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**Historical Impediments to the Development of Agricultural
Production in Pre-capitalist Rural Iran; Absentee Landlordism**

by
HAMID ABDOLLAHYAN

**A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

Ottawa, Ontario

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Historical Impediments to the Development of Agricultural
Production in Precapitalist Rural Iran: Absentee Landlordism

submitted by

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers an explanation for the underdevelopment of the rural economy of Iran prior to the 1962 land reform. With a historical approach to the cause of surplus extraction and consequent underdevelopment of rural Iran the dissertation examines current studies on the pre-capitalist agrarian structures in Iran. While most studies concerned with pre-capitalist formations in the East and in Iran use either the Asiatic model or the western feudal model or the notion of low-productivity to explain underdevelopment in rural areas, this study reveals that these conditions are really a consequence of surplus extraction. The inability of these other models to explain these rural problems is a consequence of their attribution of uniform pre-capitalist formations in Iran through time. This dissertation takes a different direction by trying to identify whether or not the pre-capitalist formations were diverse or uniform.

The Asiatic model requires that the state be viewed as an absolute political power; this study, however, indicates that the state as a political superstructure in pre-capitalist Iran had serious limitations in its power, especially in rural areas. As a result, the class structure is used to replace the state in the analysis of pre-capitalist agrarian structures. In addition, a review of urban-rural relations through an analysis of class structure focussing on the rise of absentee landlords is presented.

The final point of this dissertation is that the absentee landlords, as the dominant classes, extracted surplus through engagement in sharecropping, the traditional method for harvesting and crop division between landlords and the peasantry in Iran.

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I would also like to thank Professor Safi-nejad, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tehran for his insights. I made Three trips to Iran between 1991 and 1994 to collect data and information. I visited various libraries including Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Economics of University of Tehran, central library of University of Tehran, Institute for Cultural Studies (Ministry of Higher Education), Agricultural Bank, the Centre of Rural Studies, Plan and Budget Organization, Statistical Center of Iran, and Ministry of Agriculture, hence, I would like to thank the staff of these libraries for being very helpful.

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Introduction:

Surplus extraction from rural Iran by the non-rural forces in the pre-1962 period and the consequent underdevelopment of rural Iran is the central theme of this dissertation. In order to study surplus extraction I will examine the formation of absentee landlords with a particular emphasis on the formation of merchant-landlords and their role in agriculture.

Some refer to the merchants and their role in cash-crop (opium) production in the late 19th century (Gilbar, 1977, 1978) and some refer to the merchants as a potential capitalist force which failed to become the Iranian bourgeoisie (e.g. Ashraf, 1978, Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981). Their role as merchant-landlords who penetrated rural Iran in the late 19th century and continued to affect the structure of agricultural production, however, has been neglected. I see their role to be especially important in connecting the rural economy to the urban economy, a connection that resulted in the exploitation of the rural economy prior to the 1962 land reform in Iran.

Rural Iran prior to the late 19th century was dominated by the landholders (tuyul-holders), as the prime beneficiaries of land who were granted temporary landholding rights in return for their services to the state, and sharecropping (the traditional tenure system) regulated the relations between these dominant classes and the peasants. In the late 19th century, landholding began to be transformed into private landownership because the state began the sale of state lands to private landlords (primarily urban merchants). A major fraction of big merchants began to buy up land, hence, as tuyul land (landholding rights granted by the state) gradually

disappeared, landownership developed. This process which continued until the 1962 land reform did not, however, alter the sharecropping system. The merchants, now part of the absentee landlord's group, entered the sharecropping contracts with the peasants which resulted in extraction of surplus product. It is my contention that under these circumstances the merchants as part of the absentee landowning class became involved in extraction of surplus from the rural economy which caused a noticeable underdevelopment in rural areas prior to the 1962 land reform.

The question of pre-capitalist Iran has been approached in Marxist and non-Marxist literature. I show that the Marxists apply a uniform mode of production, i.e., feudalism or Asiatic, to the history of pre-capitalism in Iran (Chapter One). I argue that neither the concept of feudalism nor Asiatic mode explains rural underdevelopment because the Marxists do not employ, in their analysis, the specificity of rural-urban relations in socio-economic formations of pre-capitalist Iran. In fact, they overlook this specificity. The Marxists have neglected the fact that prior to 1962, the exploitative relations between the urban and rural economies contributed to a differential development process in the urban and rural areas. It is my contention that understanding this differential development process is possible after taking into account the fact that the history of pre-capitalist Iran was not a uniform history. I also show that the non-Marxists place a great emphasis on low-productivity in agriculture and conceptualize this low-productivity in relation to the internal factors of agricultural production. A thorough examination of the urban-rural relations and the role of the merchants in agriculture is absent in this approach. As a result, the

question of rural underdevelopment has not been posited by the non-Marxists to be the result of a structural relationship between the rural and urban economies

To study rural-urban exploitative relations and consequent rural underdevelopment, my analysis begins with the original debates on the Asiatic mode. Marx's works on the Asiatic system sparked the debate on the nature of modes of production in pre-capitalist Iran. An important element of the Asiatic mode, the nature of the absolutist state in pre-capitalist Iran, is examined in Chapter Two to suggest that class relations provides a rather better alternative for an analysis of surplus extraction in pre-capitalist Iran. This will be followed by a class typology of national and local classes

Having suggested the significance of class relations as the major source of economic and political power of the classes vis-a-vis the state, i.e., the extent of land controlled or owned by the non-governmental agents will be studied in Chapter Three. We begin by examining the development of private land and its particular form, i.e., absenteeism in pre-capitalist Iran. In the late 19th century this was accompanied by the involvement of the urban merchants in landownership. In fact, involvement of the merchants in landownership is considered as a facilitator of the exploitative relations between the rural and urban economies

To show the consequences of these exploitative relations, the land tenure system in which extraction of product took place and was based on sharecropping is studied in Chapter Four. The important point in this debate is the continuity of sharecropping both under landholding and landowning systems. Bonehs, the unit of

production in which sharecropping was practiced, will be the focus of this study where we identify modes of extraction of surplus

Finally, in Chapter Five we will focus on commercialized agriculture as we show the marketing of the extracted surplus which was transferred by the dominant classes to the urban areas. This part will provide data to indicate the significance of surplus production in the overall development processes in pre-capitalist Iran

It should be noted that, for this research I made three trips to Iran in 1991, 1992 and in December 1993. On the last trip I visited professor Safi-nejad at the Faculty of Social Sciences (Tehran University) who is a long-time expert in bonehs and irrigation systems in Iran. I also visited libraries of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Agricultural Bank, the Statistical Centre of Iran, the University of Tehran's main library, the University of Tehran's Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Economics¹, the Center of Cultural Studies (Ministry of Higher Education), the Center of Rural Studies (Ministry of Agriculture), and the Plan and Budget Organization

The materials that have been used in this research could be divided into primary and secondary sources. The major primary sources were the records and other data I gathered from the various centres etc I visited in Iran. Among the secondary sources perhaps the most important for this study were the writings of Lambton and Safi-nejad. Lambton's 1969b and 1987 books played a significant role in providing information with regard to the land tenure system in Iran prior to the 1962 land

¹ Although Faculty of Social Sciences and also Faculty of Economics are part of Tehran University they are located outside of Tehran University and they both have their own libraries

reform. Safi-nejad's works, especially his 1989 book on the bonehs, are among the best known sources with regard to the question of bonehs in Iran and also the question of irrigation systems. In terms of field research, a set of studies carried out by the Research Group and Ata-ee were published in the Persian Journal of Tahqiqat-e Eqtesadi to which I had a full access from volume one (1965) to volume 18 (1969). The results of these studies were of immense importance. The research findings of these studies were a decided asset because they deal with the changes that various elements of the tenure system underwent between the 1950s and 1960s by providing examples from individual villages. This is in addition to other reports which were published in this serial. Also I should refer to Hooman's work which helped in various issues such as historical development of private land and land tenure systems. Hooman's work was of considerable assistance particularly in the historical development of private land and land tenure systems, as was his treatment of the variety of crop division methods between landlords and peasants (Ibid:297-312). The studies by Khosravi, Safi-nejad, Ajami and Abdollaev on land tenure in Iran which appeared in the Journal of Nameh-ye Olum-e Ejtema-ee in the 1970s were also very helpful. Earlier works by Stack (an 1882 travel report) and by Jamalzadeh (1917 published in 1983) were also of considerable value. Also, Gilbar's (1977 and 1978) articles about the commercialization of agriculture and the role of the merchants in 19th century Iran and Issawi's (1971) collection of useful data and information about economic conditions of Iran in various periods were of considerable help.

Those secondary sources which contributed to the theoretical and analytical

work in this study include Foran's 1993 book, Vali's 1993 book, Lahsaiezadeh's 1984 thesis and his 1990 book, Amid's 1990 book, Motazed's 1988 book, Nakhaie's 1986 thesis, Keshavarz's translation of Petroshevski's books published in 1984 and 1966, Bonine's 1981 book, Momeni's 1980 book, Ashraf's 1982, 1981, 1978, 1974 and 1967 articles.

It should be noted that in Chapter One where considerable space is devoted to a discussion of Marxist scholars' views it is not Marx's work which is under discussion but that of his adherents.

Chapter One

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

1.1 The Peasantry of Iran: Historical Specificities of Pre-Capitalist Agrarian Structures and Conceptual Dilemmas of the Development Literature

Two objectives will be traced in this chapter: 1) in section 1.1 and 1.2 a review of the Marxist and non-Marxist literature on Iran will be provided in an attempt to examine critically the discourse of pre-capitalist agrarian structures. It is contended that their models of studying pre-capitalist Iran do not address rural-urban relations; and, 2) in section 1.3 an attempt will be made to construct another model for studying pre-capitalist Iran focussing on urban-rural relations and the relationship between absentee landlords and merchant's capital.

