a threat to the overland

trade to the Levant, so much so that by the end of the sixteenth century the main trade route was water and the eastern Mediterranean trade volume declined tremendously (Armajani, 1970: 172-3). This decline in overland trade also severely damaged the interests of Venetian and Genoese merchants in the East.

Soon, the Portuguese trampled upon the Iranian trade and, as Curzon has noted, forced them to "purchase Portuguese magazines, at prices fixed by themselves, and to ship their wares on Portuguese vessels." (1966,II: 418) These developments were seen by the new Iranian king, Shah Abbas I, as a political and economic threat to his power --a threat which provoked Shah Abbas to go to war with the Portuguese in order to free southern Iran from their direct and indirect control.

In 1602, angered by Portuguese activities and persuaded by the English Sherley Brothers, Shah Abbas captured Bahrain and forced the Portuguese off the island. In 1612, the Portuguese retaliated by seizing and fortifying Bandar Abbas (Gombroon) as a precaution against the possible blockade of Hormuz either by the Iranians or the English. This seizure did not last long because, in 1615, Iranian troops launched a lengthy siege and regained the port. Iran used all her power to expell the Portuguese from the Gulf region but she was not able to do this alone because her naval forces were inadequate. To achieve this goal, Iran turned to the British for help. With this external help, Iran was able to weaken the position of the Portuguese in the Gulf and prepare the ground for their expulsion from the area. In 1620, an attack on one of the Portuguese stations on the Arabian coast near Ras ul-Khaima bore

fruit and ended the Portuguese domination of this region (Wilson, 1954: 140ff). By 1922, the Portuguese were forced off the Persian Gulf. This victory for Iran would not have been possible had the Shah not received help from English and Dutch forces. This alliance of Iranian, English and Dutch forces, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, resulted in a defeat for the Portuguese and cleared the way for the easier penetration by the English and Dutch East India Companies into Iran. These European Companies substituted themselves for the Portuguese domination of the Gulf trade and became so entrenched in the region that many of them opened factories at Bandar Abbas, Grain (Kuwait), Basra, Bushire, Muscat, and Hormuz.

9.3. The Arrival of the English

In the Tudor period, England achieved a remarkable industrial growth, so much so that the production of woolen commodities were over and above what that country could consume or the Staplers and Adventurers could sell in the traditional markets of Western Europe. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the English merchants had to look outward for new channels for this surplus woolen. Fascinating reports and stories of the profitable Portuguese trade in resource-rich countries remote from Western European territories seized the imaginations of these merchants. The English agent, Drake, who had reached the Spice Islands in 1579 inspired the newly-formed merchant class with tales of this sort:

High on a throne of royal state, which far

Outshone the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold.
(Quoted in Edwards, 1961:~22)

In 1557, Anthony Jenkinson, an experienced, enterprising English merchant who had already secured trading privileges for English merchants in Turkey, started an expedition to extend the English trade in Iran through Russia. At this time, the easiest way for the English to get access to Iran was through Russia. Since 1553, the English had obtained trading privileges from Ivan the Terrible and established the Muscovy (Russia) Company in Russia. As a branch of English foreign trade, this Company had five "households" in Russia but it still lacked any permanent organization in Iran. If there was to be any trade, it had to be carried out through the Company's agents (Willan, 1956: 30). In 1558, with permission from the Russian Tsar, Anthony Jenkinson embarked on a journey through Kazan and Astrakhan to reach Iran. Before arriving in Iran, his journey met with great difficulties in the land of the Tartars. Nevertheless, the Englishmen accompanying him decided to pursue an exploration of the possibilities of trade with Iran because the expedition appeared to have been commercially profitable.

On 27 April 1562, Jenkinson again set out on his travels from England. He first went to Moscow in order to find a way to open a trade route to Iran. On November 2, 1562, Jenkinson began his trip to Iran in the hope of persuading Shah Tahmasp to grant him permission for English trade in Iran (Hakluyt, 1927,II: 5). With him Jenkinson carried a few letters of recommendation to various

potentates from the Russian Tsar and a fulsome letter from Queen Elizabeth to Shah Tahmasp demanding from him "... free passage of our Merchants and people, to repaire and traffique within his [Shah's] dominions, for to bring our commodities, and to carry away theirs to the honour of both princes, the mutual commodities of both Realmes, and wealth of the Subjects." (Quoted in Savory, 1980: 111-12) On his way to Qazvin, the Iranian capital at the time, Jenkinson met with Abdullah Khan Ustajlu, the Shah's brother-in-law and the governor of Shirvan. Abdullah Khan gave him adequate assurance of support in the court. From there, he moved to the capital and came to visit the Shah on November 20, 1562.

Originally, Jenkinson's hope for securing a trading grant was based on the enmity between Iran and Turkey. His mission was to exploit this antagonism and win the Shah's favor for trade with Englishmen in competition with the Turkish tradesmen, who were regarded in Iran as Moslem brothers. With all the backing from the Tsar and Abdullah Khan, Jenkinson's efforts to convince the Shah failed. His failure in obtaining any favorable concession was partly due to the fact that he was a Christian --a disturbing fact to Shah Tahmasp at the time --and partly because in this same year Shah Tahmasp had just concluded a peace treaty with Turkey and "felt that any friendship shown to the English would be prejudicial to that treaty." (Willan, 1956: 58) Disappointed with the Turkish trade domination over the Iranian land, and dissatisfied with the latest political developments, Jenkinson turned himself to other ventures. He tried to sell 400 kerseys and other goods he had brought with him for experimental sale in Iranian market. He stayed

at Qazvin for the whole winter and discussed his desires and plans for the possibility of opening up a trade in spices there with Indian merchants residing in that city. He also bought a lot of spices being sold by these Indian merchants in Iran (Griffiths, 1974: 25-7). On his way back, he was able to obtain some privileges from his friend, Abdullah Khan the governor of Shirvan, to trade in the Shirvan area. According to this accord, the Russian Company was to do business in Shirvan without paying "any maner of custome or duties." (Willan, 1956:58)

The second expedition to Iran was entrusted to Richard cheinie, George Wrenne, and Thomas Alcock as its leader, travelling through Russia in the following year. Alcock was able to have some trade in Iran on behalf of the Russia Company (Willan, 1956: 39). But he was unable to collect his debts and was killed on his way out. Although Alcock lost his life, as Richard Cheinie reported on the voyage at the time, the prospects for trade with Iran were regarded to be good (Hakluyt, 1927, II: 32). This report also implied that some of the Company's servants had done private business in Iran too. For instance, he reported that while Thomas Glover "had that voyage in venture of his owne better than an hundreth rubles, Richard Johnson had 20 roubles and Thomas Pett 50 roubles."(in Willan, 1956: 59)

The third expedition was led by Richard Johnson in May 1565, accompanied by Alexander Kitchen and Arthur Edwards. In 1566, Johnson was received by Shah Tahmasp and they had extensive talks about the quality of Western cloth, the power of the Tsar and the Spanish victories over the Turk. Concerning this expedition, as Palmer has mentioned, "Edwards was convinced of the large market

awaiting good broadcloth." (Palmer, 1932: 8) Johnson's mission turned out to be a success because on June 29, 1566, Edwards was able, with the help of the leading nobles and courtiers, to obtain a grant of valuable privileges from Shah Tahmasp. He assured Tahmasp he would relieve him from dependency on the unstable Turkish friendship.

According to the agreement concluded, the English Joint Company in Russia was entitled to trade in Iran at anytime and wherever it wished. Not only was the Company exempted from the custom duties or tolls, but it was also to receive protection and help from the Iranian government in the matters of transportation and the collection of debts. More importantly, the Company was assured that if the English merchants or their servants killed an Iranian, the Company would not suffer the confiscation of its goods (Willan, 1956: 60).

In return, the Company was to provide the Shah with a series of commodities he needed. The latter included kerseys, tin, and copper. Edwards found the Shah desirous of exchanging silk for English goods; thus, taking advantage of this attitude, he assured the Shah that the Company could supply him 200,000 kerseys per year (Ibid.) What Iran could provide England at the time was silk, spices, and yew for bow staves (Griffiths, 1974: 27-8).

By the 1570s, the Moscovy Company, which had entered the Iranian land by way of Russia, was running an extensive business machine in Iran (Cf. Ball, 1977: 42). In 1568, Edwards was sent back to Iran in order to discover more trading opportunities and expand the English venture there. To this end, Shah Tahmasp allowed

one of Edwards' factors, Lawrence Chapman, to go to Tabriz and Gilan provinces in order to check on the market on those areas.

From 1569 to 1573 the trade between Iran and the English factors was carried out by a group of fourteen Englishmen and forty Russians. The mission was headed by Thomas Bannister and Richard Duckett. For four years, they did business in places like Kashan, Tabriz, Qazvin, and Shirvan. Although this mission was faced with a lot of difficulties, it nevertheless made profitable transactions and deals in large cities like Tabriz, in spite of competition from Armenian merchants there (Griffiths, 1974: 31) Bannister was also able to obtain new privileges for the Russia Company from Shah Tahmasp. The Iranian trade "resulted in the import of pepper of better quality than that supplied by the Portuguese and of raw silk which would 'greatly sett a worke the subjectes of this realm'." (Willan, 1956: 74)

Because of the difficulties in transportation and threats of attack by Tartars, trade between Iran and England was discontinued for the next five years. In 1579, the Queen explained to the Shah that trade with Iran had been interrupted because of the wars in that region (Hakluyt, 1927, II: 171). However, during this time, minor trade relations existed through private merchants.

In 1578, the Company was anxious to reopen the trade with Iran and considered "the possibility of sending experts to learn the secrets of making Persian armour or carpets." (Griffiths, 1974: 31) Two memoranda prepared about 1579 or 1580 "emphasized the desirability of exporting kerseys to Persia, which would give employment to the poor in England, and of importing Persian raw silk

and 'wrought anile,' which would hinder the Spaniards and Italians in the sale of their silk, and the French and Spaniards in the sale of their wood." (Willan, 1956: 148) To materialize this desire, the Company was urged to take the new initiative of sending out various craftsmen to Iran either to stimulate Iranian production or to learn the secrets of Iranian industry:

Thus a 'saltpeter man' should be sent to develop 'a veyne of saltpeter,' which could furnish 'the whole state of the protestants of all Europe'. A bowyer should go to cut bow staves from the yew which was said to grow near the Caspian. An armourer should be sent to learn how the Persians forged thin plates for the making of light armour. A man skilled in forging daggers and knives should learn the secret of Turkey blades. Such blades could 'cleave a common skull', and their manufacture in England would reduce imports, set the people in work, and save the drain of bullion. Turkey carpets, which were used in England for 'tables, windowes, and stooles', could be imitated, and could be made from 'our naturall yerne, wollen and lynn'. A feltmaker, too, should be sent to learn how to make felts for cloaks, though apparently he could learn this secret in Russia itself. This was very desirable 'since the cloth of England is not abell to hold owt rayne in this moyst clymat, wherof folowes to aged and weke persons much sicknes'. The foreign type of felt, however, might 'be right good for soldiers in moyst wether, as well for the defence of armour from rayne and rust as also for the harqabusier that wold passe in the night with his ma(t)ch with fier unsene of the enemye, or passe with his lock and peece fre from rust'. Finally two expert soldiers, one for sea and the other for land, should accompany the expedition to Persia, for 'the marchant is a man of litle defence'. (Willan, 1956: 148-49)

Therefore, in 1579 another voyage was entrusted to Arthur Edwards, William Turnbull, Mathew Tailbois, and Peter Garrard. They carried a letter from Queen Elizabeth to the Shah requesting their kind reception. With them was Morgan Hubblethorne, a dyer who was to learn how Iranians colored their silk and stained their linen cloth. To Arthur Edwards, the Iranian trade promised a bright future. As

Willan put it:

It would provide an outlet for English cloth and would tap the riches of the east. It would open the golden road to Samarkand and would make London the new Antwerp through which jewels, spices, silks, drugs, and alum would flow to the countries of western Europe. Just as the trade 'by the northe seas' could free England from dependence on the Hanseatic League and the Baltanic princes, so 'the traffyke of Percia through Russia' could 'passe saiflie, without dainger of the Turk and without knowledge of Italy and Spayne, and without any lycens of the King of Portugale'. (Willan, 1956: 152)

However, these dreams could not come true and the mission failed.

The expedition was aborted even before reaching Iran. As a matter of fact, this became the last "Persian Voyage" undertaken by the Russia Company in that century. The failure of the expedition was due to many factors including the death of Shah Tahmasp in 1576, the Turkish invasion and conquest of Shirvan, disturbances around Astrakhan in the land of Tartars, and the Tsars' negative attitude towards the Company's trade with Iran through Russia (Willan, 1956: 152-54). Writing at the time, Camden summarized the ending of this trade in the following way:

The wars which shortly after grew hot between the Turks and Persians, and the robberies of the Barbarians, interrupted this laudable enterprise of the Londoners. (Quoted in Willan, 1956: 153)

In the absence of the Company, the Turks felt free to conquer all corners of the Iranian market. But the English did not abandon their trans-Russia plan and revived it again thirty years later when they found another golden opportunity to enter the Iranian market.

The new adventure was designed by the Moscovy Company with the help of the English East India Company. The idea was to increase

English cloth exports by resuming overland trade with Iran. To reduce the risks of passing through dangerous deserts, the English approached the Turks and won some trade concessions. Now they were able to enter Iranian land along with caravans protected by armed convoys (Cf. Curzon, 1966,II: 541-45).

In September 1580, John Newberie and William Barrett left London for Iran through the river route and arrived in the Persian Gulf in June 1581. Their mission was to establish a factory at Hormuz, as the Venetians had succeeded in doing, and to study the customs of the Iranian people and the trade opportunities in the different cities of Esfahan, Shiraz, Lar, Kashan, Tabriz, and Qum. When the mission got underway, a communication network of travellers, merchants, and agents of the East India Company were established in order to seek knowledge of the Iranian markets and persuade the Shah in allowing the theme of English enterprise in Iran (Palmer, 1932). We are informed that Newberie and his fellow-travellers were arrested by the Portuguese forces in Hormuz as spies and heretics. However, their attempt was followed by John Mildenball and John Cartwright in 1600. While the former passed through Iran to India, the latter remained in Iran in search of a way to open a trade route to the Persian Gulf.

In the years around the turn of the century, the relationship between Iran and England ran into trouble. In 1598, induced by the Earl of Essex, Sir Anthony Sherley and Sir Robert Sherley accompanied by twenty-six other men, came to Iran in the guise of noblemen who had heard about the greatness of the Iranian monarchs and wished to stay in Iran and serve the Shah. They were hosted for

six months in Esfahan during which they had won the confidence and friendship of Shah Abbas (Sykes, 1951, II: 175-6; Savory, 1977: 400). The Sherleys' main objective in being in Iran was to exploit the long-standing rivalry between the Safavid and Ottoman states for the benefit of the so-called "Christian World." More specifically, they came and stayed there to promote the commercial interests of England against the Ottomans in Iran (Cf. Sykes, Ibid.: 191-4). In this they were very successful, if their performance is judged in the long run. However, in the short run, one may be led to believe that their presence in the Iranian court might have benefitted Iranian interests --a wrong impression usually given by the British apologists.

Sir Anthony Sherley was well received by Shah Abbas and was granted a farman (decree) allowing "Christian" merchants to trade in Iran with full protection of their property and person.(3) In 1599, on behalf of Shah Abbas, Sir Anthony Sherley went to Europe in order to win the alliance of the English for the Shah in his war against the Ottomans. Elizabeth's government promptly rejected this offer and Sherley's efforts in winning the English support for his proposal failed. In 1608, Sir Robert Sherley, who had become engaged in training the Iranian army, went to Europe on a mission similar to the one his brother took ten years before. He went to Spain with the hope of encouraging the transfer of overland silk trade through Turkey to the Persian Gulf. This proposal was not accepted by the Spanish government. Sherley went to England and had more luck there because he was well received by King James I (Wood, 1964: 48). However, his negotiations in London also failed and he

had to come back to Iran with no success.

The English found themselves in a very difficult situation. In their attempt to win the Iranian market and to gain access to Iranian silk, they had to enter into competition with the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf. For a long time, the English had wished to do away with the Portuguese control of the Indian Ocean. They had been looking to find a way through the Cape route which not only would take them to Iran and the Persian Gulf, but also would open the way to the profitable markets of the cold regions of China (Armajani, 1970: 174-75).

British achievements in Iran were beset by the Portuguese control over the southern Iranian market as well as the Persian Gulf trade. At this time, Shah Abbas was establishing his patrimonial hegemony and could not abide the Portuguese domination of the sea trade in the southern part of his domain. This provided the English with a golden opportunity to gain the Shah's support against the Portuguese --an alliance which was beneficial to both parties against a common enemy.

The presence of the English travellers and traders in Iran and the Persian Gulf alarmed the Portuguese. In 1619, they sent a fleet of five ships to sweep the Persian Gulf clean of what they saw as foreign ships. In December 1620, Portuguese ships came head to head with the English ships around Jask. As the Portuguese were making progress in ravaging the coast, the Iranian commander was looking for allies. The English were in a dilemma: should they help a friendly European state or a foreign country the favor of which could bring them the silk trade. After a long debate, the English

commander decided to help the Shah provided he grant them half the spoils, free custom trade with Iran, and half share of the custom duties at Hormuz. The terms of the agreement were:

That the Castle of Ormus (in case it were won) with all the Ordnance and Ammunition should belong unto the English; That the Persians might build another Castle in the Isle at their own cost, when they were pleased; That the spoil should be equally divided; That the Christian prisoners be disposed by the English, the Pagans by the Persians; That the Persians should allow for half charge of victuals, wages, shot, powder &c.; That the English should be Custom-free in Bander-gum-broon (Bandar Abbas) for ever. (Quoted in Wilson, 1954: 145)

The Shah was in no position to reject the English help or reject their demands. The English took advantage of this helpless situation and made the deal. The English crews dissented because they saw this neither as a "merchandizing business," nor as something for which they were hired (Furber, 1976: 46). However, the deal could not be sacrificed for such a minor issue! The crews were pressured to participate in the battle by threat as well as the promise of a month's extra pay. On February 1, 1622, three English were killed and two wounded in Qishm island and on April 23, the Portuguese surrendered. In this latter fight, twenty more English lost their life at Hormuz, along with 1000 Iranian fighters.

By 1622, the Portuguese traders were all expelled from Hormuz and Bahrain, and later from Muscat and Basra as well. Losing their control over the Gulf region, the Portuguese tried very hard to revive the glorious past and prevent the English and Dutch from obtaining commercial ascendancy in the Persian Gulf. To subvert their rivals' success, they harassed English, Dutch, and Iranian

merchants whenever and wherever they could find them (Palmer, 1932: 278).