The existing literature² characterises Iran's agrarian structures with the purpose of making them fit into the existing models, i.e., Marxist models (feudalist or Asiatic) or non-Marxist ones (stagnant agriculture). An argument will be provided which will delineate the implications of these types of treatment of pre-capitalist structures. This review will inform my future argument on rural Iran in the sense that it will discuss how the historical specificities³ (that may be present in almost all societies⁴ but

² I will review it in accordance with the perspectives and their chronological emergence.

³ Vafadari (1979:80-94) for example examines the interpretations of the history of East by non-Easterners to reveal the historians' negligence of the specificities of the East. Although he becomes trapped in the Asiatic thesis (i.e., he reproduces the interpretations) he shows the vitality of the specificities in understanding the East.

⁴ Bernstein (1979 421) investigates the specific historical conditions, for example, of agrarian question in sub-Saharan Africa.

focusing here on Iran) provide grounds to argue that various socio-economic structures may function differently. I will try to show that the existing literature has failed to address the critical question of surplus extraction from the particulars of Iranian urban-rural relations. It should be noted that in reviewing the sources, a wide range of arguments will be covered but an emphasis will be placed on the manner in which they approach the question of the characterization of pre-capitalist formations in Iran.

The conceptual importance of peasant societies in social science disciplines, especially sociology, has encouraged research studies for many years, the results of which have enriched social theory. Marx as one of the first and major scholars whose work has been closely examined in a number of social science disciplines conceptualized the peasant societies (i.e., a transitional stage) as one of his theoretical tools for theorizing about industrial societies. In the immediate post World War Two period when the development discourse was strong the peasantry and its transitional role became even more subject to study. It can be said that in the 1980s and 1990s there has been a shift of interest from theorising the transitional role of peasantry in the history of social evolution towards examining the effects of the application of developed social theories such as Marxian development theories and modernization theories. For instance, numerous books have been published in Iran and elsewhere dealing with the place of Iranian peasantry in social theory; a number of them will be dealt with here⁵. Lambton (1969b)⁶, as an initial attempt, described how the Iranian

⁵ The most well-known example of Marxist work in this case was The History of Iran written by the Iranologists of the former Soviet Union which was translated into Persian by Keshavarz first in 1968 and was republished in 1984.

agricultural enterprise operated prior to the 1950s. Although descriptive her work was the first attempt to describe the specificities of a society that, as Ashraf (1967) and Sodagar (1990:34-45) indicate⁷, Marx and Engels desired to put into their conceptual framework. A major contribution of her work was her questioning of the application of feudalism to Iranian peasantry (Lambton, 1969b:53)⁸. In this sense, Lambton's critique of the application of the notion of feudalism to Iran was an indication of her recognition of the significance of Iranian peasantry in the history of Iran's social system as a distinct peasantry. No matter what her concerns were for making such a distinction between the Iranian peasantry and the peasantry of European feudalism, her work indicated that theoretical problems concerning the peasantry were of major concern in 1950s' academic research⁹.

In the 1980s and the 1990s, however, the trend toward recognition and theorization of peasantry has been gradually replaced by concerns over the issue of peasantry in the post-transformation era (i.e., after the development projects of the 1950s and 60s such as land reforms which resulted in the transformation of the peasantry in the Third World)¹⁰. Despite this shift of interest¹¹, the question of Iranian

⁶ It was first published in 1953.

⁷ These are two examples in which Marx's and Engels's desire for theorizing Asiatic societies (including Iran) has been described.

⁸ See also Ashraf (1967:23,25); Lambton (1987:33); Lambton (1971a:52-53).

⁹ She did not alter her assumptions about pre-capitalist rural Iran and in her most recent work she repeated that the pre-capitalist formations were not a feudal type (e.g. Lambton, 1987:33).

¹⁰ Lahsaiezadeh's (1984) modes of production approach and Nakhaie's (1986) Orthodox Marxist approach are examples from Iran. Stavenhagen's (1981) work is another example in the Latin American context, more sources can be found with regard to Latin American context but it is not the concern of

peasantry in the pre-capitalist period, nevertheless, remains in an ambivalent place even in today's social theorizing. The most recent attempts were made by Sodagar (1990) and Vali (1993) whose works, as will be reviewed later, are examples of an ongoing argument over the nature of pre-capitalist social formations in Iran.

Iran's peasantry has been treated as a feudal society¹² (Turner, 1984; Hooglund, 1982:10; Keshavarz, 1984) and/or as a variant of the Asiatic Mode of Production¹³ (e.g. Alatas, 1993:473-96). Ashraf (1967:18-19) rejects the similarity of Iranian socio-economic structures to that of European and argues that "Iranian society has been moving between three ideal types as follows; feudalism, Asiatic mode and Moluko-tawa-yefi"¹⁴. In the more recent works on rural Iran the argument still continues. Nomani (cited by Foran, 1993:40) terms the pre-capitalist formation in Iran 'specifically Iranian feudalism' or 'Asiatic feudalism' or 'feudal nomad formation'. Vali (1993) calls it Iranian feudalism. The following argument is a review of this literature; it is an attempt to identify those aspects of peasantry in Iran which have not been addressed as yet. It is contended that these aspects may provide a set of

the debate here. See also Stavenhagen (1975).

¹¹ This was a shift from theorizing the peasantry to analyzing the post-transitional peasantry.

¹² Demin (1971:221) finds it a system dominated by 'semi-feudal' landlords. Shaygannik (1985:80) also argues that the post-Islamic period was dominated by semi-feudal property relations in which the lords had partial rights to the land which could be denied by the king.

¹³ An example of classifying the pre-capitalist Iran as a variant of Asiatic mode can be found in Abrahamian's Oriental Despotism in which he suggests the dominance of despotism until the 20th century (Abrahamian, 1974:9).

¹⁴ Moluko-tawa-yefi is a system that includes the tribal intervention in the political system. Ashraf (1967:18) maintains these interventions created a constellation of relations that are important in analyzing the above structures.

analytical tools for understanding the Iranian peasantry. Among them, urban-rural relations (and the dominance of absentee landlords) are considered historically important as one of the tools that can be used to account for the cause of agricultural backwardness.

1.1.1 Marx's Asiatic Concept and its Application to Iran:

Adam Smith, John Stewart Mill and Richard Jones were among the first to distinguish the socio-economic structures of Eastern societies by referring to a lack of internal dynamism in Asiatic systems (Sodagar, 1990:37-8; Ashraf, 1967:3,5)¹⁵. Then Marx, in 1859, with the knowledge of the previous works tried to theorize the specific type of social structure that existed in the East (Ashraf, 1967:5). In his first attempts he considered the Asiatic mode as a historical phase that was also present in the history of Mexico and Peru (Ibid:6). The lack of private ownership¹⁶ of land and also the lack of conflict between city and countryside were considered to be the most important characteristics of the Asiatic mode (Ibid:6-7). The interesting point in Marx's work is that he initially considered the Asiatic mode as a separate stage in his theory of historical evolution (Ibid:6). It had a theoretical outcome for him, because he considered the possibility of evolution from an Asiatic mode to a feudal mode; i.e. a multilinear evolution (Ashraf, 1967:8; see also Sodagar, 1990:35). Later, the Asiatic mode of production was eliminated from Marx's theory of historical evolution

¹⁵ See also Taylor (1979:25-33) for further descriptions of the structural functionalist perspective which includes Smith's input.

¹⁶ See also Melotti (1977:54) first published in 1972.

(Sodagar, 1990:39).

In the 20th century's Marxian literature on Iran, the scholars felt obliged to consider the assumption of unilinear¹⁷ socio-economic evolution and conducted research on Iran on that basis (e.g. Ashraf, 1967:19-20; Keshavarz, 1984)¹⁸. The most outstanding of these was the work of Petroshevski and his co-authors who remained faithful to Marx's five stages of historical evolution (see Keshavarz, 1984)¹⁹. This obligation to stay true to Marx appears to have originated from the political apparatus of the former Soviet Union especially in Stalin's era (see Ashraf, 1967:11,13, Ashraf, 1970:309; Nakhaie, 1986:39)²⁰. On the one hand, this tendency contributed to the application of the notion of feudalism to pre-capitalist formations in Iran. On the other hand, despite the elimination of the Asiatic mode from Marx's theory of historical evolution and its absence in Marxian literature for a century²¹, it occupied an important place in the conceptualization of Eastern societies including Iran. Dunn

¹⁷ Unilinear in the sense that all societies go through the same stages. In the case of Iran, the concern of Marxists was to show that Iran was not any different and therefore its pre-capitalist stage was feudal or some variation of it. Vali (1993:5-12) indicates that a lack of Marxist literature in the first half of the 20th century and the formation of Tudeh Party in 1941 which was supported by the Soviets dictated Soviet historiography on Iran based on unilinear discourse.

¹⁸ A book on the history of Iran was published by the former Soviet Union scholars and was translated by Keshavarz in 1967 and published by the institute for Research and Studies in Social Science, University of Tehran. Its Fifth Edition was used in this dissertation and due to numerous contributors to this book I cite only the name of the translator, but the full names of the original authors have been provided in the bibliography.

¹⁹ Petroshevski is one of the authors who wrote the book on history of Iran.

²⁰ Hindess and Hirst (1975:178-79) refer to the rejection of Marxism-Leninism of the concept on theoretical and political grounds. Also see Dunn (1982) and Vali (1993:5-6) for more details.

²¹ Anderson (1974:111) refers to his time as a period when this notion was revived.

(1982) indicates that controversy over the application of Asiatic mode to Eastern societies among former Soviet scholars was an indication of this importance (also, Hindess and Hirst, 1975:178). We will review the Marxist literature and application of the notion of 'feudalism' and 'Asiatic mode' to the case of Iran.