9.4. The English East India Company and Iranian Trade

At this time, the English East India Company had trouble selling its heavy woolen cloth in India. The Company was only too eager to enter the Iranian market as an outlet for its surplus product in that country (Palmer, 1932: 51). The Company was also faced with the serious problem of financing its investments in the East. One possible way of overcoming this was to buy the Eastern commodities with gold and silver. However, this meant a drain of bullion from England. A better way to accomplish this baffling task was to exchange cheap Indian cotton goods with the spices of the East Indies. Thus, a triangular trade was devised and the Company decided to rescue the Indian investment by extending its trade to China, and Iran.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the pattern of Eastern trade became complex: "the traffic flowing between England and India, between England and China and Persia, and between India and China and Persia." (Banerji, 1974: 98). The older monopolistic trade carried out by the Levant Company was displaced through the seventeenth century by the competitive colonial-interloping traders as the most powerful commercial interests. The older pattern of trade was unsuited, both in "temperment" and organizational form, to the demands of the British colonial trade (Brenner, 1973). This structural shift demanded a willingness to

make the long term investment in the productive enterprise that colonial trade required if it wanted to expand. As Hobsbawm has explained:

The traditional pattern of European expansion -- Mediterranean, and based on Italian merchants and their associates, Spanish and Portuguese conquerors, of Baltic, and based on German city states --had perished in the great economic depression of the 17th Century. The new centers of expansion were the Maritime states bordering the North Sea and North Atlantic. The shift was not merely geographical, but structural. The new kind of relationship between the "advanced" areas and the rest of the world unlike the old tended constantly to intensify and widen the flow of commerce. The powerful growing and accelerating current of overseas trade which swept the infant industries of Europe with it --which, in fact sometimes actually created them --was hardly conceivable without this change. It rested on three things: in Europe, the rise of a market could be expanded, as they became available in larger quantities and more cheaply; and overseas the creation of economic systems for producing such goods (such as, for instance, share-operated plantations) and the conquest of colonies designed to serve the economic advantage of their European owners. The Industrial Revolution was generated in these decades --after the 1740s, when this massive but slow growth in the domestic economy combined with the rapid -- after 1750 extremely rapid --expansion of the international economy; and it occurred in the country which seized its international opportunities to corner a major share of the overseas markets. (Hobsbawm, 1969: 51-2)

Realizing the new reality of global expansion of capital, the British traders thought they could secure their trade interests overseas and avoid conflicts with the rival trading interests by establishing some safe bases on the borders or harbors of the target countries. The old routes of the Syrian desert, of the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris, of Southern Russia, of the Volga valley, and of the Caspian Sea were not anymore suitable for heavy European trade traffic. On all these routes, they were faced with the Armenian merchants who had both a better knowledge of the area

and more courage to take the risk of trading in a desert environment. One of the attempts to find a way out of this insecurity was the expansion of the English trade and investment of English capital in Iran and the Persian Gulf regions. It was these reasons that brought the English East India Company into Iran.

In 1615, when the English East India Company found its supply to markets at Surat in excess of demand, encouraged one of its agents, Thomas Aldworth, to find an outlet in Iran, where because of "... much cold, ... men, women and children are clothed therewith some five months of the year." (Cf. Wilson, 1954: 136) The Company's representative sent two factors, Richard Steele, who had already been to Iran for making detailed investigation of trade opportunities, and John Crowther, with letters of recommendation to Sir Robert Sherley in Iran in order to acquire an outlet for English cloth in that country and to find out which port on the Iranian coast was most suitable for trade activities. Owing to the cold winter, the Iranian market promised good fortune in "a dearth of cloth." Also, since the overland trade route was closed because of the Turkish wars, the Company seized the opportunity to get hold of the existing surplus silk in Iran. Therefore, the Company hoped for sale of its cloths and, in return, purchase of the Iranian silk. As the Company's records show, this was a trade which "promiseth much hope of benefit, so doth it little danger, being no loss at all." (Quoted in Chaudhuri, 1965: 51)

The first representation of the Company in Iran was able to manage a visit to the court at Isfahan and to successfully persuade the Shah to issue a favorable farman (decree) granting the English

Company the full right to use Iranian ports and sell "their Merchandize to what place or places they themselves desire" This was a great success for the English Company. Jask, a port located on the Mokran coast and sufficiently remote from the Portuguese control at Hormuz, was chosen as the landing port and Iranian subjects were ordered "to kindly receive and entertain the English Franks or Nation, at what time any of their ships or shipping shall arrive at Jaskes, or any other of the Ports in our Kingdom." (Saldanha, 1908: 395; Cf. Wood, 1964: 48 & Savory, 1980: 113)

In November 1616, a cargo consisting of 350 cloth and 550 British Pounds in cash were sent to Iran to be sold by Edward Connock and some other agents of the Company. When this cargo arrived at Cape Jask, it was safely given entry to the country. The arrival of this cargo marked "... the beginning of the British share in the maritime and trading activity of the Persian Gulf." (Wilson, 1954: 138) This also signalled the success of the English in assuming the provision of Iran with Indian cloths and Eastern spices. Here, the English had to bribe the local governors in order to gain their kind protection --a method of winning favors and grants practiced by the English from the very first days of their arrival in this region. An important part of Connock's mission was to give the Shah Abbas some presents encouraging him to allow the English trade in Iran. He was able to obtain for "the Company most of the privileges it would enjoy during the succeeding centuries of its existence in this kingdom." (Amin, A. A., 1967: 5) More specifically, he was able to get the Shah's promise of annual

exchange of "from one to three thousands bales of silk at bazaar rates, custom free, for money and a large proportion of goods."

(Palmer, 1932: 63) In 1617, Connock opened two factories in Shiraz and Esfahan. The English trade in Iran began to flourish again.

In 1618, the English Company was eager to make a contract for Iranian silk at a fixed price. Shah Abbas was unwilling to adopt such a position and thus rejected it. Connock, the representative of the Company, foresaw the English monopolization of silk trade in the Gulf:

The Company received the first letter directly from Persia by its factors Edward Connock in 1618 by overland route. Eccentric and ambitious, Connock had grandiose designs for diverting the entire silk trade of Persia from the Ottoman Empire to the Persian Gulf into English hands. The treasurer of the Shah, he wrote, had already offered the English two or three thousands bales of silk to be shipped freely from Jask, his reason the wish 'to weaken his enemy the Turk by passing all the silks into Christendom by sea. He also held to high hopes for the sale of English cloth, tin, quick-silver and vermillion, and he begged the Company not to be dissuaded from sending large quantities of these goods by their unfortunate experience in India. If the goods from Europe were not enough to pay for the whole quantity of silk offered by the Shah, the rest could be exchanged for pepper and spices brought from Bantam. He had already asked the Bantam factory, he informed the Company, for a ship of 500 tons to be sent to Persia annually. (Chaudhuri, 1965: 53-54)

Shortly after receiving this proposal, the Court of Committees debated it and came to the conclusion that the Company,

...having had eye upon this trade of a long time, made many trials and proceeded hitherto with a desire to bring the said Persia trade of silk into the Land, being honourable and profitable, as is conceived for a King and country, and having such overtures now offered, held it no discretion nor wisdom to refuse it or leave off without futher trial! (Quoted in Chaudhuri, 1965: 54)

Carrying a letter from King James, Connock persuaded the Shah to

grant the Company more rights of trade in Iran. In this, he was successful because the Shah granted the Company "most of the privileges it would enjoy during the succeeding centuries of its existence in this kingdom." (Amin, A. A., 1967: 5) The new agreement

provided, among other matters, for the perpetual residence of an English ambassador at the Persian court, and for dispatch, should circumstances make it desirable, of a Persian ambassador to England; the right of buying and selling freely in the Persian dominions; protection in the exercise of their religion; authorization to possess arms and to use them, if necessary, in self-defence; the power of appointing agents and factors in Persia by the English ambassador; and, in criminal cases, Englishmen were to be punished by their own ambassador, (Wilson, 1954: 139)

To insure the Shah's keeping on his promise, Connock agreed to buy specified yearly amounts of raw silk from Iran and promised to buy this silk only from the patrimonial mercantile agents (Steensgaard, 1973: 107-8). Furthermore, he requested from his employers "a large present for the Shah, including a coach and coachman, 100 gun barrels, a suit of armour, and as many little dogs as possible." (Palmer, 1932: 64) This was the first important concession won by the English East India Company. The English now were free to do business throughout the country as they wished. They were given the right to expand their trading "factories" in the cities of Esfahan, Shiraz, and Jask (Boxer, 1965: 187-88). Also, this is the first complete capitulatory right offered to foreign agents. According to this agreement, "the merchants were to live [in Iran] according to their own laws and religion, might carry arms for their defence, and in the event of the death of one of them, the goods he had in charge were to be preserved for their Ambassador or

his fellow-countrymen." (Palmer, 1932: 63) The agreement was to last for Shah Abbas' lifetime.

Hereafter, the English East India Company became the most important instrument in the expansion of English colonial adventures and creation of British imperial system. The activities of this Company in the early seventeenth century were crucial to the future development of British international trade and the discovery of new markets as well as the sources of raw materials. The growth of the Company's re-export of colonial and East Indian wares to the Middle East, as well as to Europe, was the first step towards the creation of a multilateral trade network centered in London. The commodities were exchanged for bullion and other export goods which in their turn established the Company's investments in different countries in the Asia.

The establishment of trade relations with Iran provided the Company with the most significant market for its exports from Europe. It also enabled the Company to gain grounds for a monopoly of one of the most important raw materials for the growing British textile industry. The purpose of the Company was to win the monopoly of the silk market to the exclusion of the Armenians, the Dutch, and the Portuguese. By promising to help the Shah in expelling the Portuguese from Hormuz, in 1622 the Company was able to acquire exemption from the tolls at Bandar Abbas, together with half of this port's customs revenue (Simkin, 1968: 200). In the agreement concluded by Connock, the Company was also granted the concession of paying only one-fourth of the total value of silk bought in money, the remaining three-fourth were to be paid in

goods. This practically guaranteed the sale of European commodities in Iran. The Company's agent had originally demanded 1,000 broadcloths and 2,000 kersies to be shipped annually, together with 600 tons of tin. As it turned out, these figures were not a temporary estimation and remained pretty much the same because as long as the Iranian trade continued, the Company exported between 1,000 to 2,000 cloths along with a sizable quantity of tin and lead (Chaudhuri, 1965: 138).

The years between 1627 and 1635 marked a turning point in the Company's fortunes in relation to the Iranian trade. Until the death of Shah Abbas in 1629, the Company could not obtain any long-term contract and the system of periodic contracts was reinforced for both the English and Dutch equally. But after Shah Abbas' death, English merchants most nearly realized the precarious nature of Iranian politics and the necessity of winning the Shah by giving him their very especial attention and making his country the target of their chief efforts instead of as an afterthought or a second-best endeavour. The British government also decided to favor the idea of the Particular Voyage. In 1627, William Burt entered into Iran as the English Company's agent securing a new contract with Shah Abbas for five years and shipping a great many bales of silk out of Iran. In 1628, the British government decided to export 100,000 Pounds Sterling of bullion to Esfahan to fulfill the new contract obtained by Agent Burt. This agreement, which asked for one quarter in money and three quarter in goods in return for silk at 48 tumans for goods and 45 for ready money, was also confirmed by the new Shah in the first year of his reign. In 1629, all the previous

privileges granted to the Company were confirmed by Shah Safi --an achievement which cost the Company 1,500 Pounds Sterling in presents (Amin,A. A., 1967: 7).

The prominence of Iranian trade in these years was increased by the devastating famine and "subsequent pestilence which swept the Indian province of Gujarat, and practically suspended the Indian cloth trade through the mortality among the weavers." (Palmer, 1932: 210) The new voyages initiated by the Company, "would benefit them in freight and passengers nearly 3,000 [Pounds Sterling] ," a Company's representative stated, "if vessels were despatched to the Coast earlier so as to arrive in Masulipatam during April, he estimated that 'two ships yearly cannot gain less than 10,000 [Pounds Sterling] 2 year freight and customs besides investments which will yield 60 or 70 % profit'." (Ibid.: 231-2)

After Burt, Heynes was sent to Iran on a new business expedition, to extend the British interests in Iran by entering into a new contract with Shah Safi, Shah Abbas's successor, and receiving 800 loads of "two bals each in the space of three years." (Palmer, 1932: 242) An important element in the success of these two agents in Iran was Mohammad Ali Beg, whose influence in the court was instrumental in winning support for the English interests in Iran. After the death of Mohammad Ali Beg, Heynes' relationship with the court became precarious. Without Mohammad Ali Beg's support, he found himself in a helpless position in the Iranian court because he could not get from Shah Safi what he wished for . After trying all sorts of intrigues and briberies, Heynes turned to Imam Quli Khan, the overlord of the regions bordering upon the Gulf, for support.

But with the execution of Imam Quli Khan by Shah Safi, the English lost some of the "influential friends" in Iran. This weakening of English position in the court worked to the benefit of the Dutch again (Palmer, 1932: 266).

By far the English merchants had gained the largest privileges they could obtain in the Iranian trade. However, their fortunes were still upset by the Dutch's activities in Iran. From the early seventeenth century, when the Dutch East India Company came into the Persian Gulf, the English company did not find their competition favorable. The Hollanders had a very good trade position in the Eastern islands. They controlled the flow of key commodities and had a series of strong bases in the Indian and China trade. They could bring a variety of goods to Iran and provide the Shah with all the money he needed. In 1653, when the Dutch started to gain similar privileges in Iranian trade, especially the right of free trade, the English Company put forth its greatest effort to secure the silk trade through longer-term and more profitable contracts with the Shah of Iran. The Company was determined to frustrate the Dutch and to secure a profitable return for their share of the custom. The security of this trade was important not only to the Company, but also to the British government which was in need of additional revenue (Palmer, 1932: 177).

The British government and the English Company were not in agreement about how to extend the Company's privileges in Iranian trade and to frustrate the Dutch business. The difficulties the British faced in the shipment of their goods and in the differences of opinion at home created an easier situation for the Dutch to make

their venture profitable. But the English continued their trade and had no difficulty in sending their ships out of Iran. The English were determined to prevent the Dutch from having their way easy; so, the Company made every effort to implement the rule that the custom privileges should not "be allowed to go by default." (Palmer, 1932: 197) The English forced Iran to either cancel the Dutch privilege of custom free trade or apply it only to Iran's share of the customs. The dispute continued until 1670 when an agreement was reached according to which Iran had to pay 1,000 tumans a year to the English in lieu of its share in the customs of Bandar Abbas (Amin, A. A., 1967: 10).

By mid-1680s, both the English and Dutch East India companies "were expressing a desire to exploit the Persian demand for woollen goods more fully and hoping to develop a new channel of trade through Basra into the Ottoman Empire." (Chaudhuri, 1978: 219) The commercial position of the English East India Company in Iran was strengthened when in 1699 Shah Sultan Hossein visited the English factory in Esfahan --a visit for which the Company spent 12,000 Pounds Sterling in preparations. This visit was very "advantageous and commensurate, for not only did the Shah manifested his gratification by presenting a robe of honour, a valuable sword, and a horse to the agent, but one year's arrears of customs were paid at Bandar Abbas, and other solid advantages followed." (Wilson, 1954: 173)

In the 1693, the East India Company was obliged by the British government to export at least 100,000 Pounds Sterlings worth of commodities annually. This was an unfavourable and heavy demand put

upon the Company because there was little demand for English commodities in India. A way out of this difficulty for the Company was to ship English cloth to the Persian Gulf and barter it in Iran for raw silk. The Company was successful in pushing its sale of English cloth in Iran. Large quantities of woolen cloths were sold in Iran and a very considerable amount of silk was exported through the Gulf. To make this trade more lucrative, in competition with the commodities sent to Iran by the Levant Company through Constantinople and Smyrna, the Company lowered its prices. Such a reduction of prices did not mean a loss in the rate of their profit because the Company paid no customs and its freight from Bombay was small. During the three years of 1693 to 1696, the Company sent 6,360 cloths to Iran. Furthermore, half of over 8,000 cloths sent to Surat and other places also found their way to Iran (Wood, 1964: 115-16).

At this time Iran was buying 30,000 pieces of cloth exported by the English, Dutch, and Venetians. The English India Company was convinced that it could readily supply this quantity much more cheaply than the other companies' merchants because it did not have to pay custom duties at Bandar Abbas and its ships were exempted from freight charges on the outward voyages. Such an attack on the Persian market meant also a blow to the traditional preserves of the Levant Company. But, if the new policy was impairing the interests of the latter, it was entirely the Levant's own doing. As the Despatch Book, written in 1698, states:

... the Turkey Merchants ... have assaulted and battered at the East India Company perpetually for not sending out

the English Manufacture and magnified themselves by the popular notion of sending out such great quantities of English Cloth by the inculcating which pleasing argument to King, Lords, and Commons, they have brought upon this Company a necessity of reviving their ancient Cloth trade in Persia, and prosecuting of it effectually. (Quoted in Chaudhuri, 1978: 219)

At this time, to the detriment of the English East India Company, there were other British companies which were engaged in the Persian Gulf trade like "the Merchant Adventurers" which was founded by a trade commission from Cromwell in 1655. This situation was aggravated in 1693, when a resolution was passed in the House of Commons affirming the trading right of all English companies in the East unless prohibited by Parliament. Subsequently, a new Company, "The English Company Trading to the East Indies" was founded and began to compete with the East India Company (Amin, A. A., 1967: 10-11).

In addition to this rival European competition, another obstacle to the Company's efforts to capture a greater share of the Iranian market was the commercial transactions carried by the Armenian merchants. These merchants bought European cloth at Aleppo and transhipped it to Iran, where they bartered it for the raw silk. To eliminate this obstacle, the Company tried to divert the Armenian merchants, who were in full control of Iranian wool and silk supplies, to bring "their goods to Bombay where they would receive greater profits than if they went through Turkey to Aleppo." (Wood, 1964: 115). 1688 the Company approached Khawaja Panous Callendar, a leading Armenian merchant who then lived in London. The Company made a contract with Callendar according to which the Armenians were allowed to ship cloth on the Company's ships on the understanding

that the Armenian merchants would assist the Company's trade in Iran. The Company realized that some of the Armenian cloth traders in that country might oppose this plan. But the Company was determined to overcome this opposition because

The large concentration of the Armenian merchants in Isfahan, engaged in the woollen cloth and silk trade, made the capital particularly well located for developing the Company's trade in broadcloth and to further its plan to divert the bulk of Persia's overland trade to the Mediterranean into its own hands. (Chaudhuri, 1978: 226)

In 1708, various rival English companies and interlopers decided to put their differences aside and amalgamated into "The United Company of the Merchants of England Trading in the East Indies." This unity gave the English East India Company a ground upon which they could challenge the Dutch and French competition in the Persian Gulf. The competition had become so aggressive that on one occasion the Dutch were able to make Nader Khan believe that the English had helped the Afghans in their invasion of Iran, thus persuading him to treat the English unfavourably (Cf. Lockhart, 1938: 40-41). Although the English were able to stand these hardships and finally came to win Nader Shah's support for their business, their trade in Iran was faced with many difficulties (Ibid. 284-85). As a result of the severe economic depression brought about by the invasions of the Afghans, Turks, and Russians, the English company had to bear an economically intolerable situation. In 1721, the English and Dutch factories at Bandar Abbas were attacked by a force of 4,000 Baluchi tribesmen (Savory, 1980: 125).

The overthrow of the Safavid dynasty by the Afghans on the battlefield of Gunabad in 1722 marked the beginning of a far less stable period in the history of European trade in Iran. By 1730, the European factories were operating at a loss or an unsatisfactory rate of profit in Iran. The trade with Iran was badly affected by the political instability caused first by the fall of the Safavid dynasty and then by the assassination of Nader Shah in 1747.

Although the Company was able to renew its previous privileges during the rule of Nader Shah, by March 1735, it had to close down its factory at Esfahan and Kerman and move the center of their trade to Bandar Abbas in the Persian Gulf. The only privilege accorded to the English by Nader was increasing their share of the customs on goods imported from Bandar Abbas from 1,000 tumans to a one-third of the total levies (Wilson, 1954: 176). However, this was a decline in fortunes because trade in this period was basically depressed. By 1738, even Bandar Abbas became an unsafe trade center and a large share of trade was transferred to Basra (Kelly, 1966: 51).