Before going further, it should be noted that one of the most important missing elements in the debates on rural Iran which is evident in the post World-War-Two literature is a lack of consideration of the differentiation of the historical periods²². This differentiation, it is my contention, would have resulted in the development of a different approach for the case of pre-capitalist Iran. The period before the 1962 land reform is often considered as a single specific type of pre-capitalist mode of production (e.g. Katouzian, 1981)²³. There are periods in the history of Iran, however, that do not necessarily correspond to a specific mode of production. As Foran (1993:26) argues, sometimes several modes of production co-existed. This is not reflected in the work of Petroshevski (and his other co-authors as the major contributors in this field) who reviewed Iran's history and argued that the period between 224 A.D. and 1906 marks the dominance of feudalism or centralized feudalism and began to disintegrate in the 19th century (Keshavarz, 1984:563; Ashraf, 1967:20-21)²⁴.

²² Vali (1993:5) argues that despite the introduction of Marxism in the early decades of the current century "... Systematic debates on the periodization of Iranian history began only in the late 1960s".

²³ Lahsaiezadeh (1990:41) refers to the period of pre-1962 in which feudal large landownership was one of the dominant forms of landownership

²⁴ It means a disintegration by the external forces

In general, a period of sixteen centuries (224-1906) is considered to be the era of feudalism in Iran (Vali, 1993:11)²⁵. And, the present century represents a period of the growth of national or dependent bourgeoisie that is wiping out the remains of the feudalist era (Keshavarz, 1984; Ashraf, 1967:20-21 and 1978:309). A clear distinction between periods during which urban and rural economies were distinguishable based on the representatives of various socio-economic structures (and not one specific mode of production), however, is absent in the work of these former Soviet scholars

In recent works, Petroshevski's twofold periodization is challenged. Vali (1993:xviii) for example, distinguishes pre-capitalist Iran as Iranian feudalism (as opposed to the general term of feudalism). Also, he considers a shorter period (1050 to 1906) to be the era of Iranian feudalism reflected in a form of land assignment called the *Iqta* system (Ibid).

The periodization of pre-capitalist social formations has always created considerable confusion. The repercussion of this confusion might be on the way the fundamentals of socio-economic relations have been treated. For example, the former Soviet scholars overlooked the periods (such as pre-tenth century)²⁶ to which the characteristics of a feudal mode were not necessarily applicable²⁷. Even Petroshevski

²⁵ Nakhaie (1986:84) also considers the period prior to the 20th century as a feudal period. Based on definition of Strayer and Coulborn (1956:4-5) which define feudalism as a method of government between lord and vassal, Brundage (1956:93-119) even considers ancient Iran as a feudal period.

²⁶ If one intends to attribute feudalism to pre-capitalist Iran, it would be more logical to accept the discourse of Vali (1993) in which *Iqta* is considered to have developed as a result of political disintegration in the 10th century which strengthened property rights.

²⁷ Foran (1993:40) refutes even application of feudalism to 17th century Iran on the grounds that there was "no hereditary nobility, no juridical serfs, few labour services, no manorial system".

(Keshavarz, 1984) indicates that the situation of pre-10th century Iran marked a lack of sovereignty over land due to presence of external forces. In these circumstances a settled feudal system could not emerge.

The confusion over periodization results in a lack of (or clear) distinction between various periods. This lack of distinction of historical periods, in turn, results in a lack of understanding the socio-economic formations of these periods in the history of Iran. In other words, it contributes to a conceptual problem, i.e., overlooking historical specificities. There have been times²⁸ when the urban and rural economies were operating independently²⁹ and a lack of knowledge about these periods obscures one's understanding of the specificities of rural and urban economies. The confusion adds to another problem, i.e., a lack of distinction between rural and urban socio-economic structures. For example, Ashraf (1967:6-10) argues that the Asiatic approach bases its theoretical debate on two assumptions; 1) the existence of an irrigation system is characteristic of the East and therefore the development of

²⁸ I have considered the Safavids (1499-1736) period as one example due to the stability of socio-economic structures and the growth of trade (e.g. see Foran, 1993). The second example, as we will see is Qajar period during which the urban economy developed (e.g. Issawi, 1971:25-27) in accordance with the requirements of the Russian and the British capitalist developments. In this period absentee landlords began to link the rural and urban economies.

²⁹ The unity of manufacturing and agriculture is often considered equal to the unity of city and countryside (e.g. Vafadari, 1979) whereas in the situation where lack of communication facilities played the most significant role to separate communities therefore, imposing extra cost on the supply of means of production the best strategy was to create means of production within the community. Therefore, it is a contradiction to accept that the East has had a much longer history of urbanization, on the one hand, and to reject that cities existed as independent contexts, on the other. There was a division of labour between city and countryside, the best example is the production of silk, as we will describe it in Chapter Five, during Safavids (1499-1736) which occurred in the countryside but it only transformed into a commodity when it was circulated by the urban groups (i.e., the state, merchants etc.). In other words, it was the existence of non-rural power which collected the products and made it into a national product for export, scattered rural settings would not have been able to do it.

absolutist states becomes possible through the involvement of the state in the administration of the irrigation system, and, 2) a lack of autonomous cities that resulted in the lack of conflict between city and countryside in a history of 2500 years (see also Shaygannik, 1985:84-90; Ashraf, 1974 10). In a more specific argument Ashraf cites Marx's point that the urban areas in the East developed once they were suitable to foreign trade or the ruler exchanges his income (i.e., surplus product) with labour (Ashraf, 1967:8-9, Ashraf, 1978). With this argument, Ashraf (1967 8-9) adds that the Asian system was not a class-based society or, if the system was class-based, it was a primitive one. Earlier in his paper, he refers to Marx's approach to the Asiatic system by saying that a basic characteristic of the Asiatic systems is the unity of hand-made and agricultural products³⁰, i.e., urban and rural economies (Ibid 8)³¹. It is then followed by his reference to Marx's points on the urbanization of the countryside in Europe which resulted from the contradiction between city and countryside (Ibid 10), meaning that, the East was left undeveloped as it lacked these development requirements.

From Ashraf's reasoning and Marx's points on urbanization, a parallel conclusion can also be drawn; a lack of contradiction created a homogeneous socio-economic structure that was governed by an absolutist ruler. This is a result that Ashraf produces because his approach to pre-capitalist formations³² does not use 1)

³⁰ See also Vafadari (1979:92) and Ramtin (1979 65-66)

³¹ Melotti (1977:54) also refers to this as one of Marx's features of Asiatic system

³² This approach is not different from the original Marx quoted by Shaygannik (1985 85) and discussed by Melotti (1977 54)

the specificities of rural-urban relations, and, 2) the periodic recurrence of disturbance in the reproduction of pre-capitalist modes of production in Iran. Instead, he attempts to make these specificities fit into some type of Asiatic mode. This creates a confusion that is most obvious in his review of the literature on Iran wherein he does not try to solve the problem and the place of Eastern systems in Marxist literature but, rather, he adds a new type of system which he calls Moluko-tawa-yefi to the list of feudal and Asiatic modes (Ashraf, 1967:16-19) leaving one to wonder what happened to the Marxian theory of linear social evolution.

Ashraf's problem with the position of Iran's pre-capitalist formations indicated that he had inherited the legacy of 100 years of silence since Marx's time about Eastern formations³⁴. Throughout the following chapters we will see that this legacy affected the 20th century's conceptualization of Iranian peasantry, by leaving the concrete elements of socio-economic formation such as surplus production or rural-urban relations out of the analysis. Probably one of the reasons that the 20th century literature on Iran lacks a conceptualization of surplus outflow (from pre-capitalist modes) is the fact that this literature never assumed that the surplus could be produced in a system in which they assumed no classes existed (see also Shaygannik, 1985:88). Ashraf (1967:8) mentions the existence of 'surplus' but he maintains that this surplus was spent on military, religious or irrigation purposes. In other words, the surplus was nothing more than some type of tax that was levied by the state and was spent by the

³⁴ This could mean that the concept of Asiatic mode, contrary to other Marxist concepts, has not been examined for a long time since its original development by Marx. Hence, Ashraf was unable to benefit from any intellectual developments in the application of the concept of Asiatic mode.

state. That is to say 'surplus' was not realized through involvement of social classes in the process of production, rather it was an outcome of forceful extraction. Therefore, 'surplus' never plays a conceptual role in his views on the socio-economic structure of pre-capitalist Iran. This is particularly evident when he confirms that in Eastern cities, compared to Western cities during feudalism, trade exchange was done by money (Ibid:10)³⁴ which was confirmed by Poliak (cited in Keshavarz, 1966 48, vol. 2)

We need to clarify this. On the one hand, Wallerstein (1974:18-19) refers to the existence of surplus (in kind) during feudal Europe which was exchanged in the market. He (Ibid:21) also quotes Owen who argues that the structure of trade was more a tribute structure than a trade structure meaning the incentive of trade was not economic. Bloch (1968:66) also refers to trade in feudal Europe which was restricted to a few routes and that its volume was small. It is not, then, surprising that Bloch (Ibid:66-67) emphasizes the dominance of payment in kind. On the other hand, Ashraf (1976:41-42) refers to the East where the large-populated cities contributed to mercantile activities and accumulation by the merchants (see also Ibrahim, 1990). Descriptions by Curzon (1966:529-30, vol. 2) about the strength of trade and the merchants in Iran over a long period is even more convincing that the merchant's capital had a much longer history in Iran than in feudal Europe.