But these events did not stop the English trade with Iran. The abundance of silver, gold, and diamonds in Iran, which were brought into the country as the spoil from the attack on India, attracted foreign merchants to trade in the Persian Gulf (Amin, A. A., 1967: 15-16). Throughout all these years, the merchants from Khurasan, Yazed, and Kerman travelled down to Bandar Abbas to buy goods from the English and the Dutch. Although the English Company pulled its factories out of Iranian land and relocated to the safe shores of Basra, the sales and purchases conducted at Bandar Abbas, though not so considerable as earlier dealings, were nevertheless profitable to

go after (Chaudhuri, 1978: 227). One other upsetting factor in trade in this period was the increased competition from both European and Indian traders in the Malabar pepper trade. The English company continued its business in the area because of "the company's servants' interests in country trade and of the necessity of maintaining, especially in war time, regular 'overland' communication between Europe and the East." (Furber, 1976: 9) While the Company shifted its headquarter to Basra in Iraq, and withdrew its remaining factories from Iranian cities , it did not completely leave Bandar Abbas. Such a withdrawal would have meant damage not only to its own servants' trading interests, but also to Britain because it would have given way to the French, who were always interested in trade in the Persian Gulf (Furber, 1976: 284).

While the English East India Company's interest in Iran was reduced, the competing companies representing British interest made the best out of this loss by the East India Company.: In 1739, Captain John Elton from the English Muscovy (Russia) Company started an expedition from Moscow to map the area of the Caspian Sea in order to establish an overland trade with Iran --a trade for which Britain had acquired from Russia the privilege of paying only three percent ad volorem customs duty. His attempt bore fruit and he was able to penetrate the Iranian market down to Rasht in the north. In August 1739, he worked out an agreement with Reza Quli Mirza, the Shah's son and then regent for the absent Nader Shah, which gave him the right to trade in Iran on the same terms the Iranian merchants enjoyed. This was a profitable trade which, despite its fluctuations, would last for about seven years. During these years,

the Muscovy Company was able to establish a factory at Mashad, a region far beyond the reach of the English and Dutch East India factories at Bandar Abbas, and to import woolen goods through Russia and Gilan into central Iran --a trade which badly affected the English East India Company's trade in Iran. In the history of the Russia Company in Iran, there were a few cases in which the Company experienced some difficulties in collecting debts during its ventures, but in all cases they were able to invoke the Shah's help against debtors. In 1742, the English East India Company took up this challenge and sent two factors to Esfahan in order to reopen its business there. However, the Company did not succeed in achieving this goal. The English Company's failure was also fueled by Nader Shah's suspicion about the Company's complicity in a local revolt by Taqi Khan in 1744 (Lockhart, 1938: 285).

In 1746, the relationships between Elton and Russian authorities became cloudy. Elton was alleged to have transferred his loyalty to Nader Shah which angered the Russians so much that the Tsar prohibited the Caspian trade to all English elements. This event coincided with the assassination of Nader Shah. With the death of Nader Shah the country lapsed into a condition of instability which made settled relations impossible. This condition was further aggravated by the fact that large areas of the country became depopulated. Finding itself in this disastrous situation, the Moscovy Company found no more grounds to stay and had to withdraw to St. Petersburg. By 1751, this trade came to a halt (Lockhart, 1938: 286-90). However, the Company continued to look for the opportunity to obtain Iranian silk.

In mid-eighteenth century, the situation in the Persian Gulf was improved and the English East India Company was able to regain its previous position. In spite of strong competition from the Dutch, the Company was able to have a monopoly access to Kermani wool. However, political disturbances at Kerman and the neighbouring areas disturbed the production as well as the importation of this commodity. Within a four years period of 1755-1759, the Company imported the following quantities of Iranian wool:

Table 4

Imports of Kermani Wool by the British East
India Company

Year	Tabirz mound (=6-3/4 lbs.)
1755	7,659
1756	10,000
1757	12,000
1758	8,000
1759	3,000

Source: Amin, A.A., 1967: 126.

In 1763, when the English East India Company removed its factories from Bandar Abbas, it did not give up its interest in the Iranian trade and left some of its agents in Bandar Abbas to secure its interest. In 1763, despite the losses the Company suffered in the past three years, the English East India Company was able to restore its supremacy in Iranian trade and expand its hegemony in the Persian Gulf region again because the Zand period was basically a stable and commercially prosperous one. Having achieved a dynamic economic growth at home, the British interests were able

to overcome French challenges in India and to gain a virtual monopoly in the Persian Gulf trade by establishing a trading post at Bushire. In 1763, the English Company decided to turn the tables against the Dutch by obtaining new concessions from Karim Khan and by changing the Company's principal items of purchase from silk to copper and Kermani wool. This time, the English chose Bushire as their Iranian port. In July 1763, the Company sent its agents to Iran and secured a grant to establish a factory in Bushire. The Company had a monopoly right over this port and no other European trader could use this port while the English were there. The new agreement renewed the previous rights of exporting and importing free of customs as well as the capitulatory rights of being free from Iranian jurisdiction (Harrison, et. al., 1945: 283-84).(4) Monopoly access to Bushire provided the Company with exclusive control over the main Iranian market in Shiraz. Furthermore, the agreement also gave the Company an exclusive right to control the expanding Iranian wool export trade and the import of woollen textiles (Amin, 1967: 71-4; Wilson, 1954: 178-9). As a result of this agreement, Bushire became the center of a lucrative export-import trade controlled by the English. During 1763-67, the Company's trade at Bushire increased drastically. More than half of the Company's annual sale of woollen in the Persian Gulf went through this port (Perry, 1979: 260).

In February 1769, the relationship between the Company and Iran deteriorated, because of the Company's involvement in a Turkish expedition against the Ka'ab, and the English factory was withdrawn from Bushire. However, in April 1775 the Company opened its factory

in this port again and trade was resumed (Kelly, 1968: 52-3). The Company continued to expand its trade in the region despite the negative effects on trade caused by piracy, the plague of 1775, and the siege and capture of Basra. This expansion was encouraged by Karim Khan's nephew, who in 1788 extended previous concession granted to the English and assured the English merchants to "sleep in the cradle of security and confidence." (Wilson, 1954: 179) However, from 1779 onwards, the civil war in Iran had a more negative effect on this trade. After 1780, the Company reduced its purchase of raw silk and Kermani wool in Iran. In 1800, the Government of Bombay declared its lack of interest in these goods and gradually this trade was transferred to northern Iran where the Russian initiative won the market in woollen goods (Kelly, 1968: 56-7).

Between 1784 and 1833, the English East India Company was gradually transformed into an organ of the British government and ceased to function as it had previously. A new, qualitatively different form of relationship was to be formed in the coming era of imperialism. The age of imperialism had arrived and the imperial powers were about to scramble for territorial, political, and economic gains. This development will be discussed in the next chapter.

9.5. The Dutch East India Company and Iranian Trade

The Dutch made their presence known in the Persian Gulf as early as 1581. By 1602 various Dutch enterprises participating in

the "Society for Trade to Distant Countries," founded in 1597, were federated into the United East India Company as a national force with royal patent. The Company started to expand its operations in the Asian lands and even created a vast network of trade associations in the Middle East region.

In the mid-sixteenth century, the Dutch East India Company became interested in Iranian silk which, at that time, was mostly controlled by the Portuguese. Iranian silks, as well as those obtained from Bengal and China, were very important raw material for the Dutch merchants.(5) The importance of obtaining the Iranian silk can be realized if it is remembered that around this time the Dutch were making a profit of about 320 to 350 per cent on Chinese silk (Glamann, 1958: 114).

The way to secure high quality Iranian silk, as it was perceived at the time, was to enter into an alliance with Iran and Britain against the Portuguese. In 1619, the merchants of the Dutch East India Company, as an inconvenient ally with the English East India Company, entered the battle against the Portuguese in hope of securing an agreement for Iranian silk. While the cooperation of the two companies was necessary for the purpose of ousting the Portuguese from Hormuz, and later supervising the imports of spices, sugar, textiles, and other Asian and European products to Iran from this strategic point on the Persian Gulf, the English merchants were dissatisfied with the competition the Dutch were waging (Glamann, 1958: 116). The two soon became dangerous rivals.

In the 1620s, the Company was able to extend its Iranian market much more energetically than even the English. In June 1623, Hubert

Visnich, as a representative of the Dutch Company, arrived at Hormuz. Finding the place deserted, he proceeded to Bandar Abbas. He went to the Iranian Court with a considerable amount of money and presents and succeeded in securing a treaty for establishing some trading houses in Bandar Abbas and Esfahan as well as a profitable share in the silk trade from the Shah Abbas I. According to this agreement, the Dutch Company was exempted from tolls and allowed to trade freely inside the country, except for trade in horses and some other religiously prohibited items. An important advantage of this treaty, over the one achieved by the English, was that the Dutch received their silk right at Esfahan and unlike the English did not have to go to the provinces of Gilan and Shirvan to get the bales of silk. The first consignment was four hundred bales of silk.

But this was not all the Dutch achieved. The more important acquisition for the Dutch was the Iranian market for spices which the Dutch could bring to Iran and sell (Furber, 1976: 46-47). They bartered Dutch merchandises with Iranian rugs, wool, silk, and brocade. The high valued luxury items such as incense, the attar of roses, and Shiraz wine, as well as dried fruits and nuts, were shipped to India and other places. In return, the Dutch supplied Iran with spices, pepper, and sugar. The importation of Indonesian pepper, and Bengal and Chinese sugar to Iran was almost entirely in the hands of the Dutch (Chaudhuri, 1978: 207-8).

In April 1626, the Dutch were able to conclude another contract with Shah Abbas regulating both prices and volume of goods sold in Iran. In return for the silk the Dutch exported from Iran, they were to import into Iran commodities worth 40,000 tumans or

1,600,000 Dutch florines (Savory, 1980: 198). From the end of October 1628 to the end of October 1629, the Dutch East India Company had earned 332,000 florines on a capital of 400,000 florines at Bandar Abbas. To this should be added the profits on the silk - remitted to home, on which the Company expected having a further gross profit of fifty per cent (Glamann, 1958: 258-59). The Company imported large quantities of Japanese copper to Iran, where it made a good profit and saved the company some cash. For example, in 1628 Bandar Abbas bought 400 piculs. In the next year, 1477 pieces of coarse silk and 1252 pieces of copper were delivered to a factory in Iran (Ibid.: 170-73).

This, of course, affected English trade very unfavorably and flamed the rivalry between the Dutch and the English Companies. The entrance of the Dutch into the Iranian market reduced the English fortunes. The Dutch were successful in achieving capitulations and concessions similar to those of the English. They were accorded freedom of movement and trade without any duties but that of rahdars (road guards). This embittered the English who were also angered by the Dutch's refusal to pay customs at Bandar Abbas.

One of the most important factors helping the Dutch to achieve this hegemonic trading status in the Middle East was their monopoly control of the spice trade from the Far East, thanks to their conquests in the East Indies, whereas the English imports consisted of English woollens and the less valuable products of India. Furthermore, the Dutch abandoned the earlier practice of bilateral trade and developed a multilateral, co-ordinated trade throughout Asia based on Batavia. They did not expect an immediate return of

their capital to its original source and allowed their money to circulate permanently in Asia (Savory, 1980: 200). There was also another factor which contributed to this relative decline in the English trade vis-a-vis that of the Dutch: the United Dutch Company was strongly backed by the Dutch government, while the English Company was beset by the growth of rival English companies and "interpolers."

At the time of Shah Abbas' death (1629), the Dutch had established a factory at Bandar Abbas and secured a firm presence in the bazaars of Esfahan and Shiraz. During the rule of Shah Safi (1629-1642), they virtually had practical control of Iranian trade and by the time Shah Abbas II came to power, they had acquired a monopoly of the trade in this country (Armajani, 1970: 175-6). As a matter of fact, they had monopoly control over the whole spice trade in this region. The Dutch activities in the region were expanded substantially, as Birn has pointed out:

The half-century after 1648 was the [Dutch East India] company's golden age. It was the most important European institution in Asia. Its sphere of interest radiated out from its headquarters on the island of Jva to control the spice trade of Malaya and Ceylon, dominate the coastal traffic of India, and ply the Persian Gulf. (1977: 29)

In 1637, the illegal activities of the Dutch, such as dealing with agents behind the back of the royal factors and the bribing of officials, presented some difficulties between the Company and the government of Iran. The Dutch were forced to pay 160,000 fl. export duties, and their exportation of silk to the Netherlands ceased. The most important worry of the Company was that the Iranian silk might reach Europe through Aleppo. This development

would decrease the Company's gains and force it to find ways to regulate its commercial relations with Iran again. In pursuit of this goal, the Dutch changed their approach to Iranian market: they abandoned the policy of bribing and making presents and resorted to the dominant British style: force. In 1645, the Dutch frightened Shah Abbas II by a show of naval force in the Persian Gulf and demanded more advantageous trading rights in the export of silk. In the autumn of 1645, the Dutch attacked Qishm and forced the Shah to offer peace by granting them further privileges. A new agreement was signed between the Company and the Shah allowing the Dutch to purchase silk anywhere in Iran they pleased and export it without paying any customs. This new agreement stimulated further expansion of the Dutch trade in Iran. In 1652, as Tavernier has reported about trade at Bandar Abbas, the Dutch "vended fifteen or sixteen hundred thousands pounds of their Pepper, and paid therewith for all their silk." (Quoted in Wilson, 1954: 165) The value of Dutch trade in this period is estimated to be 100,000 British Pounds (Savory, 1980: 119).

In 1652, Joan Cunaeus's embassy to Esfahan succeeded in extending the Dutch privileges in exporting silk and importing spices. The Company also got permission to rebuild its factory house at Bandar Abbas, which had been destroyed by an earthquake in 1645. From the Company's point of view, what was important in this new agreement was not the purchase of silk, but the profits from the sale of the goods at Bandar Abbas (Glamann, 1958: 119-20). A minor example of this can be seen in the Company's sale of 5 million pounds of Bengali powdered sugar in the years 1680-88 in its Iranian

factories at a very high price (Ibid.: 159). Table 6 attests to the high profitability of sugar sale during 1680-89.

Table 5

Prices of Sugar at the Iranian Factories,
1680-89. Fl. per 100 Ponds.

	Bengali poeder			Batavia poeder		
	Cost	Sale	Gross Profit	Cost	Sale	Gross Profit
	fl.	fl.	%	fl.	fl.	%
1680	9.29	23.02	147.8	12.65	28.33	124.0
1681	9.14	24.79	171.2	13.61	30.10	121.2
1682	8.84	23.02	160.4	13.51	32.76	142.5
1683	9.83	17.71	80.2	---	---	---
1684	8.90	24.79	178.5	13.45	31.87	137.0
1685	8.03	23.76	195.9	---	---	---
1686	---	---	---	---	---	---
1687	11.63	18.20	56.5	---	---	---
1688	10.32	27.01	161.7	14.19	34.53	144.0
1689	---	---	---	10.71	28.33	164.5

Source: Glamann, 1958: 160.

In this connection, it is important to remember that 19 years of 1680 to 1709, the Company sold 28,681,905 pounds of Batavian sugar and 5,442,313 pounds of Bengali sugar in Iran (Derived from Glamann, 1958: 161).

In the 1680s, when there was a shift in European demands for Iranian products, the Dutch turned their attention to Iranian cotton. Soon, Kerman's wool was carried to the Netherlands by the Dutch East India Company. The Kermani wool was regarded as one of the best and finest quality in the world which even exelled the ordinary Iranian wool. At the same time the Company was making great profits in sale of Indian pepper which it brought into Iran

from the Malabar Coast, along with other spices. Later, in the eighteenth century, the Company introduced another kind of the same produce, i.e., Indonesian black pepper, which brought the Company greater profit than the earlier pepper sold there (Glamann, 1958: 22 & 85). In 1695, they imported merchandise worth 20,000 tumans to Esfahan without paying duty (Amin, A. A., 1967: 11). The sale of spices in Iran yielded enormous profits because the Company monopolized the spice trade and arbitrarily priced the product. It is reported that in cases "the gross profit from the spices became overwhelming, often more than 1000 per cent." (Ibid. 93)

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the Dutch influence in the Persian Gulf began to decline. Piracies in the region hit the Dutch hard. In the attack by Baluchi tribesmen in 1721, not only the Dutch factory at Bandar Abbas was destroyed, but also the Company's warehouse, containing goods worth 20,000 British Pounds, was plundered. In the early eighteenth century, the English succeeded in pushing the Dutch to the margins of the Iranian trade scene. However, the Company did not give up its privileges in Iran and in 1717 it sent a mission, headed by Joan Josua Ketelaar, to renew the Dutch trading privileges in that country. Ketelaar's efforts failed and by 1722, when Iran was attacked by Afghan forces and the Safavid patrimony disintegrated, it became impossible for the Dutch Company to retain its factors and goods in Iran. In subsequent periods of the Afshar and the Zand rule, the Dutch had limited access to the Iranian market. However, their gains in these periods, despite all the difficulties they experienced, were substantial. For instance, between 1753 and 1760 they gained a net

profit of 416,856 Dutch florines from their trade in the area (Perry, 1979: 269).

9.6. The French East India Company and Iranian Trade

Early in the sixteenth century French merchants entered into a competition with the Italian city states for the expansion of trade overseas, especially in the Ottoman Empire. As soon as Francis I consolidated his power internally, he desired to get involved in the profitable Oriental trade in the Far East and the Middle East.

At this time, France had already secured a strong position in the Levant. In 1536, King Francis I concluded a capitulatory agreement with the Sultan Suleyman I of Turkey which gave France collective, personal, and juridical privileges of trade in the Ottoman Empire. The treaty permitted the merchants of both countries to pursue freely their trading interests in each other's lands. If they committed a crime or violated the law, they were to be tried only by their own consuls or appointed representatives while in the territory of the other nation. Trade between the two countries was exempted from customs duties and other taxations.

However, what the French were interested in was to reach those profitable markets controlled by the Dutch and Portuguese. Finding the Dutch an aggressive monopolizer, they were discouraged in this attempt. In 1625, Isaac de Razilly, one of the most celebrated French colonizers, stated that:

... as regards Asia and the East Indies, there is no hope of planting colonies there, for the way is too long, and the Spaniards and the Dutch are too strong to suffer it. (Quoted in DeSomogyi, 1968: 136)

However, in his Testament Politique, Cardinal Richelieu reminded these Frenchmen that:

the trade that could be carried on with the East Indies and Persia ... ought not be neglected. (Ibid.)

Having failed to open the trade through political and economic means, the French turned to religion. The Catholic Church acted as an instrument of foreign policy. As Peretz stated:

After successive failures by the French East India Company to open up Iran to trade during the seventeenth century, France resorted to the Church. Cardinal Richelieu encouraged Capuchin, Jesuit, Carmelite, and Dominican missions to take up where the merchants had failed. (Peretz, 1963: 83)

Consequently, in 1642, Richelieu founded the *Campagnie de l'Orient* whose original task was to sail to Madagascar and the neighboring islands to lay the foundation for colonies which "might secure places of refreshment on the way to Arabia, Persia, India, and the Spice Islands." (Ibid.) In 1664, complaining about the preponderance of the Augustines (Spaniards and Italians) in the Carmelite mission in Iran, Cardinal Richelieu sent a mission to Iran to obtain "permission from Abbas I for the establishment of Capuchin mission at Isfahan and elsewhere." (Savory, 1980: 120) The mission succeeded in obtaining permission to found a Capuchin mission at Esfahan and at Baghdad, the latter being recently taken from the Turks, as a diplomatic counterweight to the Augustines. Later, a new mission was established both at Julfa and Shiraz by Pere Francois Rigordi.

In 1665, three representatives of the French East India Company

and two diplomatic delegates from Louis XIV set out for Iran. This group went to visit the Shah and was able to obtain a grant similar to those received by the English and Dutch allowing the Company exemption from tolls and customs dues for three years (Savory, 1980: 120). Towards the end of the century, the Company decided to increase its share of Iranian trade by sending de Canseville, a capable merchant from Marseilles, to Iran in order to gather information about the Iranian economy. In 1705, the French government sent a mission to Iran in order to secure a commercial treaty. The mission arrived in Iran in 1707 and, due to some difficulties faced by its personnel, it could not gain the desired privileges. However, in September 1708, Pierre Victor Michel, who was originally sent to Iran to rescue the mission, was able to conclude an official treaty between Iran and France which contained many trading privileges too. On August 13, 1715, Iran and France signed a new agreement which exempted France from import and export duties, and allowed French merchants to trade in Iran freely with full protection from the Iranian government.

From the late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, French merchant capital, in consort with the Dutch capital, flew successfully in and out of the Middle Eastern ports. Chardin (1811) reports that in 1674 the French Company had a factory in Bandar Abbas and was involved in exporting raw silk. French merchants exported wine, wheat, linen and cotton cloth, and imported and redistributed tropical products such as sugar, coffee, cocoa, tobacco, and so on. Compared to the meagre profits yielded from the cultivation of land at home, the profits accruing from these trades

seemed enormous, sometimes as high as 300 and 400 per cent. It was these adventures of merchant capital which laid the ground for the early accumulation of modern capital in France (Palmade, 1961: 43) It is also important to note that French merchants went to Iran, not only to trade there, but also to gain some access to further profitable ventures in India..

However, the French trade in the Middle East remained more or less a transit trade. The competition of the Dutch and the English never allowed the French India Company to obtain an upper hand in economic gains from trade in this region. There are evidences that in 1739, the French merchants were selling coffee in Iran in a hard competition with the Dutch (Glamann, 1958: 211). It was this competition, in addition to the political instabilities caused by the overthrow of the Safavid dynasty, which finally pushed the French into the margins of the mainstream Middle Eastern trade and forced them to close their factory at Bandar Abbas in the 1720s. While the Company closed down all its factories, French vessels continued to remain in the Gulf carrying on trade with the merchants at Bandar Abbas and Bushire at irregular intervals.

In 1761, the French had to surrender all their settlements in India to the British. This defeat marked the beginning of the end for the French India Company in this region. In 1768, the French attempted to negotiate a contract with Karim Khan allowing the exchange of French woollens for Gilan silk. In December 1770, an agreement was signed which stipulated that the Compagnie des Indes would supply the Iranian army with two million articles of woollen clothing annually to be paid for half in cash and half in silk and

wool (Perry, 1979: 268). However, this agreement did not find a chance for full realization partly because of the difficulties the French agents experienced in the following year and partly because of Karim Khan's death. In 1769, the Company was disbanded for the reason of non-profitability. It should be noted that the French East India Company was not really a trading corporation in the manner of the English or the Dutch. The French Company was basically an economic instrument of French foreign policy. Its financial policies and commercial adventures were more or less subordinate to the political attitudes and trends in its home land (Cf. Edwards, 1961: 48).

From 1763 until 1793, France had a low profile in the Persian Gulf trade activities. During this period, a French residency was maintained in Basra but its activities were exclusively political. As Perry has noted, at this time France was basically concerned with her Indian interests and her "ambassador at Istanbul concerned himself with Iran and the East India Company only insofar as they affected Turkey's potential contribution to the balance of power in Europe." (1979: 267)

After the outbreak of the Anglo-French war in 1793, France launched a new initiative in reestablishing its position in the Middle East. Bruguiere and Olivier were sent to the area to gain the support of the local leaders for a French initiative. In 1796, Bruguiere and Olivier arrived at Tehran and visited Iranian officials. This presence of a French mission in Iran alarmed the English in the Gulf, thus they attempted to abort the French mission. Although this mission did not achieve its goals, it still

prepared the ground for Napoleon Bonaparte's activities in the region in the coming years (Wilson, 1954: 188-91).

Although the French position in the Middle East was weakened, the French did not give up their desire for Asian trade. Inspired by the centuries-old French trade in Asia, and in defense of the achievements of the French Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte decided to occupy Egypt in order to secure North African as well as Far Eastern markets for France. Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt was the first step in the direction of competition for India with the English. His reforms in Egypt and his campaigns in the whole region secured unhindered trade for France in the Middle East. Having gone through the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century, French industry, on the one hand, was in great need of the raw materials existing in the Asian countries. On the other, French ready-made industrial articles found a fertile consumptive market in the Middle East. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 by the regime of Napoleon III was obviously undertaken with this aim in mind. The event was triggered by "the pressures of buoyant French capitalists who were anxious to shorten distances and increase their profit margins" (Palmade, 1961: 174).

9.7. Iranian Trade: Gain or Loss for Europeans?

Some European historians argue that the Iranian Trade was a loss for European companies and did not bring them any profits. Our assessment of the European trade activities in the area in general and in Iran in particular suggests the opposite. True, not all

voyages were financially successful; there were many shipments whose returns did not satisfy the expectations of the promoters. However, this was only true of very few trade items. We have to remember that European business in the area was rarely determined by one commodity only, but by a variety of products as well as political considerations.

The vicissitudes of the European East India Companies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries surely indicates the difficulties these companies encountered in their penetration into the Middle Eastern countries. The profitability of these trades was high in some quarters of the century and low in others. But all in all, the benefits of trade with Iran to both the Netherlands and Great Britain are undoubted, even though it was very uneven.

Palmer (1932: 69) has argued that the reason Shah Abbas gave entry to European traders was to gain money for his military and economic projects. Although there is some truth to this view, it must be emphasized that European penetration was accomplished by force and was structurally imposed on Iran. The Portuguese entered the Persian Gulf forcibly and captured different islands and ports against the wishes of their native government and population. Furthermore, when the Portuguese tried to control trade in the Persian Gulf, Iran adopted a competitive economic policy saving it from the imperial adventures of the Portuguese. But this policy itself made the country vulnerable to the penetration of other European powers. The Portuguese were pushed out of the Persian Gulf to enhance the interests of the English and the Dutch. These forces came to Iranian help not to rid Iranian trade from Portuguese

domination, but to save this trade for themselves. Iranian silk, exported by these two Companies after the expulsion of Portuguese, ranked third in value in the international trade after pepper and spices. At this time, China was the only country which rivalled Iran in exporting silk (Steensgaard, 1973: 155 & 162).

As for the question of the profitability of the trade, a look at the commercial calculations of the English India Company on the profitability of one of voyages in 1712 gives us a fascinating glimpse into the margins with which the Company was operating. The calculation presented in Table 7 is based on the latest reports of prices prevailing in Iran at the time. This calculation was made by the Calcutta Council of the Company before sending the ship Recovery to Iran.

Table 6

Estimation of Profitability of Sugar, Ginger, and Rice
for the English East India Company in 1712

Quantity maunds(unit of weight)	Commodity	Estimated Cost Value Rs.	Estimated Sale Value Rs.	Estimated Profit %
3000	sugar	15000	23718	58
600	ginger	2100	3175	151
2000	rice	1000	5000	400

Source: Chaudhuri, 1978: 211.

These figures were very similar to those calculated in the private papers of Sir Robert Cowan, the governor of Bombay and an active country trader (Chaudhuri, 1978: 211).

In most of the eighteenth century, despite the decline in Iranian trade, the balance of trade was heavily against Iran. The

large influx of foreign textiles, which in this period could sell cheaper in Iranian market, resulted in the decline of manufacturing in southern Iran. This decline in Iranian manufacturing, accompanied by an increase in European imports, resulted in a large net outflow of gold and silver coins from Iran. This persistent outflow of coins, in turn, created a cash shortage which devalued the local coinage (Amin, A. A. 1967: 92, 129, & 136). This financial hardship increased the costs of trade for Iran and contributed to her commercial decline in this century.

In 1809, the annual trade between Iran and Britain amounted to 600,000 British pounds --according to Harford Jones, the then English East India Company's resident at Baghdad (Shadman, 1939). It is against the background of a decline in the production of silk in Iran, that he wrote:

The commerce of Persia, like its population, under the present Shah, has increased prodigiously. When I first arrived at Basra, about 60 or 70 bales of Indian chintz made the whole of the annual import of this article at Bushire; when I last returned from Persia, this importation had increased to between five of six hundred. (Quoted in Shadman, 1939: 13)

Another consideration in determining the profitability of this trade is the exploitation of Iranian producers through the circulation of commodities. European commodities brought into the Iranian market were produced in a newly industrialized economy which required fewer hours of paid labor. However, commodities and materials produced in the Iranian peripheral economy demanded more hours of paid labor. This disparity in wages was amplified by an unequal level of productivity and the technological advance between

Iran and European societies. Based on this unequal exchange, a great deal of value created by Iranian producers were transferred to the European economy (Cf. Emmanuel, 1972).

And finally, the profitability of the European companies should not be measured only in terms of the prices at which they sold their commodities in Iran or bought Iranian silk. These companies enjoyed various privileges which added to their fortune in these lands. For instance, the share of the custom duties the English East India Company collected in Iranian ports constituted an important source of revenue for this Company. It is estimated that in its most prosperous days, the customs of Hormuz amounted to 180,000 British Sterling --an amount half of which was collected by the Company (Amin, A. A., 1967: 9).

9.8. Endnotes

(1) This same view is shared by Navidi (1977) and Reid (1978a).

(2) According to a report by the British political resident in the Persian Gulf, Lewis Pelly, "Report on the Trade of the Persian Gulf, 12 May, 1866," quoted in Saldanha (1905: 29-31).

(3) The text of this message can be found in Malcolm's book, The History of Persia, Vol. I, 1815: 535-6.

(4) The text of this agreement can be found in Aitchison, C.U., A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, 3rd edition, Vol. X, Calcutta: Government of India, 1982, pp. 32-35.

(5) In this period, Iranian silk was of several kinds, according to its origin or quality:

ardasse was a coarse quality from the district of Shirwan, ardassina was pearl silk of the best quality, canary was silk with white spots, gilam was silk from the province of Gilan on the Caspian Sea (a similar sort from China, of which the Dutch sold much in Japan, was also called gilam), legi or legia was the best quality from the district of Lahidja or Laidjan. (Glamann, 1958: 21)

CHAPTER X

IRAN AND THE IMPERIALIST RIVALRY

... there are persons who ask --Why should Great Britain continue to exercise these powers? ... We were here before any other Power, in modern times, had shown its face in these waters. We found strife and we have created order. It was our commerce as well as your security that was threatened and called for protection. At every port along these coasts the subjects of the King of England still reside and trade. The great Empire of India, which it is our duty to defend, lies almost at your gates.... We are not now going to throw away this century of costly and triumphant enterprise The peace of these waters must still be maintained ... and the influence of the British Government must remain supreme.

Lord Curzon's Speech to Trucial Chiefs, November 21, 1903.

With one concession after another, Persia will soon be completely in the hands of the foreigners.

Jean-Baptiste Feuvrier, 1890.

10.1. The Imperialist Stage of Capitalist Expansion and the Semi-Colonial Position of Iran

As the sixteenth and seventeenth century European adventurers became ever more deeply involved in trade with and within Iran, they were consciously or unconsciously laying a large part of the foundation upon which eighteenth and nineteenth century successors would establish their imperialist positions on Iranian soil. With the advent of the machine, the attack on the slave trade in

Americas, and the revolts in the British "outports," the age of mercantile capitalist expansion came to a close. The eighteenth-century struggles between European powers for the control of the Middle East marked the final staging for the age of European imperialism which was to follow.

The processes of early penetration into and integration of the Iranian market involved a long and complex history of military and commercial encounters between Iranians and European forces beginning in the early sixteenth century. It began by the Portuguese's attempt at establishing their commercial empire in the Persian Gulf. In that early stage, which is termed "the colonial phase of imperialism" by the Marxist theorists of imperialism (Cf. Kemp, 1975 & Lenin, 1939), various European "nation-states" scrambled, more indirectly rather than directly, for the control of the surplus products, as well as the natural resources, of the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This early penetration of European interests into Iran especially through the Persian Gulf, was exclusively commercially motivated.

Although the Iranian market was opened to Europeans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the Iranian economy was influenced by the initial European contacts in that period, the real process of integration of Iran into the world capitalism was not yet complete because those early economic interactions, and to a limited extent political relationships, marked the culmination of a particular stage in the expansion of capitalism world-wide. The new stage, which began in the second half of the eighteenth century, was totally different both in nature and in the extent of European

intervention into Iranian political affairs and the economic sphere. new stage involved more direct use of force and political domination for exclusive control of non-European pre-capitalist formations. It was marked not only by a struggle for securing exclusive access to sources of raw material and cheap labor, and markets for sale of European manufactured commodities, but it also involved an attempt in the expansion of capitalist relations and the reproduction of pre-capitalist relations furthering the process of capitalist integration. This contradictory expansion of capitalist relations and simultaneous preservation of pre-capitalist modes was an important feature of the articulations, discussed in Chapter I.

Beginning with the last decade of the seventeenth century, the European traders had found richer profits farther east of Iran in Asia. The political instability caused by the decline of Safavid patrimony and the economic turmoil resulting from the breakdown of the Asiatic mode in Iran made the Iranian trade precarious and less attractive. The Afghan invasion of Iran in 1722 and the war with France and England brought an end to the Dutch adventurers in Iran. The British also had great difficulty dealing with Nader Shah and even to a lesser extent with his successor Karim Khan Zand. In spite of these difficulties in economic exchange, Great Britain, along with Russia and the Ottoman Turkey, started to expand their political control over the Middle Eastern countries especially Iran because the future of their fortunes in Asia was dependent on their political control of Iranian state. The era of European imperialism had begun.

Iran's strategic location on the neighborhood of Russia in the

north, having access to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf in the south, extending a trade route from the east and west, and providing easy access to India --together with its rich natural resources and productive potentialities --made its complete integration into this newly emerging world capitalist system both desirable and inevitable. For Iran, the new stage was marked by a systematic and uninterrupted flow of economic surplus and/or natural resources away from the Iranian peripheral economy to the core capitalist countries. The security of this flow, in this new stage, was guaranteed by the decisive political intervention of core capitalist states. The early growth of mercantile European capitalism and its subsequent development into industrial capitalism ensured the progressive and inexorable inclusion of Third World social formations, like Iran, into the newly developed and expanding international capitalist system. This was achieved through the mechanisms of trade, military intervention, and political chicanery.

During the mid-sixteenth to the seventeenth century period, Iranian contact with the West was primarily commercial. This is the period of European commercial expansion and naval explorations. This contact was basically localized in the Persian Gulf area. While in parts of the eighteenth century this contact lost its momentum, because of internal political instability in Iran as well as the British consolidation of power in India, it achieved a politico-economically new character at the end of that century. By the end of eighteenth century, Russia became a contending political force in world politics and it posed a potential threat to the British control in India by spreading its influence to the south and

east on the borders of Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. This political consideration changed the British policy in the Middle East in general, and in Iran in particular. An increasingly more active British intervention replaced the earlier and relatively freer trade and political relations. The change in British policy was first and foremost a response to two closely interconnected phenomena: (a) the commercial interests of European companies and private traders in Iran in particular, and in the Middle East region in general, and (b) the simultaneous activities there of the major European powers and Russia. To ensure the freedom of British trade and economic opportunity, as well as of its political control of events there, Britain changed course to exercise a more direct, explicit, and comprehensive control over Iranian affairs. Concerning the significance of Iran to England in this period, Curzon writes:

The Persia of to-day is not ... the Persia of Darius, nor is it the Persia of Shah Abbas the Great; but it is a country which, for good or ill, may powerfully affect the fortunes of Great Britain's Empire in the East
(1966,II: 588)

Therefore, Iran became a strategic buffer zone between these two expanding imperial powers. While England and France pushed for further spread of their politico-economic control and influence in Iran, Russia inserted her own pressures on Iran for political and economic gains too. Never being a direct formal colony of any imperial power, Iran was virtually dragged into the arena of these European powers and became the object of the rivalry of Great

Britain, France, Germany, and Russia, as a "semi-colony," for more than 150 years. The fate of the country was determined by the relationship between these imperial powers. Any change in the relationship between them had serious repercussions in the status of Iranian society. The economic, political, and social structure of the country were totally dependent on the policies undertaken by these powers.

10.2. The British and Russian Competition for Concession-Hunting

In 1798, when the Afghan ruler, Zaman Shah, revealed his intention of having a plan for driving the Marathas away from northern India to Deccan, where they could no longer be a threat to his rule, the British were alarmed by the dangers this move could pose to the security of their interests in India (Sykes, 1951, II: 289-99). Right after this event, the British Governor-General of Bengal was selected by the British to lead an urgent mission to Iran. The mission was assigned the task of preparing a groundwork for the entry of a high-level representative to Iran. In 1799, Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General of India, chose Captain Malcolm to represent England in the court of Fath Ali Shah. Malcolm's mission to Iran had three objectives: (a) to obtain Iranian assistance in curbing the potential Afghan threat to India; (b) to abort Napoleon's plan seeking Iranian assistance in a joint military operation with Russian forces driving into India (Elwell-Sutton, 1941: 57); (c) to re-establish British commercial interests in Iran by obtaining new agreements allowing the British merchants to

operate freely within Iran. Being a veteran of British foreign policy and knowing the psychology of the weak, twenty-eight year old Iranian Shah, Malcolm perceived that "the two great necessities of diplomacy in Persia were the giving of presents and the stickling for forms." (Kaye, 1856, II: 112) On January 28, 1801, a month after his arrival in Iran, Malcolm was able to secure the desired commercial and political treaty.

According to this treaty, Iran was obliged to invade Afghanistan, if the latter were to attack India. Furthermore, Iran had to prevent any French or other nationalities from landing in the southern part of her territory. British officials were to receive the highest courtesy, the warmest treatment, and any assistance they needed from Iranian officials both in the border areas and within the country. British merchants, as well as Indian merchants in the service of British, were allowed to trade anywhere they wished within Iranian territory with the full personal and property protection of the Iranian government. Furthermore, English iron, lead, steel, broadcloth, and perpetts were to be imported to Iran without any custom duty (Kaye, 1856, I: 519-20). Interestingly, the British were accorded the right to employ as many Iranian citizens as they wished in their commercial enterprise; they also were granted the right to punish or discipline these Iranian citizens, if necessary, provided that the punishment does not involve amputation and death (Kelly, 1968: 68-73). Malcolm was able to achieve such favourable agreement, as all the historians have noted, only through bribery and lavish gifts to courtiers and the Shah himself. His gifts included "watches glittering with jewels, caskets of gold

beautifully enamelled; lustres of variegated glass; richly chased guns and pistols of curious construction; marvels of European science, as air-guns and electrifying machines; besides a diamond of great value, and the mirrors, which had been brought up with so great toil." (Kaye, 1856, I: 132-3; Nafici, 1966, I: 93) estimates that Malcolm spent more than two million Rupis in that mission in order to achieve his ends.

Meanwhile, Russia was pursuing an aggressive, adventurous foreign policy aiming at expansion toward the Persian Gulf and India via Iran. The Russian desire for control of Georgia was a continual threat to the territorial integrity and political independence of Iran. Having failed in excursions to the east of the Caspians, in 1722 the Russian Tsar sent an embassy to Iran presenting false, trivial, and imaginary complaints and claiming compensations for them. When Iran refused to give any credit to these demands, Russian troops moved southward, passed Daqestan, and captured Darband on the coast of the Caspian Sea. The early Russian drive southward was temporarily prevented by the founder of the Qajar dynasty, Aqa Muhammad Khan. However, later the weak administration of his nephew, Fath Ali Shah, was unable to thwart this Russian push toward Iran. In 1800, Russia formally proclaimed Georgia as an integral part of her territory. This led to a series of small scale border wars starting in 1804 until 1811 (Sykes, 1922: 115).