Returning to Ashraf's point, the presence of money in the market was, in fact, an indication of the existence of surplus from which the merchants developed their

³⁴ A lack of autonomy of the merchants vis-a-vis the state is considered here as one of the obstacles to the development of bourgeoisie in Eastern cities (Ashraf, 1967:10). The same argument is applied to the case of Iran (Ashraf, 1978).

capital (e.g. Marx, 1973:326, vol. III). Ashraf (1967:10), nevertheless, emphasizes the lack of autonomy of the merchants vis-a-vis the state. This means that the existence of merchants and their capital, which developed as a result of an economic surplus, is left out of the analysis as the role of the repressive state is magnified³⁵.

In 1970³⁶, Ashraf tried to find a link between the Iranian socio-economic structures and reasons for the failure of the development of Iranian bourgeoisie. Given that his main concern in his previous work was to find similarities and differences between the Asiatic mode and the feudal mode, this new attempt was a major shift. He no longer claimed that the Iranian socio-economic structures had been fluctuating between three types: feudalism, Asiatic system and Moluko-tawa-yefi. In this new attempt he adds to his 1967 approach more elements of Weber's thesis on patrimonialism³⁷ than Marx's Asiatic thesis (e.g. Ashraf, 1978:311-12)³⁸. Then, he moves to a more specific argument on the obstacles that prevented the emergence of bourgeoisie in Iran and presents them as follows; 1) the presence of strong Shahs; 2)

³⁵ Contrary to Ashraf, Berkday (1991:251-52) questions the extent of power that the state exercised. And, with regard to the position of merchants in history of Iran see, for example, the involvement of merchants in money relations and land purchase in the late 19th century in Keddie (1971:54-57). In the post-fifteenth century we find Persian merchants abroad affecting the internal formations in India signifying the strength of the merchants (Berkday, 1991:248-50)

³⁶ His 1970's article on the ' *Historical Obstacles to the Development of Bourgeoisie in Iran*' was republished in 1978.

³⁷ According to Ashraf (1978:311) "patrimonial government is an extension of the ruler's household in which the relation between the ruler and his officials remains on the basis paternal authority and filial dependence".

³⁸ Vali (1993:46-51) also critically examines his 1970 work showing that Weber's work transcends Marx's work in his latest article.

the existence of competing tribal groups³⁹; and, finally, 3) the effects of colonial powers (Ibid:313). He went as far back into the history of Iran as the Safavids era (16th century) where, he contends, the Asiatic patrimonial despotism was contemporary with colonial Europe and the growth of 'Bureaucratic'⁴⁰ Capitalism' (Ibid).

The fall and rise of centralised governments and the existence of patrimonialism to him is characteristic of the history of Iran even in the current century (Ashraf, 1978:312-313). The weakening of the quasi-feudal⁴¹ tendency as a result of the state attempts to revive the *tuyul*⁴² system and consequently the growth of crown land, state land and *Vaqf* (endowment) land marked the changing nature of land tenure in Safavids (Ibid:314-315). A decline in the power of the state in the 19th century, the influence of the Russian and British powers, and then incidents in the constitutional revolution of 1906-1911 in Iran until the rise of Reza Khan in 1921 marks the history of the decentralization of patrimonial power during Qajar (Ibid: 321-327). He maintains that one of the major changes in the Qajar period (1800-1914) was the tendency of the bourgeoisie "to seek for landownership in order to achieve

³⁹ For more details on the combination of tribes and their significance to the politics in Iran see also Upton (1961:20-30).

⁴⁰ '*Bureaucratic Capitalism*' is mostly used to imply the intervention of state in trade and industrial activities.

⁴¹ In quasi-feudal system, *suyurghal* land entailed land-use rights for the landholders (Ashraf, 1978:314, ft. 30). These rights were close to western feudal type of fief, that is the reason he calls this system a quasi-feudal system.

⁴² '*Tuyul*' was a piece of land that individuals, usually associated with the state, received as a gift in return for their service to the state (e.g. Lambton, 1987:66).

status and power" (Ibid:327). After Qajar, he indicates that, in Reza Khan's period (1921-1941), the institution of private land ownership developed and the landlords formed 57 percent of Majlis deputies (Ashraf, 1978:330).

To sum up, it should be noted that Ashraf's shift of interest from his 1967 attempt for identification of the Iranian pre-capitalist socio-economic formations to his 1970 attempt to provide a causal account for the backwardness of bourgeoisie is a result of the problems that he encountered while trying to classify these formations in 1967. Despite this shift, his 1970 work also had some problems⁴³. For example, he recognized the specificities of Iranian society by mentioning the urban-rural relations, but he failed to consider them as independent socio-economic formations so as to account for the dominance of one which limited the development of the other, something that we will argue was the cause of rural backwardness. And finally, he ignores the outflow of capital in the form of surplus from the rural economy.

My contention is that urban and rural economies, especially, in the 19th and 20th centuries (before 1962 land reform) affected one another. There was a distinction between city and countryside that signified the dominance of the urban economy over the rural economy. It is because of this distinction that absenteeism and the merchant's capital, as a link between rural and urban economies, developed. This distinction also helps one to understand how 'surplus product' was created and transferred to the cities.

Before engaging in a detailed argument on these issues we should note that the

⁴³ His 1970 work had more elements about periodization.

notion of an Asiatic system that was examined by Ashraf in 1967 became unpopular in the 1970s and 1980s. The problems such as those faced by Ashraf drove the research scholars working on Iran to look for alternative notions that not only; 1) replaced the Asiatic notion; but also, 2) applied to the case of Iran. For the Marxists this also meant to maintain the principles of classical Marxism, i.e., the five stage theory of evolution.

As the theory of Asiatic mode gradually disappeared in the Marxian literature of the late 1970s and 1980s the internationalization of capital approach by Clawson (1977 and 1980)⁴⁴, the Orthodox Marxist approach by Nakhaie (1986) and Sodagar (1990), or a combination of a Marxist notion of feudal mode and Weberian notion of prebendalism⁴⁵ by Turner (1984),⁴⁶ and, finally, the Articulation of Modes of Production thesis that was applied to the Iranian case by Lahsaeizadeh (1984), became dominant streams of thought in the 1980s. These trends indicate that unlike the 1960s, the Marxist literature tried to employ external forces as the complementary elements engaged in the socio-economic formations of Eastern societies. Therefore, the significance of identifying the pre-capitalist formations has been by-passed for the sake of accounting for current formations. Following is the review of these approaches.

⁴⁴ This approach was repeated/reformulated by Jenkins in 1987 as he applied it in the larger context of the world focussing on the effects of transnational corporations.

⁴⁵ By prebend, Turner (1984:166) means allowances in kind or land-use rights in return for services. This is synonymous to the concept of *tuyul* and *iqta*. Turner (Ibid) focuses on the conditional rights of prebend as opposed to absolute rights of European feudals.

⁴⁶ It should be noted that although Turner uses the Marxist notion of feudalism to describe pre-capitalist rural Iran, he argues that he even discards teleological world views. In this sense he is not even an Orthodox Marxist who believes in a unilinear evolution of human societies. However, his remarks about the pre-capitalist Iran using Marxist views links him to this group of Marxist thinkers

1.1.2 Internationalization of Capital Approach:

An example of the Internationalization of Capital approach is presented by Clawson (1977) in an attempt to revive the laws of motion of capital and the corresponding socio-economic changes. Unlike Marx's (see Ashraf, 1967:10) theory of Asiatic mode that refers to the resistance of the internal formations of the East and suggests the inevitable penetration of external capitalism for changing the stagnant East, Clawson (1977:64-66) focuses on the classic notion of Marx's self-expansion nature of capitalism in relation to the Third World and local economies. The notion of the self-expansion of capitalism implies that capital finds its way into every possible place where grounds for accumulation are suitable (Clawson, 1977:64-65)⁴⁷. In this fashion, Clawson (1980:152) considers the commodity production prior to the 1953 coup to have been a non-capitalist sort. But the production was directed towards a capitalist market which had started in the 19th century under the dominance of merchant capital (Ibid:147-48). In this sense, merchants and market relations were geared to the production of raw material (e.g. cotton) and imports from capitalist economies (Ibid). An analysis of their role in connecting urban and rural economies is missing.

Our critique, rests on Clawson's views on pre-capitalist formations in Iran. He quotes Marx's argument on the paths to capitalism where he talks about transitions from a feudal mode to a capitalist mode (Clawson, 1977:68). In this debate, Clawson

⁴⁷ It should be noted that his reliance on the external forces and aggressive nature of capital movement drives him to neglect what Taylor (1979) considered to be the resistance of the Asiatic mode to change and the resulting articulation of modes of production.

does not seem to have considered any distinction between a feudal mode in Europe and a pre-capitalist mode in Iran and he avoids delineating the characteristics of Iranian feudalism (e.g. Clawson, 1980:143).

He employs two general categories, i.e. capitalist and pre-capitalist relations of production (e.g. Clawson, 1980:143) and avoids explaining the specificities of Iranian agrarian structures. Consequently, a lack of explanation of these structures is evident in his work which causes a confusion similar to that which led Ashraf and others to neglect the possibility of surplus production in pre-capitalist rural Iran. It should be borne in mind, however, that perhaps Clawson's choice of calling the pre-land-reform period a 'pre-capitalist' system, is not a theoretical flaw but rather a necessity. This was a necessity in the sense that the concept of 'pre-capitalist system'⁴⁸ provided a solution to the Marxists' uncertainty about the East as it was inclusive of any mode of production that might have been dominant prior to the development of capitalism. Clawson's general term of 'pre-capitalist system' would not contradict the concept of feudalism (which was becoming popular in the 1970s and 1980s) and its application to Iran, hence, it was an indirect contribution to reproduction of the concept of feudalism. Looking at the works of Abdollaev (1982 and 1971)⁴⁹, Turner (1984), Nakhaie (1986), for example, indicates that the contributions of Clawson and others helped the

⁴⁸ Especially its neutrality vis-a-vis the concept of Asiatic mode that was examined by Ashraf.