To win this war, Fath Ali Shah turned to Great Britain for help but it balked at his request. At this time, the British were mainly worried about the threat of Napoleon and could ill afford the enmity of the Russians over the "Persian Question." Disappointed by

British refusal, Fath Ali Shah went to the French for help. For Napoleon, who had his own plan of an overland march toward India, this was a good opportunity not to be lost. Napoleon decided to help the Shah and in 1807 he sent a mission to Iran in order to develop an agreement which would bring French advisors to Iran to help create a European-style army for the Shah. On May 4, 1807, the Treaty of Finkenstein was signed by the two countries. In return, Fath Ali Shah promised "... the right of passage across Persian territory for French troops, should Napoleon decide to invade India." (Savory, 1972: 32) The French mission in Iran was headed by General Claude Mathieu, Comte de Gardene, Napoleon's former aide-de-camp, and consisted of 70 military advisors and engineers who were to assist Abbas Mirza in northern Iran in his campaign against Russia. This Irano-French cooperation did not materialize because soon after this agreement, in July 1807, Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I signed the Treaty of Tilsit which insured the peace between France and Russia --an agreement by which, in the words of Sykes, "Persia was thrown over" (1922: 111) The Shah was angered when he heard the news and ordered Gardane to leave. Apprehensive about the French involvement in the "Persian Question," the British were quick enough to substitute the French advisors in Abbas Mirza's camp. In 1808, the British envoy, Sir Hardford Jones, who was earlier a Resident at Basra, came to Iran as the representative of the Crown of England and worked out a preliminary agreement, known as the Preliminary Treaty, according to which Britain promised to provide the Shah with military assistance.

Based on the above-mentioned agreement, in 1810, Britain sent a

military staff to Iran replacing the French mission. This military staff played a very important role in the formation of Iranian military and the further political developments in Iran. A member of this group was an artillery officer, named Lindsay, who later became the Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian army. The procedures of the 1809 agreement served as a basis for the conclusion of a very important agreement in 1814: the Definitive Treaty. In formalizing the Definitive Treaty with Great Britain Iran became an ally of England by cancelling all her previous agreements with any European country which were in a "state of war and animosity" with England. Furthermore, according to this agreement Iran was required to close all her borders to any crossing force who would aim for India (Mahmud, 1965, I: 199-200).

In 1812, Irano-Russian hostilities culminated in a decisive battle in Aslanduz from which Russia emerged victorious (Sykes, 1922: 115). The Iranian defeat resulted in a peace treaty in 1813, known as the Treaty of Gulestan. According to this treaty, a vast part of Iranian territory was ceded to Russia and the Russian naval forces were permitted to sail warships on the Caspian Sea. This navigation right was so exclusive that even Iran could not do so off her own seaboard (Cf. Hurewitz, 1965, I: 85 & Kazemzadeh, 1968: 5).

In 1825, Russia violated the terms of the Gulestan agreement by bringing her forces to march on the city of Gokcha, the status of which was still a matter of dispute. Iranian resistance to this and similar territorial advances brought the two countries to a war again. In 1828, after an almost fifteen month battle, the war came to an end with a decisive Iranian defeat. As a result of this

defeat, Iran had to surrender her Caucasian provinces beyond the Araxes River as well as her rights to the Caspian Sea. A second treaty, known as the Turkomanchay Treaty, was signed between the two countries. According to this treaty, Iran renounced all its claims to the territories seized by the Russians. Furthermore, in addition to paying thirty million roubles as indemnity to Russia, Iran agreed to give extra-territorial rights to Russian citizens living in Iran, such as owning homes, shops, and warehouses. This provision laid the ground for other European countries to demand similar capitulatory rights. More importantly, the Russians were granted a fixed custom duty of five percent ad valorem on goods exchanged between the two countries. This provision gave much advantage to Russian merchants over Iranian traders and set in motion a deteriorating economic process which was later augmented by similar advantages obtained by British merchants (Cf. Hurewitz, 1965, I: 95-102 & Entner, 1965: 13-15).

Russian thirst for Iranian lands and resources was not fully satiated by the Turkomanchay Treaty. After the conclusion of this treaty, and while attempting to establish a friendly relationship with Iran, Russia engaged in an expansionist campaign from 1847 to 1876 which led to the occupation of many significant strategic lands in Central Asia. These advances brought Russia very close to the Turkoman territories, thus threatening Iranian control over these lands. Plagued by her last defeat in war with Russia, Iran requested British help. While sympathetic to Iranian concerns the British did nothing to thwart the Russian threat (Cf. Kazemzadeh, 1968: 26-31). Aware of Iranian military incompetence, in 1881 the

Russians advanced towards Turkoman territories and annexed that region. This annexation further squeezed Iran and established a new border between Iran and Russia.

After signing the Treaty of Turkomanchay, Iran made every attempt to ward off the threat of imperial powers by a policy of balancing the two major powers interested in Iranian territory and resources --Russia and Britain. This policy was successful only in one important aspect: after 1828, the Iranian borders remained intact and Iran preserved her territorial integrity. However, this was only one aspect of the matter. Foreign penetration continued in a form, which one scholar labelled "penetration pacifique" (Kazemzadeh, 1968). While the Qajar foreign policy in this period was simply a policy of "mortgaging Iran to foreign companies," (Turner, 1980: 90) the imperial powers of Russia and Britain followed a policy of "concession-hunting." (Keddie, 1966: 7) After 1828, these powers began to compete for political and economic influence in Iran, each demanding concessions and privileges similar to those granted in the Treaty of Turkomanchay. This influence and control was expanded to the point that on the three occasions in which there was a succession in the Qajar patrimony (1834, 1848, and 1896), the open show of support by these powers was deemed necessary for these successions to take place (Cf. Velintine, 1903: 46; & Avery, 1965: 47). In 1834, when Fath Ali Shah died, he was replaced by Mohammad Mirza. The ascendance of Mohammad Mirza to the throne marked the beginning of a political pattern which remained in effect for the next hundred and fifty years. Mohammad Mirza was one of the three individuals from the patrimonial household (the other two

being Farman Farma and Zel ul-Sultan) who claimed the right of succession to the throne. Mohammad Mirza was a preferred candidate of both England and Russia. Thus, as Sir Percy Sykes informs us:

Fortunately for the rightful heir [Mohammad Mirza] the British Envoy, Sir John Campbell, was at Tabriz, and by his assistance, both moral and material, and that of the Russian representative, the new Shah was able to march on Tehran at the head of a considerable force commanded by Sir Henry Lindsay Bethune. (1951, II: 327)

This direct political and military involvement of the Russian and British in the matters of leadership succession remained an obstacle in the way of determining the kind of political system Iranians themselves wished to have in the next one and half century.

Furthermore, this influence and involvement in Iranian politics by imperial powers also hampered the course of Iranian development and created a condition of political instability in which the pursuit of economic development became next to impossible. Any potential effort for industrial development was blocked by commercial penetration of these foreign forces into the Iranian market after the Treaty of Turkomanchay.

In 1838, in retaliation for the Shah's military campaign against Herat, Britain landed her troops in the Persian Gulf and occupied the Iranian island of Kharg (Cf. English, B., 1971). In 1842, Iran agreed to stop her operation against Herat provided Britain would return the island. However, the question of Herat, which was seen by Iran as an internal matter and by England as a foreign policy matter threatening British interest in India, remained unsolved and in 1856 Britain started another military

operation which resulted in reoccupation of Kharg and a considerable portion of Iranian territories in the south (Wilson, 1954: 256-7). The British intrusions did not stop until 1857 when Iran signed the Treaty of Peace at Paris declaring her neutrality towards the affairs in Afghanistan (Kelly, 1968: 452-99).

From 1860 to the late 1880s, the construction of a railway system in Iran became the object of the imperial rivalry. Russia viewed the construction of any railway in the southern or western parts of Iran as a means of British and/or German penetration from the south. The British, in their turn, viewed the building of a railway system in northern Iran as facilitating Russian expansion towards south. As a result, the efforts to build a railway was blocked by foreign pressures. In blocking this effort, Russia even obtained the formal consent of the Iranian government to not undertake such a project for a period of ten years --a moratorium which later was extended for an additional ten years (Kazemzadeh, 1968: 228-38).

Having failed in her attempt to establish direct communication between her colonies through a combination of rail and river, in mid-nineteenth century England decided to establish a telegraphic line connecting Baghdad to Tehran and Bushire in the Gulf area where it could be connected to India by an undersea cable. As Wilson notes:

It had been but too clearly demonstrated during the Indian Mutiny how essential to our rule in India such a connexion had become, and the Government at last determined to take the matter seriously in hand. (1954: 267)

In 1862, Britain received an exclusive right to construct and operate a telegraphic line for a distance of some 1,100 miles in Iran. It did not take too long for the British to reveal their real objective in this matter, i.e., the establishment of an Indo-European telegraphic network from London to Bombay. Two years later, another agreement was signed according to which a telegraphic line was to connect Iran to the European continent (Mahmud, 1965, II: 804-5; Curzon, 1966, I: 467-8; Simpson, 1928: 382-400).

In 1872, Baron de Reuter could successfully persuade the Shah to grant him a comprehensive mineral-exploration concession. The concession obtained by Reuter gave him not only an exclusive right over construction of the Iranian railway system, but also granted him, gratis, all land in public domain necessary for building this system. He was also granted the right to construct irrigation facilities, roads, and trainways, establish banks, and exploit all mines except gold, silver, and precious stones. This concession, as Curzon wrote about it, was in fact "the most complete and extraordinary surrender of the entire industrial resources of a kingdom into foreign hands that has probably ever been dreamt of, much less accomplished in history." (1966, I: 480)

In 1888, a British Company was able to obtain a concession from Iran which for seventeen years Britain had been demanding: utilization of the Karun River for political and commercial purposes. In this year, the Shah issued a decree allowing British ships to navigate the lower Karun River, as far as Ahvaz. Regarding the importance of this concession, Wilson writes:

The Karun River became the object of special British solicitude in the eighties, by which time its value as a channel of communication into the interior had become fully recognized. Much earlier than this, the latest value of the Karun --as a trade route and avenue of approach to the great towns and centers of grain cultivation in the west of Persia, and as an opening more particularly for British and Anglo-Indian commerce --was first brought prominently to notice by the writings of Layard and Lieutenant Selby. The former, from his intimate relations with Muhammad Taqi Khan, the great Bakhtiari chieftain, and with the merchants of Shustar, was enabled to guarantee Persian reciprocity in any such enterprise; and he submitted a report to the British Government, urging the product utilization of so favourable an opportunity. (1954: 266-7)

Following this opening, other British companies rushed to obtain various construction concessions allowing them to build a road from Tehran to Arak through Qum (Cf. Curzon, 1966, II: 330-87; Ainsworth, 1890).

In 1889, in reaction to allowing the British to navigate in the lower Karun River, Russia forced the Iranian government to grant a Russian company the right to construct "any railways in Persia which might be resolved upon in the following years." (Wilson, 1954: 258). The agreement also specified that Iran would not grant such a concession to another foreign power. Furthermore, Russian construction firms demanded construction concessions similar to those granted to the British. After the 1890s, Russian firms obtained lucrative concessions which in period of eleven years (1893-1914) resulted in more than 1000 kilometers of roads connecting Tabriz with Julfa, Tehran with Enzeli, and Qazvin with Hamadan (Cf. Kazemzadeh, 1957: 355-73). Construction of these roads was very essential for Russian imperialism because:

Russian industrialists wanted to open new channels, which would reduce the cost of delivering their goods in Iran; and railways also presented strategic advantages.(Issawi, 1971: 184)

In 1889, Baron de Reuter received a concession to found the Imperial Bank of Persia. Reuter received an exclusive right to issue paper money for sixty years (Issawi, 1971: 346). In return for this concession, Iran received 6% of the annual net profit from the Bank. Along with this concession, Reuter was granted the right to working the iron, copper, lead, mercury, and petroleum mines which had not yet been ceded to other foreign countries. For this, the Qajar state was to receive 16% of the net profits from the exploitation of these mines (Kazemzadeh, 1968: 210-11). The establishment of this bank resulted in a financial situation in which "many of the leading sarrafs went out of business." (Issawi, 1971: 346) Also, in reaction to the granting of this concession, the Russian government demanded a similar privilege: In 1891, Poliakov obtained a concession allowing him to found the Banque des Prets which was renamed Banque d'Escompte de Perse in 1902 (Cf. Issawi, 1971 & Entner, 1965). With the latter development, the finances of the whole country came under the control of these foreign powers, thus eroding the power of the native money-lenders and financiers.

On March 1890, another an Englishman, Major Gerald F. Talbot, obtained a grant from Naser ud-Din Shah according to which he could monopolize the sale and distribution of tobacco both for the domestic market and for export purposes (Cf. Hurewitz, 1956: 205-6). Talbot was granted an exclusive right to purchase, process, manufacture, sell, and export all Iranian tobacco production for the

duration of fifty years. In return, Iran was to receive 15,000 Pounds Sterling per annum and twenty-five percent of the net profits after the concessionaries had deducted a dividend of five percent on their investment (Cf. Browne, 1910: 33-5).

This total sell-out brought strong opposition from Iranian merchants as well as from Russia. Russia protested promptly by regarding it as a violation of the first article of the Treaty of Commerce, which had been expended to the Turkomanchay Treaty (Cf. Greaves, 1959: 181-3). The Russians used all forms of direct and indirect means of influencing the Iranian government in order to cancel the agreement. However, in all this they failed. If the Russians had any impact at all, it was flaming the fire of internal opposition to this treaty --an opposition which was very strong (Keddie, 1966: 12-13; Kazemzadeh, 1968: 250-68).

The treaty came under attack from various sectors of the population, especially the merchant class and the religious groups. The grant of the tobacco concession, if it had not been opposed and annulled, would have simply meant the elimination of one of the most important trade avenues for the Iranian merchants involved in the production and sale of this item. According to the terms of the concession, Iranian merchants could not buy tobacco directly from the cultivators or even from the wholesale merchants, as they had done in the past. They had to buy tobacco only from the Regie at whatever price it demanded. This could have put many of these merchants out of business or reduced the income of some others greatly. Furthermore, by the middle of the century, production of tobacco had reached to 50,000,000 pounds a year. The control over

such a huge amount of tobacco could have denied the Iranian merchants the access to a lucrative trade. Therefore, these merchants set out to repeal the concession. When they found themselves unable to convince the Court, they sought the support of the ulama in taking action against the Regie. This alliance was fruitful. In January 1892, popular opposition to this concession, expressed by widespread mass uprisings, forced the Shah to revoke the concession and pay 500,000 British Sterling to the English Company --an amount which he had to borrow from the British-owned Imperial Bank (Cf. Algar, 1969: 207-9; Kazemzadeh, 1968: 108-16; Keddie, 1966).

From the turn of the century, the fate of the country was determined by the discovery of oil. From the very early stages of this discovery, the British attempted to secure a complete monopoly of this black gold. In 1901, William Knox d' Arcy was able to secure a sixty year contract with the government of Iran (Cf. Hurewitz, 1956, I: 209ff). The agreement granted d' Arcy exclusive right to explore and excavate oil throughout the country, excluding the five northern provinces under Russian influence. In return for sixteen percent of the profits, the concessionaire was also to enjoy full exemption from taxes and customs duties.

In 1903, oil was discovered and in 1908 attempts were made to establish the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC). D' Arcy also secured an agreement with Bakhtiari tribal leaders, who controlled territories surrounding Masjed-e Suleyman, according to which he offered them an annual subsidy of 3,000 British Pounds plus three percent of the new APOC's profits in return for protecting British

interests in the oil fields. Also, an agreement was concluded with the feudal overlord in Khurramshahr, Shaykh Khaz'al, allowing the British to build pipelines on southern regions and a refinery on Abadan in return for an original annual rent of 650 British Pounds per year (Elwell-Sutton, 1955: 13ff).(1)

At the turn of the century, the German influence in Iran started to grow. With the development of the Baghdad Railway, the Germans also became interested in gaining some politico-economic concessions from Iran. In 1906, a German shipping service was founded in the Persian Gulf. In order to offset the detrimental influence of the Russian and British control on the national economy, the Constitutionalist government granted a banking concession to German financiers in return for the purchase of arms from Germany (Martin, 1959: 204-9).

The expansion of German interest in Iran threatened Russian and British interests. To counter the German influence, Britain and Russia agreed to reduce their competition in Iran and not to interfere in each other's so-called "sphere of influence." (Hoffman, 1964: 162; Martin, 1959: 204-9). On August 31, 1907, Russia and Great Britain signed a treaty, the "Anglo-Russian Convention on Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet," in St. Petersburg which, whilst formally guaranteeing the integrity of the country, literally divided Iran into two zones of influence, each controlled by one of those powers. According to this agreement, Iran was divided into three regions: the northern region as the sphere of Russian influence, the southern region as the sphere of British control, and the central region as the neutral buffer zone nominally

controlled by the Iranian government (Cf. Hurewitz, 1956: 266). Two years after signing this treaty, the two powers came into conflict and both tried to penetrate deep into the heart of the country. British troops occupied the southern part and the Russians penetrated into the northern belt (Nirumand, 1969: 23)

In 1903, Russia was able to force the bankrupt Qajar state to sign the Russo-Persian Customs Treaty which gave her a more advantageous economic position in Iran. This treaty, which was supposed to increase the State's revenues, replaced the five percent *ad valorem* on all goods by specific imports. Based on this treaty, Russia paid duties of 2% on sugar, 4% on petroleum, and 4% on matches, while Britain was to pay 8% on heavy cotton and 100% on tea exported (Issawi, 1971: 73).

In 1910, a new detente was established between Russia and Germany. On August 19, 1911, Russia signed an agreement with Germany, known as the Potsdam Agreement, according to which Germany gave full recognition to the Russian sphere of influence in Iran.(2) In return, Russia recognized the German commercial interests in Iran by agreeing to give support to the German's undertaking in extending the Baghdad Railway to Tehran.

From 1911 to the outbreak of the World War I, Iran was almost ruled by the Russians in the north and by the British in the South. Faced with financial problems, bankruptcy and empty treasury, the Iranian government negotiated a 1,250,000 British Pounds loan from the Imperial Bank after remortgaging the southern customs.

To stop this mortgaging policy and similarly harmful financial policies taken by the Qajar feudal state, the bourgeois elements of

the Majles instigated the government to invite a group of American financial advisors for help in reorganizing the state financial administration. The government agreed and invited a group of American advisors, headed by W. Morgan Shuster, to Iran. In reforming the tax structure, in order to increase state revenues, Shuster established strong measures forcing the feudal aristocracy to pay more taxes. However, Shuster's efforts bore no fruit partially because of the adamant Russian and feudal opposition to his reforms and partially because of the limited and superficial understanding he had of Iranian socio-economic problems.

The presence of American advisors in the Iranian cabinet provided Russia and Britain with an opportunity to further pressure the Iranian government into accepting their demands. Russia began to send her troops to Iran and issued an ultimatum threatening full invasion if Shuster was not dismissed. In addition to asking for an indemnity to defray the costs of Russian operations in Iran, the ultimatum also demanded that Iran sign an agreement stipulating Iran should not hire foreign advisors without the prior consent of Russia and Britain. While the feudal cabinet showed its willingness in accepting the ultimatum, the Majles, under pressures from its radical elements, rejected the ultimatum and, hence the Russian invasion of northern Iran.

Meanwhile, Britain dispatched her own troops into southern Iran under the pretext of protecting British commerce and property. Both Russia and Britain came to virtually control northern and southern Iran respectively. In the north, Russia controlled the towns, chose their puppet administrators, and arrested and executed the

Constitutional leaders. In the south, Britain entered into dealing with various tribal groups, such as the Bakhtiyari, Baluchi, and Arab khans, in exploiting the Iranian oil and controlling the southern regions (Kazemzadeh, 1968: 640-55).

When World War I broke out in 1914, Iran declared herself neutral. However, as Avery has stated:

... the Great Powers could hardly ... observe ...[Iranian] neutrality with any great scruples: the spirit of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 was not favourable to overmuch respect for declarations of neutrality from Tehran. It was the spirit in which ...[Iran] was regarded as ground to manoeuvre for power on The expansionist aims might be called defensive, excused as necessary to guard Russian and British possessions in Central Asia and India, but to ...[Iran] they appeared as unadulterated expansions of power. The economic aims were desirable adjuncts to an imperialism not worthwhile if not profitable.... (1965: 179)

During the war, despite the neutral position taken by Iran, the country served as a battleground for the British, Russian, and Turkish forces. To neutralize the influence of Germans, Russian forces entered northern Iran again and Britain quickly attached the neutral zone to its "protected" zone in the south. Late in 1915, military forces of two powers met each other on the Tigris. England organized the South Persia Rifles in the south and quickly moved them up to central Iran. By 1916, when the Rifles reached Esfahan, they discovered that the Russians had penetrated down to that area. This meeting of the two forces clearly indicated that by 1917 the whole country was under the virtual occupation of these two forces (Cf. Groseclose, 1947: 71-3).

Following the October Revolution of 1917, Russia pulled out all

her forces from Iran and renounced all the "imperialist" agreements imposed on Iran by Tzarist Russia (Cf. Lenczowski, 1949: 49-50). With the disappearance of the Russian control after the Russian Revolution in the post World War I era, Britain moved quickly to fill the vacuum by moving into northern Iran early in 1918 and by imposing a treaty on Iran according to which Iran could virtually become a protectorate. In 1919, Iran was forced to sign a treaty with Britain which had no other purpose than to make Iran a "vassal state." (Abrahamian, 1968: 188) This pact provided the British with a magnificent opportunity to utterly exploit Iranian resources and manipulate Iranian politics and economy. As Sheean has argued, this treaty

could without the slightest difficulty, have been made into an instrument converting Persia into a semi-autonomous part of the British Empire. Certainly, it provided a much better legal basis for the ultimate absorption of Persia than was ever contrived in the cases of India or Egypt (1927: 22-3)

According to this treaty, the British missions were to control and administer Iranian finances, army, customs, communications and so on. As Toynbee observes, while relieving Iran from the fear of partition, the treaty could threaten "... her independence in a less painful but hardly less effective way by bringing her permanently under the military and political ascendancy of a single foreign Power." (1927: 534)

Internal and external opposition to the agreement was spontaneous and strong. France and the United States of America both opposed the agreement because such a treaty could exclude them

from any control over Iranian affairs as well as resources. In spite of the endeavors of the British and Iranian government to mislead the Iranian people about the nature of the treaty, the mass opposition to such an obvious sell-out put the Iranian Assembly in a situation that it did not dare to ratify it, thus making it a dead letter (Ramazani, 1966: Chpts. 6 & 7).

10.3. Endnotes

(1) The text of these special treaties concluded with the local feudal lords can be found in Government of India, Treaties and Undertakings in Force Between the British Government and the Shaykh of Mohammerah, Calcutta, 1919 and, Government of India, Precs of the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes and Shaykhs of Arabistan, Calcutta, 1912.

(2) The text of this agreement can be seen in "Agreement between Germany and Russia Relating to Persia," The American Journal of International Law, VI, April, 1912: 120-22.

CHAPTER XI

CONSTITUTIONALISM AND EMERGING BOURGEOISIE

11.1. The Development of Commercial Activities During the Nineteenth Century

The expansion of foreign trade within the Iranian social formation during the second half of the nineteenth century had serious consequences on the social structure of this social formation. While the local manufacturing industries lost their initiatives and declined in the face of tighter Western control over the financial and commercial institutions of the country, the commercial activities nonetheless increased significantly. This increase in commercial activities helped to enlarge the Iranian merchant class. The rebirth of trade activities, rejuvenated by foreign trade, contributed to the growth of the indigenous bourgeoisie, particularly to that sector of this class known as the "comprador bourgeoisie."⁽¹⁾ Although the extent to which relations of production characteristic of a capitalist mode had been established was limited, articulation between the Western world capitalist system and the feudal mode of production in Iran resulted in the development of commodity exchange and the formation of classes associated with the circulation of these commodities. These

classes included a small "comprador bourgeoisie," a more extended national commercial merchant class, and a vast network of small traders and retailers.

These merchants and traders were a major constituency of urban centers in late nineteenth century Iran. Many of these merchants were absentee landowners who resided in the cities. In one sense, these land-owning merchants had a specific privilege over non-landowning merchants: they expanded their trade activities by increasing their surplus appropriated from the countryside. To increase their fortune, they exerted greater pressures on their tenants or subjects in the villages. Soon, these urban land-owning merchants accumulated considerable amounts of wealth and became large capitalists. As Atrpet has pointed out:

Until 1880 there were few millionaires and rich property owners but in 1900 one could count them in hundreds."
(Quoted in Abdullaev, 1971: 43)

This huge fortune was also obtained partly through hoarding consumer goods and food products. These merchants usually hid their products and created artificial shortages, thus raising prices. For instance, Behjat al-Mulk and some other government officials such as the governors of Kerman bought grains and "kept them in storehouse to be sold in winter at three times the price." (Abdullaev, 1971: 43)

While Iranian trade in this period was inextricably bound to the international market and the growth of Iran's foreign trade was at the mercy of the dynamics of the world capitalist system rather

than of the internal dynamics of the Iranian economy, the relative freedom in economic activities offered to the big merchants by the Qajar patrimonial authority, also played a significant role in the development of commercial activities in the country. However, the importance of this indirect political and economic encouragement to business activities does not prevent the conclusion that the nineteenth century development of the Iranian bourgeoisie was due more to the dynamics of the world capitalist system than to those of the internal politico-economic factors. Nineteenth century trade in Iran had basically an international character. Iran was both a source of raw material for the world market and a market for the goods processed in Europe. For instance, when the demand for dried fruits, cocoons, silk, and cotton increased in world markets, the Tumanians (a company owned by four brothers) turned their attention to the land and established new farms to produce these products (Ibid.: 46).

This double demand on Iranian merchants, i.e., importing Western goods and exporting raw materials, provided them with a golden opportunity to increase their wealth and become capitalists. The whole foreign trade in this period was controlled by these urban merchants around the country. Two clear examples of these powerful merchants were Hajji Muhammad Hassan Amin az-Zarb and Hajji Agha Muhammad Muin ul-Tujjar. Muin ul-Tujjar had extensive business relations with the British and also carried on a large trade in India. In 1896, Amin az-Zarb's family carried out extensive international commercial and financial businesses. He had a vast business operation with approximately 25 million tumans of

investment in industry and commerce. Abdullaev points out that:

Amin az-Zarb engaged in a widespread trade in many foreign markets. In all the main towns of Iran he had agents both for the purchase and sale of goods and for the taking of deposits, transfer of money, and other banking operations. He owned real estate not only in Iran but also in Moscow and Nizhni Novgorod. Amin az-Zarb had a large trading office in Marseilles, agencies in London, Paris, and China, and correspondents in many cities of Europe, Asia, and America. (1971: 43)

The expansion of merchant activities, generated primarily by foreign capital in the late nineteenth century, also marks the development of that portion of the Iranian bourgeoisie whose interests were basically national, despite the fact that their economic fortunes was based on foreign capital. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the newly developed merchant class made certain attempts at expanding its commercial and financial activities by making capital investments in a few industrial, commercial, and banking activities. It founded many new firms throughout the country and expanded its relationship with the world market. This burgeoning economic and industrial development, though restrained by patrimonial despotism and foreign competition, led to the development of large economic enterprises. As Abdullaev has shown:

... starting in the 1880s, various national companies and societies began to appear in Iran, carrying on a vast business in internal and foreign markets. Thus in 1882, on the initiative of Mashadi Kazem Amin, the 'Aminie' company was formed and came to enjoy a high reputation. Around 1886, the 'Commercial Company of Iran' was formed, with a capital of 350,000 tumans. In 1892 the 'Mansurie' company was formed in Yazd. Approximately four years later the 'Fars' company was founded in Shiraz, under the direction of Hajji Abd al-Rahim Shirazi

In 1897 the well-known merchant Hajji Mahdi Kuzekunani, with the help of his brothers and with the participation of Hajji Sayyid Murtaza Sarraf, founded in Tabriz the 'Ettihad' company, which survived for about fifteen years.

In 1898, on the initiative of the well-known merchant Hajji Muhammad Husain Kazeruni, the 'Masudie' company was constituted in Isfahan At the same time , these same entrepreneurs founded ... the 'Islamie' company, with a capital of 150,000 tumans in 1899, seventeen Tehran merchants and sarrafs (money changers) founded the 'Omumi,' whose capital was one million tumans.(1971: 44-5)

Many of these new firms were involved not only in national business but also in importing, exporting, farming, and banking operations. Tumanians had extensive business operations spreading into Russia and competing with the Imperial Bank. In addition to branches in Shiraz and Kirman, trading house of "Jamshidian" had representatives in Baghdad, Bombay, Calcutta, and Paris.

11.2. Commercial Control of Land and Production for Export

However, these commercial practices, ownership patterns, mechanisms of production and exchange, and so on, did not really result in the release of available capital in sufficient quantity to give a new impetus to the Iranian economy. Much of the capital was turned away from productive investment to the consumptive realms. The increasing luxury expenditure of the ruling class was an economic burden as well as an economic hinderance. The wealthy were spending the money on the purchase of offices to attain higher social status and, of course, to enhance their economic sphere. But during the first half of the nineteenth century this economic sphere

was mainly limited to the land.

The craving for land, which was strong, widespread, and lasted for almost half a century, was generated primarily by four factors:

First, it was produced by the conservative attitudes of feudal merchants at the time. To put the money in landed property, was to make sure of a safe income and to gain prestige for the family. The Qajar patrimonial despots and many of their affiliated landed aristocracy preferred investment in land or something "solid" rather than in risky industrial enterprises.

The second reason for merchant investment in the land had to do with the fiscal crises experienced by the Qajar state in this period. Since the Iranian coinage was based on silver, the fall in the price of silver on the international market at this time adversely affected Iranian trade. The decreased value of silver created a liquidity problem for the Iranian urban landed aristocracy who was developing a taste for the increased European luxury goods. This provided the non-landowning merchants with the opportunity to either purchase these lands or gain their control by attaching them as collateral to the loans they offered to these landlords (Nowshirvani, 1975: 46).

The third factor contributing to the growth of investment in the land was also related to fiscal crises of the Qajar state at this time. When the Qajar state, especially during the rule of Naser ud-Din Shah and his successors, was faced with a currency problem, it attempted to gain some currency by selling state lands (khaleseh). This sale of state lands provided the merchants, who had liquid funds available, with an opportunity to manage the

purchase of a considerable portion of these lands at bargain prices (Cf. Lambton, 1953: 152-3; Nowshirvani, 1975: 46). Furthermore, the investments in land and in the production of cash crops were a potential source of revenue for the bankrupt Qajar state. One corollary of this overinvestment in land, of course, was the lack of adequate investment in industrial areas, thus leaving most of the consumer market open to the Western manufacturers.

And Finally, the desire to own land was caused by the Western demands for Iranian cash crops, especially opium and tobacco. Many merchants involved in trading Western goods invested their money in the land and in the production of export crops. Between 1871/2 and 1880/1, opium exports from the Persian Gulf increased from 870 cases (of 195 pounds each) worth 696,000 rupees to 7,700 cases worth 8,470,000 rupees. Cultivation of this product in Iran, according to a report by the British consul at Bushire, expanded to "almost all available or suitable ground in Yazd, Isfahan, and elsewhere, ... to the exclusion of cereals and other produce." (Issawi, 1971: 238) Substitution of this export crop for grain production, coupled with drought and other factors, as this British consul testifies, contributed to the famine of 1871-72 in Iran. Another export product was cotton. When the Civil War in the United States began in the 1850s, England's share of cotton from America declined. England's choice of next supplier was Iran. In 1863, the British Consul in the region reported that "... some millions of pounds might be purchased here [Iran] in the course of the year." (Cf. Issawi, 1971: 247) As a result of this foreign demand, the production of cotton for export was encouraged so much that

"shipments of raw cotton from the Persian Gulf to Bombay, which had been nil in 1844/45 and 19,200 rupees' worth in 1860/61, rose sharply to 1,614,060 rupees in 1863/64 and 6,793,845 in 1864/65" (Cf. Issawi, 1971: 245) In 1866, when the Civil War ended and the export of cotton from the United States was resumed, the production of cotton in Iran was reduced and its export to India was stopped.

The investments in landed property, which were unfruitful as far as industrial and commercial development of the country were concerned, were often far from promoting the conditions of agricultural production. When these merchants moved into the sphere of landholding and agricultural production, their interest lay not in changing but in reinforcing the existing patterns of feudal relationships. Since a major proportion of the agricultural lands was controlled by the land-owning merchants, both the quantity and quality of agricultural production was largely determined by world market demand --a market to which the Iranian merchants were both responsive and receptive.

The determination of the quality and quantity of agricultural production by the international market, in turn had serious effect on the relations of production within the Iranian social formation as manifested in the terms of tenure and in the exploitation of agricultural laborers. The combination of the rental arrangement and the division of surplus between peasants and these landowning merchants, specified in labor service or in kind and in cash, allowed this landowning class to accumulate wealth as well as to gear its production process toward changing world market demands

based on the availability of both supply of labor and mercantile capital.

11.3. Capitalist Development, Foreign Domination, and Patrimonialism

While the development of the Iranian bourgeois class in this period was prompted by international capital, because of the specific nature of the articulation between the Iranian social formation and the capitalist world system, Iranian merchants were still trading on their own accounts and had even to compete with foreign merchants seizing upon their market. This put Iranian merchants in a situation in which they could take no independent initiative. They found themselves with no choice but to act as agents of foreign companies or to work with them closely. Realizing their dependence on foreign capital, Iranian merchants were very suspicious of the presence of foreign companies and merchants in Iran. The competition with foreign capital was something more than what they wanted in their relationship with the West. For instance, when foreign capital pressured the Qajar rulers "to invest in developing the country's transportation system" (Gilbar, 1977: 285), the big merchants did not support the idea, although such a development could have increased their opportunity for business advancement. They did not do so mainly because they perceived such a development as another avenue for the expansion of foreign control over Iranian polity and economy, thus further depriving them of an effective control over their own capitalist activities.

While the lucrative European trade in Iran helped some Iranian

merchants (Avery, 1965: 76; Issawi, 1971: 70ff), its expansion contributed to the deterioration of the Iranian economy in general. The nascent Iranian manufactures could not withstand the competition from imported European goods (Issawi, 1971: 292-97 & 308-10). The expansion of foreign industrial capital and goods helped the decline of demand for domestic craft manufactures even in local markets. The cheaper European products superseded the local products and diminished the market for local manufactured goods. This became such a serious problem that the British Consul at the time acknowledged that:

... introduction [of British manufactures] has so greatly diminished the production of many articles of native industry that Persia must now depend on us chiefly for supplies of such goods. (in Issawi, 1971: 112)

As indicated by Issawi, the Iranian handicraft industry used to meet not only domestic needs but also foreign demands. This industry was flourishing "until the influx of large quantities of European machine-made goods in the 1830s and 1840s." (Issawi, 1977: 163) With the influx of foreign goods, indigenous structures of mercantile character began to disappear. Small-scale artisan and commercial activity and local initiative, like the production of sugarcane, were crushed in the face of Western pressures, especially by the influx of cheap European manufactures. Even some of the old productive industries began to feel the constraints laid upon them by foreign trade. For instance, the production of silk, which was usually high and constituted an important item of export up to the middle of the nineteenth century, was brought to a low point. In

the mid-nineteenth century, there were 1,800 silk-weaving factories in the city of Yazd alone which constituted the major industrial activity in the city. By the last decade of the century, this industry was destroyed and the vast area of land formerly under the cultivation of mulberry bushes was used instead for the production of poppies. The latter enterprise was controlled by foreign entrepreneurs who annually exported to the West 2,000 chests of the opium extracted from this land (Curzon, 1966, II: 212).

When foreign capital penetrated the Iranian arena and was invested in the production of export commodities, the country lost its productive capacity as well as its control over its own production and markets. The British merchants subordinated local handicrafts to British manufactures and local raw material to British investment. The Iranian carpet industry came increasing under the control of European traders. The production of carpets, and concomitantly of silk, became export-oriented and subject to fluctuations in European demands. For instance, in the 1870s there were forty looms in Sultanabad. By the 1890s the number of these looms in the city and its immediate vicinity increased to about three thousand. These looms operated in the form of an urban putting-out system. The local craftsmen picked up the necessary materials for production from a central warehouse belonging to European companies and then returned their finished products to the company's purchasers at the warehouse (McDaniel, 1971: 41).

All through the nineteenth century, Iran imported many manufactured goods and luxury items from Europe, especially England and France, in return for its export of cotton, silkworms, silk,

wool, and other raw products. In most of these years, the amount of imports exceeded that of the exports. Thus, Iran suffered a severe imbalance of payments (See Tables 8 & 9). To make up for the loss, the country drained its gold and silver reserves. In 1866, Waston reported that the Iranian economy had an increasing balance of payments deficit in trade with the European countries because they had not studied "political economy" yet, and if they had taken "thought for the morrow" they could have provided many items in their own country, such as sugar, which they were importing from abroad !

Table 7

Imports to and Exports From Iran, 1831-1842
(Number of Parcels)

Year	Imports	Exports
1831	4,500	...
1832	6,750	5,302
1833	8,975	8,040
1834	11,250	12,660
1835	15,525	15,800
1836	20,615	23,278
1837	16,710	16,031
1838	22,360	16,618
1839	21,095	10,891
1840	25,830	16,770
1841	27,092	17,483
1842	30,985	17,493

Source: Issawi, 1971: 720.

Finally, there was another source of irritation which made the Iranian merchants intolerant of foreign capital: During most of the Qajar period, while an Iranian merchant's tariff depended on the precarious temperment, cupidity, and power of the farmer of the

customhouse, the rate of customs on goods exported and imported by foreign merchants was fixed at five percent in accordance with the Treaty of Turkomanchay signed between Iran and Russia in 1828 (Sheikholeslami, 1978: 234). Furthermore, while foreign merchants were free from internal road and city taxes, Iranian merchants had

Table 8

Imports to and Exports from Iran
1843-1848

Year :	Imports		:	Exports	
	: Parcels:	Value*	:	: Parcels:	Value
1843 :	31,690	: 10,140,800	:	14,879	: 2,518,000
1844 :	33,100	: 10,432,000	:	16,900	: 3,684,360
1845 :	40,028	: 13,239,574	:	17,012	: 3,708,742
1846 :	38,980	: 12,892,598	:	13,619	: 3,165,390
1847 :	34,850	: 11,522,738	:	12,130	: 2,784,500
1848 :	50,277	: 16,623,804	:	10,456	: 1,813,782

* Florin

Source : Issawi, 1971: 103.

to pay large amounts of internal taxes to the state (Issawi, 1971: 80-81 & 103-105). In 1895, having failed in securing some revenue through the Tobacco Concession for its bankrupt treasury, the Qajar state took certain measures in increasing the custom duties -- measures which, while beneficial to foreign capital, would have increased the demands on Iranian merchants (Cf. Gilbar, 1977: 292-3). In 1899, the government also was forced by its foreign creditors to invite a group of Belgians to manage the operation of the Iranian custom-houses. From 1901 to 1904, the Belgian advisors changed the custom tariffs and regulations in such a way that resulted in (a) the loss of certain custom-houses by some of the big

Iranian merchants, (b) an increase in custom duties on the major articles imported and exported by these merchants, and (c) the subjection of custom affairs to a more complicated, expensive, and time-consuming process controlled by foreigners. With these developments, Iranian merchants found themselves in a disadvantageous position vis-a-vis their foreign counterparts whose goods, after paying an initial five percent duty, were exempt from any taxation (Issawi, 1971: 80-81). The designation of the Belgian Joseph Naus as Minister of Customs, Posts and Telegraphs, together with the increasing competition between British and Russian goods, created an economic hardship for the Iranian bourgeoisie, especially the small artisans and merchants. These developments were disturbing to the newly formed Iranian bourgeoisie and further flamed their opposition to the hospitality offered to foreign capital by the Qajar rulers.