⁴⁹ In the case of Abdollaev's work it should be noted although they were written before the 1970s they were translated and reproduced in Iran in the 1970s and 1980s to indicate the interest towards the content of these works.

Marxists to choose the notion of feudalism⁵⁰ (discussed later) for the pre-land-reform period with more confidence in the 1980s than in the early 1970s.

1.1.3 Halliday's Political Economy Approach:

Halliday's work (1979) needs to be introduced here because it theoretically parallels that of Clawson, as they both agree that the process of capitalist development (as opposed to dependent capitalism) happened in Iran⁵¹. Halliday's work also confirms the above-mentioned uncertainty and conceptual problem that the Marxists encountered in the late 1970s concerning the position of Iranian pre-capitalist agrarian structures in the Marxist literature. I would like to examine his approach to the question of pre-capitalist formations.

Halliday's political economy approach reflects the general trend of the late 1970s Marxists towards conceptualizing Iran's socio-economic structures in a modern way, i.e., leaving the concept of Asiatic mode aside without showing any interest in the characterization of pre-capitalist Iran. His strategy for such a study in some points provides new insights but is problematic as well. On the one hand, Halliday (1979:28) agrees that a study of 1970s Iran should employ elements of the past. On the other hand, he does not seem to agree that these elements constitute a persistent continuity, for instance, in political structures rooted in the past. The possibility of a transfer of

⁵⁰ Or a variant of feudalism (e.g. Shaygannik, 1985:85).

⁵¹ In this sense, it is different from the notion of dependent capitalism developed by Frank (1981, 77, 75, see also Cockcroft, 1972 and Persaud, 1987). This leads Clawson and Halliday to consider local bourgeoisie or the state as the leading classes rather than the dependent bourgeoisie of Frank.

the remaining elements from an Asiatic or a Despotic system to modern structures, for example, is not seen to affect the formation of a modern state (Ibid:28-29).

Consequently, the pre-capitalist political formations are characterized as 'transitional' (Ibid:28) whereas the current ones are termed 'capitalist' (Ibid:29). It is contended, however, that in order to present a logical analysis one needs to know how the pre-capitalist formations were transformed. In order to do so, Halliday needs to characterize the pre-capitalist formation.

Aside from his remarks on the significance of the modern state in conceptualization of the development process in Iran, the basic framework of his debate seems to be a tautology of the Marxist perspective (with little change on the question of pre-capitalist formations). And, his periodization of socio-political formations is rather problematic. As he argues:

There is no substantive continuity between the monarchy of today and that of previous centuries; indeed, in the 1920s the institution essentially disappeared only to be reconstituted on a quite new basis by the military dictator Reza Khan (Halliday, 1979:29).

And concludes that:

This state is therefore quite different from that which existed one hundred years ago. It is capitalist, whereas the other was pre-capitalist (Halliday, 1979:29).

The question remains as to why 70 per cent of the population still lived in rural areas where there was little sign of capitalist development⁵². Or, why did the land

⁵² I am referring to his discourse that assumes capitalist development rather than dependent capitalist development where only a few sections of the economy develop. In fact he confuses the development of oil industry with capitalist development. This is while the structure of economy as we will discuss in Chapter Five remained the same as before, i.e., based on agricultural products. Clawson (1980:152) characterises commodity production before 1953 as non-capitalist

reform and industrialization take place in the 1960s and not in the 1920s? He answers these questions with reference to the growing power of the state that he considers necessary for realization of development but did not exist until the 1920s (Halliday, 1979:28-37). Therefore, what he implies is that the state is the centre of capitalist development in Iran regardless of other socio-economic processes (Ibid:28-37, 40-41). Also, the question of pre-capitalist relations and its characteristics and their periods of dominance is loosely dealt with.

To sum up, Halliday does not characterize the pre-capitalist formations⁵³. He puts the state and political formations in the centre of his analysis and confuses the periods of the dominance of pre-capitalist mode and the beginning of capitalist development. Obviously, due to the uniformity that he attributes to the pre-capitalist formations he fails to account for rural-urban relations and the role of the merchants. In fact, he does not deal with the question of merchants and market relations.

The Marxist literature of the 1980s (Turner, 1984; Nakhaie, 1986; Sodagar, 1990) attempts one more time to examine the unsolved question of pre-capitalist agrarian structures in Iran, as the political economy approach of Halliday failed to present an alternative for the pre-capitalist formations. This trend began in 1980, one year after the 1979 revolution, with the work of Nomani. He wrote his Ph.D. thesis on the origins of feudalism in Iran (the period between 300-1600 A.D.) in 1972. His

⁵³ Criticizing one faction of Marxists for denouncing the development of capitalism in Iran and another faction for considering Iran as a still semi-feudal and semi-colonial, he argues that: "this is, in the 1970s, untenable since, while pre-capitalist elements remain, Iran has not been feudal in any significant sense since the land reform of the early 1960s" (Halliday, 1979:40). It is not clear, from his argument, whether or not he accepts the existence of a feudal mode even before the 1960s. But, repeatedly he uses the term 'pre-capitalist' in order to describe the traditional agrarian structures.

work was not any different from the work of Iranologists of the former Soviet Union in attributing feudalism to Iran. In the post-1979 revolutionary period the question of agriculture and its relations with politics provided the grounds for the reproduction of his thesis on feudalism (cited by Najmabadi, 1987:230). This can also be seen in Kazem-zadeh's (1982:237-249)⁵⁴ translation of Abdollaev's 1963 work which takes the prevalence of feudalism as a given fact but does not explain its characteristics⁵⁵ providing no more than what the other Soviet Scholars had provided before. From among studies in this new trend the work of Turner is worth reviewing here.

1.1.4 Turner's Anti-Orientalist Approach:

Turner (1984) appears similar to the Marxists of the late 1970s in employing the notion of feudalism, but presents a more recent approach to the question of pre-capitalist structures in Iran. He begins his analysis with pre-capitalist formations. In an attempt to criticize Orientalism he goes as far as seventy years back in order to discuss the evolution of social theories that dealt with Eastern societies (e.g. Turner, 1984:14). To him, functionalism and its assumptions with regard to the internal causes of backwardness of Eastern societies made up a basic component of the post World-War-Two development literature (e.g. Turner, 1984:1-3). Assuming a unilinear path to

⁵⁴ And/or other works of Abdollaev (1978, 1981).

⁵⁵ Abdollaev (1971) produced a more theoretical work which appeared in Charles Issawi (1971) in which he explains the development of bourgeoisie in Iran. In this work, he occasionally refers to his assumption about the dominance of feudalism in Iran.

modernism, this approach recommended modernization (i.e. Westernization)⁵⁶ of the traditional East as the necessity for change (Ibid). Much of the criticism of functionalism, he indicates, lies in the fact that these theories suggested the external colonialism or penetration as the opportunity that would bring the Eastern societies into the process of development without taking into account the results of penetration (Turner, 1984:1-3)⁵⁷.

The movement towards a revival of Marxist theories of social change in the 1960s and 1970s that we mentioned earlier is confirmed in Turner (1984). To him, however, the cause or the necessity for this return was not the unsolved question of Iran's pre-capitalist structures, as we discussed earlier. Rather, he indicates that the failure of the functionalist theory (or modernization theory) to determine the role of external forces as the possible cause of the underdevelopment of the Third World was an incentive for the development of neo-Marxist literature (Turner, 1984:3).

His knowledge about the opposing theories, i.e., Marxist and non-Marxist, led him to develop a new approach to the case of pre-capitalist Iran. To do so, he suggests a reconciliation of; a) the Weberian strategy of approaching an analysis of Eastern societies' backwardness, which placed emphasis on the military and political formations; and, b) Marx's emphasis on economic formations and their peculiarity in the East (Turner, 1984:4). The ground for this reconciliation is that both Marx and

⁵⁶ See also Taylor (1979:40)

⁵⁷ Turner does not provide examples of such countries.

Weber agreed on the stationariness (i.e., social stagnation) of the Eastern societies" (Ibid). Encapsulating Marxian and Weberian approaches to Eastern backwardness in a united theoretical framework, Turner also shows that his other major interest was to solve the problem of two Marxist perspectives about the East, i.e., structuralists and conventional marxists. His book includes several articles in one of which he notes,

... are thus addressed to the problem of reconciling two Marxists approaches to social change, in which change is either brought about contingently by class conflict or structurally by the contradictions within the mode of production (Turner, 1984:4).

In order to clarify his theoretical position further, Turner (1984:5-12) criticizes the deterministic theory of mode of production presented by Poulantzas on the ground that it disqualifies human agency in social formations. Poulantzas, instead, assumes that individuals and consequently classes are the effects of the larger structures, i.e. modes of production (Ibid:5-6). To Turner, the elimination of class struggle from the analysis of social formations means a deviation from an explanation of concrete social formations. Also, this type of "...theory is not multi-causal, multi-factorial or causally indeterminate" (Turner, 1984:5) and fails to deal with the possibility of multi-linear change.

From his analysis one gets the impression that his attempt was a breakthrough and a relief for the Marxists who showed interest in analyzing social formations and their transformation in the East based on the conventional Marxian theory of change, i.e., a return to class analysis. Despite this tendency, however, he intends in his book

⁵² It should be noted that Turner takes Eastern societies synonymous to Islamic societies. Therefore, the focus here is on the Middle East rather than East in its larger geographical sense.

'to criticize any form of evolutionary or teleological analysis of social change' (Turner, 1984:13) among which Marx's theory of social evolution is one. Rather, an emphasis is put on the diversity and indeterminate nature of social development and underdevelopment (Ibid). Combined with this, is his attempt to analyze both internal classes and external forces involved in social change.