The presence of international capital prevented the burgeoning Iranian bourgeoisie from expanding its economic activities in all economic areas, especially in the industrial and financial spheres. The burgeoning activities of Iranian sarrafs (bankers) were curtailed by the financial institutions controlled by the imperial powers. The establishment of two foreign banks and their control over the Iranian finance adversely affected the position of some of the prominent sarrafs in the bazaar (Curzon, 1966, I: 473-74). As Adbullaev has written:

Notwithstanding the fact that the institutions of sarrafs continued to develop in the face of serious obstacles, it would not meet the needs and demands of the Iranian economy. The Imperial Bank and the Discount and Loan Bank

constituted the main and fundamental obstacles in their path. In addition, the struggle between Britain and Russia for domination over the financial system of Iran, which took place mainly with the help of these banks, had adverse effects on government finance and the rate of the rial. (1971: 46)

Despite the increase in the number of industrial and economic factories in Iran in this period, Iranian capital remained predominantly a mercantile capital and could not be fully transformed into an industrial capital. The development of Iranian industrial capital in this period was curtailed because of the pressures placed on Iranian mercantile markets by foreign goods and capital. With a good portion of merchants becoming landlords, merchant capital only found the opportunity to acquire some economic and political power through the export of crops and imports of finished goods (Ravasani, 1980: 7). But the size of investment in industrial activities by indigenous private capital was much smaller than that of investment in the land and circulatory trade activities. The vast majority of the Iranian bourgeoisie remained in commerce, where the rate of return on capital and the likelihood of large short-term gains were higher than in the areas of industrial production. Industrial commodities were basically imported from the Western countries. Historically, it was not in the interest of world capitalism to allow the development of forces of production in Iran at this stage. The entrance of European goods through exchange relations played a principal role in both the expansion of the commercial sector of the economy and the reproduction of the pre-capitalist social relations in the Iranian social formation.

While there were many traders acting between the Iranian market

and foreign firms, the majority of the newly developed Iranian merchants did not wish to be subordinated to foreign capital. Iranian merchants, drowned in a network of economic activities which were structurally tied into a global economy, could not see the contradictions of the very relationships in which they were trapped. This fact is well exemplified in a statement made in 1840 by the British Consul, K. E. Abbott:

In regard to the suggestion of the Merchants for the Prohibition of European Merchandize; though this cannot be carried out against our Trade in the face of Treaties, I would remark that it was the Persians themselves who first introduced English goods into this Country from Constantinople and who now complain only because they cannot have the trade entirely to themselves. It must doubtless be very distressing to them to find Foreigners superseding them in the Commerce of this Country ... (in Issawi, 1971: 112)

While wishing an independent economic development and even acting somehow independently, the Iranian national bourgeoisie was still operating within an economy integrated into the world capitalist system. This was the basis of the contradictory relationship between the nascent Iranian bourgeois class and the world capitalist system. The national Iranian bourgeoisie had no choice but to compromise its interests with imperial capital because of the structural links of the Iranian economy with foreign capital.

Finally, there was another source of dissatisfaction in the Iranian bourgeoisie's attempt to expand its fortunes: patrimonial authority. The Qajar patrimonial despots were inept, corrupt, and inefficient rulers who were concerned mainly with their own positions and personal gains. In securing this position, these despots had no hesitation in granting concessions to foreign firms

because, first, they served as a lucrative source of bribes to many members of the patrimonial household and, second, they provided the state with additional revenue with which to fill its financial holes. The nineteenth century Qajar state was a bankrupt state which faced a surplus crisis. The state had lost its ability to command sufficient surplus from peripheral feudal powers to maintain its organizational basis. The feudal forces had achieved such a status that they could accumulate faster than the patrimonial state which used to be the ultimate controller and regulator of surplus during the Asiatic period.

Not being able to control virtually independent provincial governors, the patrimonial authority combined its weakness with an expensive taste for luxurious living and travels to Europe. The Qajar household was engaged in the consumption of surplus and had no productive dimension to it. The Qajar shahs were obsessed with their own private affairs and their attention was not directed to the problems of the country. Fath Ali Shah, the second Qajar king, instead of using the country's wealth to stimulate the national economy, put all his wealth in jewelry. His main productive enterprise was to marry women and produce children.(2)

The luxurious living of the patrimonial household, the enlargement of the government bureaucracy and army, and thus the increase in government expenses put a burden on the financially crippled Iranian treasury. As a consequence, it became more urgent for the state --in addition to increasing taxes on trade and land --

to borrow from, or sell concessions to, foreign countries (Cf. Kasravi, 1968: 10-13). With each of the loans acquired, the

lending country enhanced its commercial, financial, and political hold over the Iranian economy. In 1900, Iran received a 22.5 million rubles (equal to 2,400,000 Pounds Sterling) with 5% interest rate from Russia. In 1902, another loan, totaling 10 million rubles was received from the same source at a rate of 4% (Browne, 1909: 8-9). The security for these loans included the custom revenues of all Iranian ports except for those in Fars province and the Persian Gulf (Kazemzadeh, 1968: 324-5). Along with this second loan, Russia also received a concession to construct a road from Qazvin to Tabriz --a road which directly connected Tehran to Russia, thus providing her with a necessary infrastructure for further commercial penetration into the Iranian economy (Browne, 1909: 9-10). By early twentieth century, the government was indebted to Russian sources for more than 4,400,000 Pounds Sterling --an amount which did not include the initial loan of 500,000 Pounds Sterling from the British-owned Imperial Bank of Persia.

Added to the financial problems as well as the expensive life style was the political inadequacy of Qajar patrimonialism. The Qajar palace had become primarily a place of intrigue among urban politicians and feudal lords. The government was weak, unable to curb deficit spending and excessive borrowing from foreign governments. Therefore, the new bourgeois class saw the regime as incompetent, incapable of instituting changes and reforms vis-a-vis the foreign economic domination.

The patrimonial authority, by its inability to keep up with the bourgeois demands for the development of an infrastructure conducive to capitalist development, by its complaisance to foreign

encroachment, and by its disastrous fiscal policies which had led to state bankruptcy, became another target for the bourgeoisie's attack. Many members of the Iranian bourgeois class, like Amin az-Zarb and Hajji Mohammad Hassan, were very interested in expanding capitalist activities in Iran but were frustrated in their efforts by patrimonial authority who saw the expansion of capitalist activities as a threat to their own economic power which was based on land. For example:

 Ten years before the expiration of the Imperial Bank's concession, Hajji Mamed Hassan already had proposed to the shah the creation of a government bank, in which both government and private capital would participate. But this wise suggestion met with no official response from court circles." (Abdullaev, 1971: 43)

Qajar patrimonialism represented a feudal superstructure which could not keep up with the changes required by the dynamics of a formation moving in the direction of a capitalist mode. Even the reformatory measures introduced by Naser ud-Din Shah in 1859, such as the establishment of a "cabinete" including various ministries of Public Works, Commerce and Industry, Internal Affairs, and so on (Cf. Curzon, 1966, I: 423), were not adequate in transforming the outmoded structure of the Iranian polity and economy. Naser ud-Din Shah's interest in modernization was superficial and was not informed by any idea of a radical transformation. Even innovations introduced by the enlightened vazier, Amir Kabir, did not satisfy the needs for modernization of the social relations of production because they lacked any constitutional body to support them. They depended entirely upon the arbitrary will of patrimonial despotism.

As it was suggested in the earlier chapters, the Iranian bourgeoisie did not have an independent existence similar to the one the European bourgeoisie enjoyed. In Europe, the burgeoning class of merchants first took economic control of urban centers and then politically allied itself with the absolutist monarchies against the feudal class in the countryside. In Iran, the feudal landowners resided in the cities and became a major part of the new merchant class who came to dominate the economic development of the cities. While in Europe the economic interests of these two classes contradicted one another, in Iran their economic interests coincided and came into alliance with one another. In many cases, the newly developed merchant classes were themselves landowners, another factor contributing to the process which impeded the development of an autonomous bourgeoisie. This combination of interests destroyed the foundation of an alliance which in Europe had led to the consolidation of a bourgeois hegemony. Thus, the new Iranian bourgeoisie saw patrimonial despotism, rather than feudal aristocracy, as the main force to be opposed.

Since the patrimonial authority was backed by the imperial powers, the alliance of foreign capital and the patrimonial state deprived the Iranian bourgeoisie of a firm political base for class opposition to the politico-economic domination of both foreign capital and patrimonial despotism. Frustrated with this situation, the national bourgeoisie saw its interest in the development of a political response to this situation through a class alliance. Hence, the national Iranian bourgeoisie sought an alliance with the other social classes and social strata for developing a reformatory

movement.

11.4. The Constitutional Revolution and the Bourgeois Class

Dissatisfied with the outmoded social relations of production, competing foreign presence in the Iranian market, and patrimonial resistance to the political ascendancy and economic expansion of bourgeoisie, the nascent Iranian bourgeoisie started to show signs of resistance to both patrimonial despotism and the foreign domination of Iranian market. It was in the interest of the newly formed bourgeoisie to change the existing feudal social relations of production to capitalist relations and gain an effective control over the financial structure of the Iranian economy which was dominated by European capitalism. As Abdullaev put it:

... the attempt of Iranian bourgeoisie during the first years of the Constitutional Period to found a national bank of Iran expressed the desire to create a native bank for the financing of trade and industry, in order to break the constantly increasing domination of the foreign banks over the Iranian economy. (1971: 46)

With the development of commerce and industry, a more or less sizable portion of the urban merchant class, dissatisfied with the monopoly of power by the landowning merchants within the state, decided to defy the political hegemony of the landowning class within the state as well as the political impotency of the patrimonial state in resisting foreign political and economic encroachments. As this sector of the bourgeoisie saw the matter, it was the feudal domination of the patrimonial state, accompanied with foreign domination, which hindered the development of a free

enterprise economic system in Iran. For merchant capital, interested in the unfettered exchange of goods, the provision of a market secured from the arbitrary decision of the patrimonial rulers and the members of their households was a necessity. Such a market would free the owners of capital from traditional and personal bonds created and nurtured by the patrimonial rulers and some of the old members of the landed class. In short, the free movement of capital required freedom from traditional social relations. To achieve this goal, it was necessary (a) to limit the arbitrary power of the Shah and the old landed class, (b) to establish a legal-rational system of decision-making in the realms of law, the polity, and the economy, (c) to legalize the "right of private property," and (d) to secure some rights for the mercantile class to participate in the process of political and legislative decision-making (this latter was the basis of the idea of a parliament or Majles demanded by the Constitutionalists).

This opposition to patrimonial despotism and foreign domination, as well as the demand for changes in the socio-politico-economic relations, came to be expressed in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911. Before the Constitutional Revolution, the Iranian merchants never found the opportunity to form a genuine class bearing the bourgeois ideology. With the increase in the wealth of the nobility and merchants, and the familiarity of the bourgeois elements with the cultural standards of Western liberal capitalism, this class became more conscious of its interest and helped the development of the ideology of constitutionalism. The Constitutional movement was the culmination of the thirty and a half

years of dissatisfaction, built upon earlier revolts against the Reuter Concession in 1872-73 and the Tobacco Concession in 1890-92.

Although the Constitutional movement was supported by the bourgeois class, it developed into a mass movement, flamed by popular discontent during an economic depression, embracing various social groups. Three main social groups which led the movement were the ulama (clergy), the liberal intellectuals, and the merchant class (Cf. Browne, 1910; Kasravi, 1968). As Abrahamian notes:

The Constitutional Revolution was a movement of the bazaar. Its rank and file came from the guilds, its financial backing from the merchants, its moral support from the religious authorities, and its theorizing from a few Westernized intellectuals. (1968: 192)

The ulama joined the movement for the following ideological, and politico-economic reasons: Ideologically, they saw foreign influence as breaching the Islamic traditions --an influence which, if not curbed, would undermine their traditional basis of legitimacy.(3) Politically, government encroachment into the traditional religious domain, i.e., education and legal matters, resulted in a gradual erosion of the ulama's power --an encroachment that the ulama very much resented.(4)

Economically, earlier state confiscation of some waqf lands had deprived many of the ulama of a lucrative source of income. Also, that portion of the ulama who owned private land had not forgotten about the Tobacco Concession --a concession which could have seriously hurt the economic interest of these landed ulama, for much tobacco was produced on their lands. The government's fiscal measures, introduced by Belgian Joseph Naus, had also adversely

affected the economic fortunes of another portion of the religious stratum engaged in wholesale commercial activities. Some were afraid that soon similar measures might be applied to their lands by reforming the land taxes. There was also a concern about the pensions received from the central government by some members of the religious establishment --a concern which was significant in the mobilization of the lower ranking religious functionaries in the peripheral areas (mullahs). For three successive years these pensions had been in arrears. A rumor was developed in the capital that Naus intended to reduce the amount of these allowances, creating great worries among the religious community (Gilbar, 1977: 302). Finally, since the ulama had close ties to the bazaar merchants and artisans, the economic deterioration in the status of these merchants caused by foreign competition indirectly could affect the economic support the ulama received from this commercial class.

The liberal intelligentsia saw the movement as the first opportunity to experiment with their socio-political ideas of liberal democracy. These intellectuals were basically Western educated and most of them had close ties with aristocratic members of the ruling class. The growth of these liberal ideals of democracy and guarantee of equality to all citizens was due more to the rising national consciousness against the foreign pressures and corrupt Qajar rule than to any serious enthusiasm for Western liberal philosophy (Cf. Gilbar, 1977: 276). This can be readily understood for many of these intellectuals, who came from respected families with moderate wealth and were influenced by foreign

revolutionaries either inside or outside of the country. Ferdows describes this group as:

... aristocrats who either received a part or their whole education in western countries; students trained in the Western oriented schools in Iran; the Iranian ambassadors and their sons who were exposed to Western ways of life; and finally those who were influenced by foreign revolutionaries either inside or outside the country.
(1966: 2)

Neither the participation of liberal intellectuals in the revolution, which was very important in the formation of political changes demanded by the revolutionaries, nor the contribution of the ulama to the mobilization of the masses individually could have generated "a strong movement for constitutional reform" (Gilbar, 1977: 282-3). It was the political and economic contributions of the big merchants (tujjar) which provided the movement with strong support and the material means to pursue its goals to a successful conclusion. The merchants encouraged the formation of the movement because their economic interests were threatened by the patrimonial grants of numerous concessions to imperial powers which deprived them of their traditional sources of revenue. They funded and actively participated in the movement with the hope of curtailing the despotic power of the Shah and of diminishing foreign intervention. To achieve their demands, the merchants even took refuge on the British Legation grounds, demanding a change of government and the promulgation of a code of laws. The religious leaders acted similarly by going to the shrine of Shah Abdul Azim.

The alliance of these various groups to develop a reformatory movement became articulate in 1906. While the patrimonial authority

blindly resented the demands for reforms, Britain, which was very much in control of Iranian politics at the time, saw any radical change as contrary to her interests. Thus, it attempted to prevent the radicalization of the movement by playing a mediatory role in persuading the Shah to pretend his willingness to establish a constitution. In August 1906, the Shah yielded and issued a farman (decree) authorizing the establishment of a 200-member Constitutional Assembly to draft a national constitution.(5) The first draft of the constitution was ratified by the Shah on December 30, 1906 (Kermani, 1967,III: 318).

The revolution succeeded in establishing a constitutional assembly in October 1906. The newly founded Constitutional Assembly, composed of guild members (26%), merchants (15%), the ulama (20%), the feudal aristocracy, civil servants, and a few professionals (the latter three making 40%) (Abrahamian, 1968: 196; 1969: 142) started its work seriously and made every attempt to reduce the prerogatives of the patrimonial authority, especially in the areas of state finance, thus freeing the state from financial dependence on the foreign loans. In its first actions, the Majles reduced the patrimonial allocations, eliminated its pensions, and cut off the pensions of some 2,000 courtiers. It also eliminated the system of farming out the taxes and established certain procedures for the collection of tax arrears by landowners (Shuster, 1912: xxi). Efforts were also made, by the bourgeois members of the Majles, to establish a National Bank of Persia, but they were sabotaged by feudal elements and their allies in the Majles (Abrahamian, 1969: 137).

The feudal aristocracy, conservative ulama, and the patrimonial authority were all opposed to the movement and the reforms proposed by Constitutionalists. Their demands also upset the Shah because they circumscribed his political powers, as well as the Russians and the British whose interests would be jeopardized. From the very beginning, the patrimonial authority's attitude towards the National Assembly was one of resentment. The clash came when the Assembly rejected the request for a new loan totalling 400,000 pounds of sterling from Great Britain and Russia. This angered the Shah and brought him to the conclusion that "Persia was not large enough for both the National Assembly and himself and that one or the other must go." (Sykes, 1951,II: 407)

In 1908, the new Shah, Mohammad Ali, supported by Russia and Britain and aided by the Cossack Brigade, declared martial law and ordered his forces to bombard the parliament with cannon fire. The military, under the direction of a Russian, Colonel Palkonik Liakhoff, the commanding officer of the Cossack Brigade, intervened and simply burnt down the Majles building. The result were uprisings and riots throughout the country (Browne, 1910: 201-6). The ensuing political chaos provided the Russians and Great Britain with another chance for directly intervening in the political developments of Iranian society. Soon after the suppression of the movement, Colonel Liakhoff became the military governor of Tehran, and Tabriz was invaded by Russia under the pretext of protecting "foreign rights and preproperty."

The Constitutionalists continued their fight and by late 1908 they were able to force the Shah to abdicate. In 1909, Ahmad Mirza,

the twelve-year old son of Mohammad Ali Shah, succeeded his father. New elections were held and the Majles and the National Assembly were opened again. However, it did not take long before the contradictions of the new Majles were exposed. The new Majles was torn by factionalism and class divisions. The members of the Second Majles represented basically the interests of two segments of the ruling class in Iran: (a) the new bourgeoisie favoring the development of socio-politico-economic institutions similar to those of Western countries, and (b) the feudal class demanding the preservation of the status quo and supporting the political and economic approaches derived from Islamic tradition.(6)

By 1911, the counterrevolutionary forces, including the feudal forces associated with the patrimonial household, patrimonial authority, and the comprador section of the bourgeoisie, had succeeded in undoing the revolutionary achievements of the movement. For the progressive elements participating in the movement, the revolution had failed. Even for the national bourgeoisie, their efforts for achieving political and economic hegemony over the comprador merchants and the landed nobility were aborted. In this early stage of capitalist development, the Iranian bourgeoisie was unable to completely seize the power of the state and still had to share political power with the landed nobility under the control of foreign powers. The Constitutionalist movement fell far short of the attainment of its revolutionary aspirations because of the composition of its class constituency. While "intellectuals" and the "ulama", as well as the "merchants" agreed in overthrowing the old regime, they did not find any consensus among themselves on the

precise means through which their goals could have been achieved. Neither did they share the same values and general socio-economic goals.

However, if the movement did not bring any changes in the lives of the masses who participated in the revolution and did not fulfill all the demands of the national bourgeoisie, it was still a positive achievement for the Iranian bourgeois class in general. It enabled this class to obtain concessions from the patrimonial authority and to gain some measure of control over those members of the landowning class who were closely associated to the patrimonial household. The Constitution, a liberal document, institutionalized private property and formally introduced the ideas of individual rights, freedom of speech, religion, and so on. More importantly, it gave recognition to the right of the bourgeois class to participate in the political system along with the nobles, the landowners, the religious leaders, and patrimonial family. According to article 30 of the Fundamental law, direct communication was to be established, through a committee consisting of the president of Assembly and six members representing different social classes, between the Shah and the Majles. Through such a communication, the bourgeois class expected to win the ear of the Shah and overcome the sole influence of the old feudal class upon the Shah's decisions.