Generally speaking, Turner's work was a new attempt that was presented in the 1980s and contributed one more time to the revival of the Marxian notion of evolution in spite of his attempts to criticize evolutionary concepts. This is because he does not offer any alternative model to replace the Marxist notion of five-stage evolution. In fact, he even explains pre-capitalist Iran as a feudalist mode of production (Turner, 1984:153-189) only with some revisions.

I want to suggest in particular that Iranian history is the effect of the oscillation between prebendalism and feudalism, in which the feudal mode of production is dominant... (Turner, 1984:165)⁴⁹.

Turner's discourse, also, falls short in providing an account of the grounds of dissimilarity between feudal Iran and feudalism in the West such as urban-rural relations and the development of absenteeism. This originates from his reaction to Orientalism, meaning he intended to show that the pre-capitalist East was similar to feudal Europe. His definition of feudalism is also problematic when he touches on the issue of merchants and market relations in the East (Turner, 1984:162-63). He rejects Amin's argument about the importance of long-distance trade which was based on

⁴⁹ Turner (1984:168) periodizes Iran's history as follows, before the 10th century, prebendalism, and, after the 10th century, feudalism

surplus that was extracted in other nations but was circulated by the Muslim merchants. Amin rejects the application of feudalism to the East on this basis (Ibid)⁶⁰. In the case of Iran Turner overlooks the important role of the merchants in various sections of the economy. Turner (Ibid) only sees the merchants in the sphere of circulation. To this effect, Turner's discourse denies the importance of the role of merchants in change. We will indicate that the Iranian merchants played a more crucial role in Iran by connecting urban and rural economies than they did in the Arab world making the Iran case even more dissimilar to feudalism, i.e., what Turner would not see because of his orientation.

Finally, It should be noted that his interest in a multilinear process of change and his attempt to diverge from Asiatic mode and to revive the feudal mode were his major contributions.

1.1.5 The Return of Orthodox Marxist Approach:

Two years after Turner's work, a more Orthodox version of the traditional Marxian five-stage historical evolution was introduced by Nakhaie in his 1986 Ph.D dissertation. Turner and Nakhaie present a common view in that they diverge from the Asiatic assumption popular in the 1970s and converge on the feudal thesis revived in the 1980s. This is more evident in the work of Nakhaie who, contrary to Turner, attempts to conceptualize the process of change in the pre-capitalist and the capitalist era using only the feudal mode as the prevalent mode in pre-capitalist Iran (Nakhaie,

⁶⁰ See Ibrahim (1990) for a detailed analysis of merchant capital in Arab countries

1986:4, 38), and not a combination of any other socio-economic formation similar to that of Turner (1984:165). This does not mean that Nakhaie is not affected by the developments in Marxist literature with regard to the possibility of the presence of overlapping modes in Iran, but he suggests that the feudal mode was dominant and thus played the determining role in social formations (Nakhaie, 1986:38). In that sense, Nakhaie's work is also an attempt for consolidation of the five-stage Marxian theory of evolution, i.e., a revival of the unilinear notion of socio-economic change

The transformation of the feudal mode of production is the major theme of Nakhaie's thesis (Nakhaie, 1986: introduction). In an attempt to conceptualize the character of change from pre-capitalist to capitalist society in Iran "the perspectives that associate the underdevelopment of Iran with an Asiatic mode of production" (Ibid) are criticized. To him, the Asiatic mode was substituted for feudal mode in Marx's theory of social evolution in order to explain the problem of lack of private ownership and its subsequent lack of class struggle and history in the East (Nakhaie, 1986:67-71)⁶¹. Class struggle, instead, is put by Nakhaie (1986: introduction) at the heart of socio-economic analysis of pre-capitalist agrarian structures.

He approaches the problem of Marxists with regard to pre-capitalist rural Iran in an attempt not only to keep the traditional or Orthodox Marxism's evolutionary thesis intact, but also to eliminate contradictions concerning lack of private ownership of land and ambiguity over rent and tax. In '*Capital*' (vol. III:782-802)⁶² Marx

⁶¹ For further explanation on the state ownership of land in Asiatic mode see Taylor (1979:178-79).

⁶² See Marx (1973), fifth edition

indicates that three forms of rent can be realised as follows; labour rent, rent in kind and money rent (Nakhaie, 1986:43). Nakhaie criticizes Marx's distinction between feudal and Asiatic mode of production. Marx indicates that in the Asiatic mode rent and tax coincide because the state is the owner of land (Ibid:36-44). Nakhaie, however, maintains that in both situations surplus is extracted by extra economic coercion (Ibid). Besides, state centralization has not been constant (Nakhaie, 1986:74-75) in Iran, therefore, the only force that could extract rent has been that of feudal lords.

Nakhaie (1986:68) refers to Marx's revision of his earlier assumption about the East to the effect that landownership in India was the same as anywhere else. Following Marx's revision, Nakhaie (1986:67-71) describes the historical process of land privatization in order to refute the assumption that private ownership of land did not exist in pre-capitalist Iran. He concludes that Iran's pre-capitalist social structures were dominated by a highly developed feudal society (Ibid:63-71). Nakhaie's point will inform my thesis in the sense that I will question the application of Asiatic mode to Iran. I will argue, however, that the feudal mode was not dominant either and the socio-economic formations should, instead, be analyzed by employing historical specificities such as urban-rural relations⁶³ with a particular reference to the role of absentee landlords and the merchants. To discuss the difference between Iran and Europe, Shaygannik (1985:87) employs Marx's (1973, vol. III:332) point on the

⁶³ Nakhaie (1986:36-9) and Turner (1984:168) appear the same in that they both emphasize the similarities between West and East.

different patterns of urbanization process and trade in Europe and elsewhere in order to examine it in the case of Iran. In Iran the dominance of countryside over the city did not occur due to strength and precedence of urbanization (e.g. Shaygannik, 1985:87; also Vafadari, 1979:80-94). I will argue that this difference later developed into a specific class structure between city and countryside. Nakhaie (1986:78-84) touches on the conceptual phenomenon of rural-urban differences by referring to a lack of opposition between city and countryside in Iran as the absentee landlords resided in cities. He does not, however, use it to explain that it was responsible for the formation of the urban-rural relations.

And with regard to the role of merchants and market relations, in his definition of feudalism, he relies on conventional feudal exchange relations, i.e., infrequent and unsubstantial exchange which developed in later periods in Europe as a result of an increase in division of labour and search for cash by the peasants (Nakhaie, 1986:14-15). Later he (Ibid:84-92) provides a review of feudalism in Iran which dated back to Achaemanid period (550-331 B.C.). In this review the role of merchants and market relations are neglected although he refers to a long history of urbanization and the presence of merchants. This presence is not taken as a matter of difference between European feudalism and Iranian one as his earlier approach (Ibid:84-92) to feudalism did.

1.1.6 The Political Economy Approach of the 1980s:

From the revitalized notion of feudalism in the Marxist literature on Iran in the

1980s, the Marxist literature moves to a different method of conceptualizing the agrarian structures in Iran. In the works of Najmabadi (1987) the very nature of pre-capitalist agriculture is overlooked. Instead, she focuses on the changes in agriculture from 1960s to the late 1970s under auspices of the international economic system.

Najmabadi (1987:9-10) examines the question of transformation of the pre-capitalist agrarian structures with regard to changes in the world economic system. She offers a very different agenda for studying pre-capitalist Iran compared to Nakhaie. Her major thesis is that the internal level of development and the trends in the world economy co-existed with, or even reinforced, pre-capitalist social relations before World War Two (Najmabadi, 1987:9-10). After World War Two, the formation of an internal market and the changes in the international economic order contributed to the development of an internal market and commodity production (Ibid). Therefore, to answer why land reform was chosen to be implemented in Iran she suggests that the agricultural sector was assigned a different task compared to the period before the war (Ibid:10). Production for the market, contribution to surplus production, and supply of labour force for the growing industrial sector were new functions of agriculture not only in Iran but in many other Third World countries (Ibid).

In addition, she brings in the lack of a colonial period in Iran and the existence of oil revenues as two factors that affected the process of Iranian development (Najmabadi, 1987). These two factors delayed⁶⁴ the development of capitalism and the

⁶⁴ Oil did not contribute to other sectors of the economy as we will show in Chapter Five, and rivalry between Russia and Britain prevented Iran from any sort of stability whether colonial or independent

disruption of pre-capitalist formations (Ibid:13-14). This is as far as she goes in history to discover not the specificities of the pre-capitalist formations but rather to look for the factors involved in retarding a full-fledged capitalist development. It should also be noted that except in referring to the role of merchants in landownership (1987:44) she does not deal with market relations or the role of merchants in the pre-capitalist system.

Despite her efforts to conceptualize the development of capitalism in Iran she avoids the problem found by the Marxists concerning the nature of pre-capitalist Iran and does not approach this issue in any way. Her approach shares the same logic as that of Halliday's; both focus on the origins⁶⁵ of development policies and ignore the significance of characterizing the pre-capitalist formations. This latest development in the political economy approach did not provide any new recommendations for the characterization of pre-capitalist formations. In the absence of such recommendations the Orthodox Marxist application of feudalism to pre-capitalist Iran gained new strength, i.e., the concept of feudalism continued to be used.

1.1.7 Orthodox Marxism Approach in the 1990s:

In the preface of his book, Sodagar (1990) indicates an interest in examining the socio-economic changes between 1963 and 1979. One of his major theses is that capital is dynamic and it creates or in fact constructs social relations and therefore 'capital' is a social relation (Sodagar, 1990:17-18). He focuses on Marx's original

⁶⁵ The state involvement in the development process

works and develops the argument that capitalist development, as a form of capital movement, should be explained as an attempt to account for the socio-economic changes in Iran between 1963 and 1979.