11.5. Endnotes

(1) The concept of the "comprador bourgeoisie" in the underdeveloped societies was introduced and developed by Paul Baran (1975: 205-18). He saw this class as an integral part of the structure of imperialism, collaborating politically and economically with metropolitan capital and its institutions to facilitate, and participate in, the further exploitation of the "peripheries."

(2) It is reported that Fath Ali Shah had close to 2,000 children and grandchildren who would have amounted to 10,000 within the following twenty years: "Fifty-seven sons and forty-six daughters survived the Shah, as well as 296 grandsons and 292 granddaughters and 158 wives who had borne children to him." (Upton, 1970: 4)

(3) Here, we are referring to the position of religious groups as an occupational collectivity and not to individuals like Behbahani and Tabatabaee, who were on the progressive side of the movement.

(4) It is important to note that the ulama's opposition to patrimonial rule was not so much due to their concern for the deteriorating plight of the masses, for which they were partly responsible by providing the patrimonial rulers with the ideological legitimation and holding or controlling as many tracts of lands as the landowners. Although some religious reformists joined the opposition with certain progressive demands, the primary concern of ulama, as a whole, in their opposition to foreigners and patrimonial court was the political, economic, and cultural penetration of the West which was seen as a factor both undermining traditional Islamic culture as well as their the ulama's own culturally-grounded socio-politico-economic status. They saw the foreign influence as breaching their Islamic teachings and the despotic rule as threatening their positions of prominence. The Qajar government had

started to curb religious monopoly over legal matters by extending the urf courts as against the Sharia courts run by the ulama. Also, the establishment of modern school and the development of secular education were seen as a threat to ulama's control over the hearts and souls of the youth. These two areas of activity were traditionally preserved for religious groups and their secularization was not only to threaten the traditional status of the ulama, but to undermine the very ideological foundation upon which their position rested. But whatever the motivation of this group in participation in the movement, their ideological support for the revolution helped the mobilization of the poor classes.

(5) See the English version of the text of this farman in Davis, 1953.

(6) For a detailed information about the composition of the Second Majles, see Dolatabadi, 1952,III: 131-137 & 140-143. Also see Wilber, 1963:66.

CHAPTER XII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DEPENDENT CAPITALIST STATE AND THE MODERNIZATION OF PATRIMONIALISM

12.1. The Emergence of a Centralized Dependent Capitalist State

In the early twentieth century, although the Qajar rulers were able to suppress the revolutionary sector of the Constitutionalists, they proved incapable of establishing a strong centralized government necessary for the development of capitalist relations. Furthermore, the inability of the Qajar rulers during this period to resist Russian penetration from the north and to crush the growing progressive movements in the northern part of the country became a source of concern to the British and caused them to take anticipatory measures in securing their political and economic interests in Iran.

On February 21, 1921, a British backed coup d'etat was engineered by the journalist Seyyed Zia ud-Din Tabatabaee. Tabatabaee was the designer of this coup but it was Reza Khan, the commanding officer of the Iranian Cossack Brigade, who accomplished the coup and later succeeded in assuming the leadership of the country. There is a secret memorandum drafted by Sir Knatchbull-Hugessen which very clearly illustrates the support Reza Khan

received in his coup d'etat. The memorandum was submitted to the British Foreign Office and reads:

In long periods of disorders and weakness in the past we have had to adopt direct methods to protect our vital interests ... if [the] regime is suddenly overturned a republican form of government would never last in Persia, for Persia will never be belssed with an organized form of government unless it has a strong man at the center ... our course would not appear difficult --as soon as we were satisfied that the new Sovereign or President was in full control we should presumably open relations with him, the Oil Royalties would be paid in due course to him and things would go on as before. In the event of [chaos] it might become necessary to take precautionary measures to protect the oil fields but the Oil Royalties would give us an important hold. None of the aspirations to power would wish to risk prejudicing the prospects of abundant payments and, on our side, we should, I presume, be able to have the last word as to who the recipient of the Royalties should be. In such circumstances it would be most important that a clear understanding should exist between His Majesty's Gov't and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company that the royalties should only be paid to the candidate or conqueror approved by his Majesty's government. I presume this is already assured.(1)

In addition to being fearful of the Soviet influence on Iran, the British were also fearful of radical movements such as the Jangali and Khiabani revolts in the northern part of Iran. A centralized government, capable of suppressing revolutionary upheavals and of protecting the British interest vis-a-vis the Soviet influence was seen as the only alternative which "... would solve many difficulties and enable us [the British] to depart in peace and honor."(Ullman, 1972: 384) This intention was clearly stated by Major General Sir Edmond, the British officer commanding the North Persian Force. He advocated a policy of creating " a military dictatorship which would impose sufficient order to the Persian

armed forces to prevent a Soviet invasion." (Ibid.) As Ullman has discussed, the candidate for implementation of this policy was Reza Khan:

It is idle to speculate upon whether or not he [Reza Khan] would eventually have come to power had Ironside not assigned him out; but it is clear that Ironside and his British colleagues were largely instrumental in placing Reza Khan in a position to bring about the coup d'etat of 21 February 1921 which put effective power into his hands." (Ibid.: 385)

Capitalism could not develop in Iran until there was a centralized government which was strong enough to maintain a reasonable degree of law and order. The development of capitalist activities depended upon a government for the provision of an arena in which trade, commerce, and industry could be carried on in a rational and non-belligerent manner.

On December 16, 1925, Reza Khan declared himself the Shah of Iran and founded the Pahlavi Dynasty (Cf. Elwell-Sutton, 1941: 70-1). Following the consolidation of his power, Reza Shah reasserted the authority of the state over the feudal khans and tribal elements. He attempted to extend the capabilities of the state through the centralization of political power thus diminishing the politico-economic instability created by pastoral, feudal, and religious forces. He subdued the power of both the ulama and the tribal forces, crushed the progressive movements in northern Iran, and suppressed peasant and working class demands for better life chances and living standards.

Reza Shah's first and foremost concern was with the army. Upon seizing power, he immediately reorganized the armed forces with the

help of a French military mission (Cf. Groseclose, 1947: 120; Haas, 1961: 151; and Banani, 1961: 54-5). Between 1921 and 1941, his military budget exceeded total governmental expenditures (Banani, Ibid.: 57). In 1925, he asked for, and registered, a military conscription law demanding that all males reaching the age of 21 serve two years in the army. The advancement of the capabilities of the army and its extension received the highest priority. This was partly due to the authoritarian nature of Reza Shah's rule and partly due to the developmental requirements of a social system at the beginning of its capitalist accumulation. Such a process required strength in order to establish order and stability. The primitive accumulation of capital in underdeveloped countries is based on the utilization of organized force. In these societies, which are going through economic transformation, as Marx argued (1967, I), coercion becomes an economic force in the process of the transformation of a pre-capitalist mode into a capitalist one.

Reza Shah's government was essentially a military dictatorship whose ruthless domination brought it close to being a totalitarian regime (Lambton, 1946: 266). He initiated a so-called "modernization program" which, as Abrahamian (1968: 189) has suggested, was a channel through which "Oriental Despotism" was reintroduced. This modernization program was directed at both state-building and nation-building. Reza Shah tried to extend the scope of control of the central government to peripheral regions in the country. He also tried to create a limited politico-cultural cohesion among the various ethnic, cultural, and religious groups in the country.

During this period, the state undertook the historical task of providing an adequate condition for capitalist accumulation within a world system framework. Among the first laws Reza Shah established was one for voluntary registration of properties and documents, which was put in effect in 1922 (Cf. Banani, 1961:70). The law provided an important basis for the development of new commercial activities as well as for the strengthening of the right to private ownership. Banks were established, which were given a monopoly over issuing bank notes. Government departments were reorganized and the first systematic national budget was instituted. Factories were built and firms were founded to provide a variety of products ranging from foodstuffs and consumer goods to building materials and munitions. Private undertakings in industry were encouraged and financed by the government. Government monopolies were created to handle foreign trade. The government also financed a series of construction projects including the Trans-Iranian Railway, modern port installations in the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, and thousands of miles of new roads.

Among these projects, the development of a modern transportation system also played an important role in the further development of capitalism in Iran. The development of a new transportation system aided the growth of industrial activities and business interactions. It facilitated the development of a national network of capitalist activities reaching out to all corners of the country. It allowed for the shipping of large amounts of goods both inside and outside of the country, thus helping the expansion of trade activities.

The undertaking of many of these developmental projects was also politically motivated. For instance, the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway was not based on any rational economic basis because it neither connected Iran with any international railway network nor passed through any major city except Tehran and Ahvaz. From an economic standpoint, the project was far from a profitable undertaking (Cf. Bharier, 1971: 206-7). Its importance lay only in the political and strategic benefits it had for the central government because it connected the capital with the most turbulent parts of the country, thus enabling it to subdue the centrifugal forces.

Reza Shah's modernization programs were a necessary step in the development of a process which was to be completed later during the rule of his son in the 1960s. His economic policies facilitated the process of capital accumulation and the development of the Iranian bourgeoisie. His absolutist rule paved the way for capitalist development by building an economic infrastructure and a strong centralized civil bureaucracy, establishing codified bourgeois laws insuring the security of private property, and providing a secured and unified market for Western products. The centralized state created in this period was to impose capitalist relations on a feudal structure from above. This was done through state intervention in the economy. As a dependent class, subservient to both foreign capital and patrimonial despotism, the Iranian bourgeoisie was not able to complete the process of capitalist development by relying on its own resources alone. Since the Iranian economy was dependent on the world capitalist system, an

independent course of capitalist development was impossible. Whatever course this path was to take was to be determined by the structural conditions governing the world capitalist system. Like other peripheral states in the Third World, the Iranian state was assigned the task of providing an institutional and ideological framework within which capitalism could develop. The establishment of a modern army, a strong police, and a centralized civil administration provided the comprador capitalists with the appropriate means of repressing internal opposition to the intensification of capitalist exploitation. It was these early efforts of Reza Shah which provided a foundation for the expansion of capitalist relations during the later rule of his son Mohammad Reza.

12.2. The Modernization of Patrimonialism

Although during the nineteenth century the Iranian social formation experienced the commercialization of its social relations, its power structure remained pre-capitalist, i.e., patrimonial. Feudal agrarian relations and capitalist industrial relations were articulated in a totality dominated by the patrimonial authority. It was in the interest of world capitalism to preserve the non-capitalist agrarian and political relations within the Iranian social formation.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, British colonial policy solidified the existing patrimonial structure of Iranian society. Instead of transforming the old patrimonial

structure, the British colonialism attempted to further bureaucratize the patrimonial social relations. The bureaucratization of patrimonial despotism required the state to establish a legal-rational administrative system within which property relations could be legalized. This rationalization and legalization of private property relations was a necessary process in the formation and development of dependent capitalist productive relations.

The structural changes taking place in the area of power relations in this period can be best characterized as the "modernization of patrimonialism." The modernization of patrimonial structure actually started during the Safavid rule and was followed more urgently by the Qajar rulers. However, it was not until the first quarter of the twentieth century, when Reza Shah started the process of capitalist state formation, that this process achieved momentum. It was in the early 1930s that the new state felt it necessary to accompany its centralization programs with bureaucratization and institution-building. The formalization of the social relations of production and the legalization of private property and social contract were important prerequisites for the capital accumulation under way at the time. New structures had to be created, if the state was going to successfully help the development of a modern capitalist private sector. Reza Shah's reformist policies of developing a modern administrative structure for the patrimonial state represented a process in which a "legal-rational" social relationship gradually encroached upon "traditional" forms of social relations (Cf. Weber, 1978: 212-301).

That process is illustrated for example in the formation of modern bureaucratic structures of the military, civil services, educational institutions, and police machineries (Cf. Banani, 1961).

However, the implementation of these legal-rational measures was based upon existing "traditional" forms of administration characterizing patrimonial despotism. The modern structure was set up, but the offices were occupied basically by the members of the old ruling class. The ruling class did not change its world outlook and simply adjusted to and fitted itself into the new offices. These offices were established on a rational-legal basis in the Western mold, but were filled with a traditional elite who ran them in a personalistic manner. In this sense, then, the bureaucratic institution of the state did not represent a rational organization of political behavior. State bureaucracy was often unstable and conflictual due to the arbitrary use of the power of personality and the exercise of leadership.(2) Members of the patrimonial household usually demanded that the incumbents of the governmental bureaucracy mobilize resources in the service of their interests and goals.

As far as the bureaucratic nature of Iranian patrimonialism was concerned, it can be argued that while it was huge and extended, it was primitive and still under the influence of traditions. The legal-rational basis of bureaucratic organization was subordinated to the requirements of patrimonial despotism and to the religious institution of Sharia (religious laws). Organizational functions lacked specificity and depended very much on the politico-economic contingencies emanating from the Asiatic nature of patrimonial despotism. As Weber put it:

Jurisdiction was determined most of the time by compromises among those interested ... not primarily and never solely by rational considerations.(1978: 1029)

The office-holders were not given the necessary authority to act upon the requirements of their social position because "the ruler's personal discretion" delimited their jurisdiction. To make important decisions, they had to refer the matter to the patrimonial court. The patrimonial despot acted upon the matter on an ad hoc basis without any consideration for organizational continuity. Recruitment was based on the political requirements of the patrimonial court rather than on the technical requirements of the offices. The distinction between the personal and the professional, and the private and the official were blurred. Thus, the selection of officials was, as Weber put it, "based on personal trust, not on technical qualifications." (1978: 1030) The Shah often shifted the officials from one post to another regardless of their background and the nature of the offices. With some exceptions, the rule of specialization and training was overlooked in favor of loyalty and obedience. The office-holders served at the pleasure of the patrimonial despot and often performed tasks unrelated to their appointments. Finally, the offices were regarded as a source for revenue-raising. The office-holders saw their positions as a means of increasing their income and not a basis for their functions. As Curzon mentions of the Qajar bureaucracy, the "... office is the common avenue to wealth...." (1966:443)

12.3. Entnotes

(1) Foreign Office 371/E 906/239/34 Nr. 279, January 1936.
Page 7. Quoted in Rezun, 1980: 122.

(2) For further account of this type of bureaucratic pattern see Michel Crozier, The Bureaucratic Phenomenon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) and Alvin Gouldner, Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1954).

13. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This research proposed to investigate (i) the nature of the Iranian pre-capitalist social relations and (ii) the genesis of dependent capitalism in Iran within a "world-system" framework. Each of these issues involved two research questions. With regard to the nature of pre-capitalist Iran, it was proposed (a) that the Iranian pre-capitalist infrastructure can be best explained by a framework which views societies as "social formations"; (b) that the power structure of the Iranian pre-capitalist society can be best explained by using Weber's concept of patrimonialism and Marx's concept of Asiatic Despotism. With regard to the genesis of dependent capitalism in Iran, it was argued (a) that the rivalry of European commercial forces in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for the control of Iranian products and markets marked the beginning of the process of early incorporation of the Iranian economy into the emerging capitalist world system; (b) that the patrimonial power structure of the Iranian society, in addition to the Western imperialism, was also a determining factor in the

underdevelopment of the Iranian capitalist class.

After reviewing various approaches to the nature of pre-capitalist Iran, this research rejected the unilinear model of pre-capitalist development and argued that "feudalism" represented but one aspect of the Iranian pre-capitalist society, not the only mode of production existing in pre-capitalist Iran. This thesis argued that societies do not necessarily consist of one pure mode of production, but instead are often characterized by various forms of socio-economic relationships. These relationships, at least in the Iranian case, were contradictory in the sense that they did not represent a homogeneous form of socio-economic activities and relations. This work suggested that the application of the concept of "social formation" provides a better theoretical tool for understanding this multiplicity of socio-economic relations in Iranian society. Such an application allowed this author to identify various modes of production existing in the Iranian pre-capitalist period and, to specify the nature of these productive modes --their corresponding power structure, and their constituent elements as well as of their function. It also enabled this researcher to explain the working of these various modes in the historical context and of their position and importance within the Iranian social formation.

In the Iranian context, this thesis characterized the Iranian pre-capitalist social relations as an "Asiatic social formation" in order to distinguish its peculiar nature from that of European social formations. This Asiatic social formation consisted of slave, mercantile, nomadic, feudal, and Asiatic social relations.

Each of these different forms of social relations was in contradiction with one or more of the other social relations. Nomads remained in constant war with settled agrarian communities. The landed class was shown to be in constant struggle with the patrimonial king over the control of the lands as well as of agricultural surplus. The merchant class found the patrimonial court an obstacle in its efforts to become an autonomous bourgeois class.

Despite these tensions, the coexistence of these disparate social relations was made possible by the integrative function of the state in the Iranian pre-capitalist social formation. The state came to represent a balancing force in coordinating the major productive activities and regulating the mechanisms of production in the society. The Iranian patrimonial state represented a higher entity dominating all social classes in society and controlling all natural and human resources. By taking on the task of the provision and distribution of water and land resources, the state was able to centrally control all the land in the country. These lands were assigned to various individuals or groups in lieu of their service to the state and were taken back whenever the state deemed it appropriate.

The study of the Iranian irrigation system, and rural and urban structures indicated that the most dominant productive feature of the Iranian society until the late sixteenth century was the domination of the state over the landed aristocratic class. Such a domination became possible through monopolization of control over all the land, the entrepreneurial role of the state in the provision

and regulation of the water supply, and the state's domination of city and town structures. This monopolization of control over the surplus value by the state prevented the growth of competing proper economic classes and led to the underdevelopment of the Iranian bourgeoisie. The state was a patrimonial state dominated by the whims and wishes of arbitrary, absolute, and patriarchal despots.

This thesis argued that these Asiatic features of the Iranian social formation remained dominant until the overthrow of the Safavid state. During the late Safavid period, the state faced major social, political, and economic crises which gave way to the decline of Asiatic social relations and provided an opportunity for the feudal forces to achieve dominancy. Such a dominancy meant the further exploitation of peasants and the disintegration of the Iranian patrimonial state.

This change in the infrastructure of the Iranian society was also affected by the commercial penetration of the European East India Companies into the Iranian Safavid society. The early incorporation of the Iranian economy into the world capitalist system during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries made Iranian society vulnerable to its subsequent political and economic domination by the European imperial powers. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the expansion of foreign trade and capital investment resulted in the decline, and in some cases the destruction, of indigenous manufacturing. The Iranian economy became a "peripheral entity" inextricably linked to the Western metropolitan economies. It became structurally so dependent on the forces of production in the West that the only form of economic

development available to peripheral Iranian capitalism was that allowed by these Western countries.

This research has attempted to develop a comprehensive perspective of the historical development of Iranian history. The framework developed for this purpose enabled this researcher to go beyond the unilinear models of historical development and to more adequately conceptualize the complexity of the social relations of production in both pre-capitalist and capitalist Iran. To substantiate this theoretical perspective, a historical account of the nature and characteristics of these social relations was provided. However, it should be acknowledged that the accounts given on the development of dependent capitalism during the Qajar and Pahlavi periods are to be regarded as an outline of the general historical trends taking place in these periods. Much work remains to be done on the social, political, cultural, and economic developments in these two periods. More specifically, there is a need for more detailed study of the forms of capital formation, the commercialization of agriculture, the development of industrial sector, the patterns of class formation and class struggle, foreign investment and foreign aid, technology transfer and technological dependency, cultural dependency and political repression and so on within the last fifty years of Iranian history. The omission of these issues has been due to the limited resources and time this author has had. However, these are important issues to be addressed in future research.

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