In his second major thesis, Sodagar (1990:67-70) explains that capital due to its nature expands and spreads wherever it can produce more profit and constructs a form of power structure in the Third World countries that meets the requirements of capital expansion. He writes:

The Iranian capitalism in its way to gain power and to develop, has been following and continues to follow its own particular path. The Pahlavi regime or a system similar to that, was among the ways by which 'capital' could take the initial steps towards the above mentioned path (Sodagar, 1990:73)⁶⁶.

In order to construct his argument about the development of capitalism in Iran and its characteristics, he sees the need for an analysis of the pre-capitalist socio-economic formations in Iran. The question of transformation of the peasantry in Iran is, for example, explained with reference to the Marxian notion of evolution in which feudalism is one stage before the rise of capitalism (Ibid:24-34). This means that the socio-economic formations in Iran prior to 1963 were in one way or another some type of feudalism. Despite this similarity between his work and Orthodox Marxism, Sodagar appears different from Orthodox Marxists⁶⁷; he examines the question of whether or not the feudal mode of production was transformed in response to the historical requirement of internal changes towards capitalism or as a result of the

⁶⁶ My translation.

⁶⁷ Orthodox Marxism in this sense is used to refer to the original marxist explanation of historical evolution of societies through primitive communist society, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism

development of exchange relations acting like an external force (Ibid)⁶⁸. This is rather a multilinear approach that separates Sodagar's work from the unilinear approach of Orthodox Marxism which he intended to adopt. This divergence also causes some confusion in his approach.

In spite of his clear agenda, he appears theoretically ambiguous when examining the application of the Asiatic Mode of production to Iran. The ambiguity arises when one reads his descriptions of others' works. He presents these works in a paradoxical way in which opposite positions in debates over feudal mode and Asiatic mode are given equal theoretical credit (e.g. Sodagar, 1990:24-45). In other words, it is not clear if he plans to advocate either of the notions; it is almost left to the reader to decide what his position really is. He even considers some possible doubts about the nature of pre-capitalist formations as he says: "But, whatever shape and quality the historical past and the past socio-economic systems in Iran have had ..." (Sodagar, 1990:45)⁶⁹.

To us, this is a clear example of how Marxists in the late 1980s and early 1990s, contrary to 1960s⁷⁰, returned to the notion of feudalism to describe pre-capitalist Iran and at the same time they developed an ambiguous assumption (about

⁶⁸ In other words, he employs some element of neo-Marxian approach to account for new formations.

⁶⁹ My translation.

⁷⁰ For more information see Sodagar (1990:34-45).

multilinear change)⁷¹ within the context of evolutionary thesis. In this new sense, Sodagar considers the characteristics of both feudal and Asiatic modes for description of the pre-capitalist formations in Iran. Also, it seems very convincing for him that the 1960s' and 1970s' changes might have had various causes⁷² and might take a different direction towards capitalism (Sodagar, 1990:16, 23-45)

Sodagar's multilinear thesis contains new elements; the effects of an Asiatic despotic system on the form of capitalism that occurred in Iran is not refuted (Sodagar, 1990:35). In other words and contrary to earlier Orthodox Marxists such as Petroshevski and Nakhaie, the pre-capitalist formations in Iran did not necessarily consist solely of a specific type, i.e., it could be a combination of both feudalism and Asiatic mode. Although he does not refer to this combination it can be seen, first, in his argument on transformation from feudalism where Iran's tenure system is put under 'landlord-peasant system' in a bracket without considering a distinction between feudal Europe and Iran's pre-capitalist system (Sodagar, 1990: 24), and, second in his argument on Asiatic mode where he refers to characteristics of the Asiatic system (Ibid:34-45).

Reading Sodagar gives one the impression, again, that many other facts that existed in Iran should be sacrificed and/or ignored in favour of the classic Marxist

⁷¹ Ambiguity in the sense that Sodagar does not clarify if pre-capitalist formations were Asiatic or feudal. Rather, his discourse gives equal value to Asiatic and feudal theses, they both can transform into next stage. The underlying reason for his ambiguous treatment of pre-capitalist Iran is his failure to answer questions surrounding the application of feudalism or Asiatic to Iran

⁷² The conventional cause of transformation to capitalism in Marxian discourse was the collapse of feudalism. Sodagar is considering other possible paths

explanation of the development of capitalism. For example, by the time one has read the first three theoretical chapters it becomes evident that he fails to consider any distinction between cities as centres of trade and monetary relations (though not as developed) and countryside as the producing centre of economic value in the form of agricultural products which could contribute to accumulation. This failure arises because the pre-capitalist socio-economic formations are not considered capable of engaging in any type of surplus production. Only capital and capitalist development can depersonalise production processes and differentiate groups as the dominant extractors and subordinate producers. The history of Iran, however, indicates that there have been two sets of economic structures which functioned in two different ways (but interconnected): rural and urban. While the production of agricultural products took place in the rural economy the beneficiaries were the dominant classes of urban areas. The role of merchants and market relations are not addressed in a way to show they affected socio-economic formations, except where he briefly refers to the merchant capital which operated under the effects of foreign capital (e.g. Sodagar, 1990:109-10). The next and final review provides us with another trend in the 1980s Marxist literature, i.e., the modes of production approach.

1.1.8 Modes of Production Approach:

Apart from the changes that various Marxists tried to bring to the notion of feudalism and the Asiatic mode in order to make them applicable to Iran, Lahsaiezadeh (1984) suggests a different explanation for the development of capitalism

and its effects on the pre-capitalist formations. He focuses on the process of capitalist development in Iran that started after World War Two and was disrupted by the 1979 revolution. One of the direct effects of capitalism in Iran he considers to be the land reform of 1962 that continued for 10 years and ended in the transformation of the agrarian structures. The changes in the classes of peasantry are studied and he tries to identify them as they underwent change (Lahsaiezadeh, 1984: introduction).

His presuppositions consist of, 1) the dominance of feudal mode of production prior to the development of capitalism in Iran, i.e., prior to the land reform (Lahsaiezadeh, 1984:abstract, 10-11); 2) the subordination of the pre-capitalist mode to capitalist mode "through a system of commercial relations" (Ibid: introduction). "In this regard, capitalism preserved the pre-capitalist relations of production in Iran" (Ibid).

His approach suggests that the pre-capitalist relations although transformed did not disappear, the results of the penetration of the pre-capitalist mode was an articulation of modes of production, i.e., the capitalist and the petty commodity production (Lahsaiezadeh, 1984: 5). In this sense, articulation occurs only between the new productive forces and not between the old and new modes of production as Taylor (1979) suggests. Nevertheless, he indicates that, the development of small-holding classes is rather a continuity of the old peasant (i.e., sharecroppers) relations of production (Lahsaiezadeh, 1984:26-33) who reproduced the relations of the old mode of production. Accordingly, it can be argued that, the implication of his analysis is that the reproduction of the pre-capitalist mode of production has still been possible;

this is a conclusion not unlike that of Taylor (1979).

Other than his articulation of the modes of production thesis he also resorts to Amin's world economic perspective to argue that the nature of capitalist development was uneven because it created heterogenous areas of development. Using the two theoretical frameworks and in an attempt to discredit the role of the state as the determining factor in socio-economic developments he presents a structural analysis of the development process and maintains that: "there is a working social system larger than any state whose operation is itself a focus of social analysis" (Lahsaiezadeh, 1984:21). In this sense, he is rather closer to a mode of production thesis than world system and I will try to examine it briefly for the purpose of clarifying the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

One of the well-elaborated critical reviews of the mode of production theory is presented by Turner (1984:5-9). His major criticism in fact refers to a lack of consideration of human agency in Althusserian structuralism whose work generated the mode of production thesis of Taylor (1979), and contributed to the rise of the structural Marxism of Poulantzas⁷³, to name a few (Turner, 1984: 5-9). Turner introduces the works of Poulantzas who applies Althusserian structuralism to account for political power and social changes. Turner (Ibid) contends that they, Althusser and Poulantzas, abandon the teleological characteristic of Marx's theory of social evolution and develop some type of determinism that does not consider human agents as the

⁷³ Turner reviewed the following Works of Poulantzas; *The Political Power and Social Classes*, 1973; *Fascism and Dictatorship*, 1974; and *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, 1975.

cause of social formations, but rather as "...bearers of objective structures of social formations" (Ibid:6). Therefore, Althusser and Poulantzas eliminate the crucial notion of class struggle and its importance to the evolution of societies from Marx's theory of evolution. Lahsaiezadeh's structuralism reflects this in his approach to the history of pre-capitalist formations, i.e., he does not observe the distinction between classes in rural and urban economies in a way to use them for an analysis of pre-capitalist formations. We will use Foran's (1993) approach to argue that this distinction and the relations between rural and urban classes are important factors.

Lahsaiezadeh's lack of distinction between rural and urban economies in the pre-capitalist period and also his consideration of a homogeneous economic system that dominated Iran prior to the development of capitalism are his methodological flaws. Lahsaiezadeh (1984) notes that low productivity existed in the rural economy and that the landlords extracted the surplus without returning part of it for the development of agriculture (Lahsaiezadeh, 1984: 236-244). However, a critical analysis of the repercussions of this socio-economic defect is missing in his research. In other words, these problems are not addressed according to rural and urban relations, but rather to class relations in a homogeneous⁷⁴ social setting, i.e., no distinction between urban and rural class relations. For us, however, speaking of class relations in such a homogenous social setting is misleading because; first) the urban-rural differences were indicative of a heterogeneous social system; and, second) as we

⁷⁴ The homogeneous social setting is used to describe the lack of relations between urban and rural economies as two independent economies. In other words, he considers the existence of classes within rural and urban economies, but the relations between urban and rural economies are not considered

will show in later chapters, these differences were the basis of class relations.

Finally, in the Marxist literature, only Lahsaiezadeh (1984:104-10) embarks on an analysis of the role of merchants and market relations and points out the development of the commercialization of agriculture and the involvement of the merchants in landownership. However, there is little indication that he considered this presence of a commercialized agriculture to be a matter of difference between feudalism in Europe and Iran. His discussion of the merchants appears to have had little effect on his theoretical position regarding the presence of feudalism prior to land reform. As a result, his work does not illustrate the effect of the merchants' activities on rural Iran.

This review of the Marxist literature indicates that the Marxists had to deal with a theoretical dilemma with regard to the agrarian structures of the East that had two sides: a) on the one side, these structures did not correspond to the Marxian stages of historical evolution; and, b) on the other hand, the Marxists were theoretically obliged to theorize it. They made three attempts to solve the problem:

- 1) One group of them called it an Asiatic mode or a version of an Asiatic mode (Ashraf, 1967 and 1978). This approach focussed on the polity and power of the state and the consequent unity of city and countryside and a lack of autonomy of the progressive forces. We will argue in Chapter Two that Iran did not experience a continuous dominance of a centralized and absolutist state. In the case of irrigation, although the reports refer to the involvement of the ruler in repairs and upkeep of

qanats in Iran (e.g. Lambton, 1989:9)⁷⁵, Nakhaie (1986:48) argues that this role should not be exaggerated. 2) The other group called it a feudal mode (Sodagar, 1990; Nakhaie, 1986; Turner⁷⁶, 1984) or a variation of it (Shaygannik, 1985:85). This group remained faithful to Orthodox approach which was first applied to Iran by the former Soviet Iranologists. Since the underlying intention was to characterize the pre-capitalist Iran as a feudal society some historical specificities were overlooked. Some of them such as Nakhaie (1986:78-84) argue that the reason Iran did not develop a national bourgeoisie was not because of a lack of class structure (i.e., an assumption developed by Asiatic Approach) but was partly because of an unusual alliance between urban elites and rural dominant classes. This meant that the rural-urban conflict did not develop, hence, preventing the collapse of feudalism and its replacement by capitalism in Iran. Although he considers this alliance as a specificity (Ibid:83) it does not change his discourse about the dominance of a uniform mode of production such as the feudal system in Iran. His discourse shares the same anti-Orientalist element as Turner's discourse on Iran as they both sacrifice historical specificities in favour of rejecting the Asiatic thesis. The rural-urban relations which affected surplus accumulation in the rural economy and a consequent lack of the development of productive forces is never dealt with. The role of merchants in agriculture and their role as a link between the rural and urban economies is not dealt with. 3) some other

⁷⁵ Qanats were underground channels of water built skilfully to bring water from a long distance to agricultural lands.

⁷⁶ Turner did not do a mere Marxian explanation of the East but he was influenced by the Marxist perspective.

groups of Marxists named it a pre-capitalist mode (Halliday, 1979; Najmabadi, 1987) or 'traditional' (Clawson, 1980: 148, 167) which is not a Marxist concept. They used it nevertheless not only to avoid dealing with the pre-capitalist formations but also to substantiate a critical assumption, i.e. the inevitable development of capitalism.

To close the debate on the treatment of the agrarian structures of Iran in the Marxist literature and their three attempts I would like to suggest that:

- 1) Based on the existing sources there is not enough reason to conclude that the Iranian pre-capitalist socio-economic formations fully meet the descriptions of an Asiatic or feudal mode of production. The on-going debate and disagreements on this issue is the best evidence that the pre-capitalist social and economic relations still need to be characterized⁷⁷. Vali's (1993) work is the latest attempt to develop a model of Iranian feudalism. This has generated an incentive for us to investigate what has been missing in these theories since they can not fully explain Iran's pre-capitalist formations. Later we will introduce urban-rural relations as this missing factor.
- 2) Studies have confirmed the fact that Iran's pre-capitalist formations are of a specific type (at least in the areas that we will be dealing with in the following chapters)⁷⁸. This means that in order to study pre-capitalist Iran an analysis of the socio-economic and historical specificities is required. One of these specificities is the complexity of urban and rural relations and functions of the rural and urban classes (especially absentee landlords and merchants) which were dissimilar to those of feudal Europe.

⁷⁷ This on-going problem was partly due to the orientalist tendency of the literature which took history as it was interpreted based on the development process in Europe leaving out the historical specificities.

⁷⁸ Wickham (1985) in a general overview refers to the uniqueness of the East.

As indicated by Bloch (1968:283), the dominant classes of Feudal Europe consisted of a nobility who had a legal status and this status was hereditary. In Iran, a lack of stability of the landholding and landowning classes (e.g. Shaygannik, 1985:87) and their absentee characteristic was important (e.g. Lahsaiezadeh, 1984:96). The second specificity is the production of surplus product and its crystallization into commodity in later periods. The products were appropriated by the absentees from the rural economy and were marketed outside the rural economy. The question of surplus production is either overlooked or denied by most authors. There is often no trace of the rural surplus or its outflow as the possible causes of backwardness. And finally, as discussed earlier, the trade and the growth of merchant's capital was an old phenomenon in Iran which was not taken into consideration while comparing Iran and feudal Europe.

This review of the Marxist literature provides only one-half of the story. I shall now examine the question of pre-capitalist formations in the non-Marxist literature. With this review the common fallacies and assumptions will be revealed in an attempt to facilitate the production of our model in section (1.3).

1.2 Sharecropping and Lack of Productivity; A Premise in Modernization Theories:

The Marxist and non-Marxist literature share one assumption about the pre-capitalist socio-economic formations in Iran, i.e., low productivity in the agricultural

sector⁷⁹. But the two perspectives develop two different theories of transformation. While the development of capitalism in the Marxist literature, as we indicated, was presented as a necessity due to the nature of linear evolution of societies, the non-Marxist literature developed the idea that industrialization, that is, turning away from agricultural production, as the leading sector in the Third World to industrial production is a necessity (see especially Todaro, 1989:62-78, 245-246)⁸⁰.

One of the best examples of considering economic progress as equal to technological change in Iran (i.e., the growth of industries and wage-labouring) can be found in the papers presented in 'The Aspen Institute/Persepolis Symposium' which was held in Iran in September 1975. The collection of the papers was published in 1976 and was called 'Iran: Past, Present and Future' edited by Jacqz. Tofigh (1976:57-67), as one of the contributors, investigated the economic development of Iran over a 50 year period up to 1975. The population growth, urbanization, the growth of the labour force, the growth of national income, and the industrial development and agricultural change were reviewed and considered to be the indicators of economic growth. In his descriptive review, the growth of industries and wage-labour in relation to the agricultural sector were compared. One of the implications of this contrast is

⁷⁹ For example see Lahsaiezadeh, 1984:236-244 as a Marxist viewer and Adibi, 1955; Hadary, 1951; Lambton, 1969b:295-392; Baldwin, 1967:70; Ajami, 1976b:189 as the non-Marxist viewers. See also Amid (1990) for further details.

⁸⁰ Amuzegar (1966: 148-155), as an Iranian source, explains the economic direction of Iran based on Rostow's stages of technological development in which industrialization is dealt with as a higher stage compared to an agrarian based economy. Also a great deal of literature has dealt with the development blocs in the world in a dichotomy of industrial and non-industrial worlds (e.g. Harrison, 1988:8-32, Novack and Lekachman, 1964) taking industrial society as the target of the development process. See also Taylor (1979:3-41).

that technological change encompasses the essence of growth during the 50 year period. This view is shared by Najmabadi (1976:105-121) who argues that:

The new socioeconomic framework emphasized, *inter alia*, rapid industrialization and the building up of a diversified and self-sustaining industrial base in order to broaden the base of the economy, increase employment opportunities and improve the standards of living of the people and the general welfare of the society as a whole (Najmabadi, 1976:105).

A few pages later he makes it clear that the main purpose of the new socioeconomic changes at that time was to industrialize the economy (Najmabadi, 1976:120). Ajami (1976a:131-154) tackles the issue from the point where he sympathizes with the so-called neglected sector, i.e., agriculture while at the same time supports the necessity of agricultural transformation.

Along with Ajami, Doroudian (1976:157) presumes the necessity of 'Modernization of Rural Economy in Iran' after assuming that the rural economy before the reforms of 1962 was relatively stagnant. He identifies the reluctance of the landlords to invest in agriculture and the lack of incentives among the peasants to work harder as the two causes of low-productivity and the consequent maldistribution of income. He evaluated the impact of modern institutions such as rural cooperatives, agribusiness, farm corporations and production cooperatives as the new leverage on the rural economy that aimed at an increase in production and the elimination of low living standards (Doroudian, 1976:157-168).

The rural economy in the collection of articles presented in Jacqz's book is generally treated as a transitory stage. The origins of this view go back to an earlier time when the scattered studies pointed out the problems of agricultural production and

the necessity of socio-economic changes that would lead to the application of modern technology. Hadary (1951) for example, who was a research attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1951, wrote about the problems of reform in Iran. He was one of the first observers to make a distinction between the rural and urban economies, in economic terms. He recognized the fact that the income gap between rural and urban economies was widening (Hadary, 1951:181) and he attributed this to the structure of the rural economy, especially to the dominance of the landlords who were unwilling to engage in the socio-economic change stimulated by growth in foreign and domestic trade and oil revenues (Ibid). The lack of technical and financial capabilities among the peasantry were also mentioned as other obstacles for the development of modern methods.

Hadary was aware of the Western views on the causes of deficiency in Eastern agriculture and that they laid the blame on the cultivation methods (Hadary, 1951:184). Nevertheless, he did not take a different direction and conceptualize the urban-rural relations as the major tools for his analysis of the causes of the backwardness of the cultivation methods. Because of this failure he sees the agrarian transformation and reform to be inevitable.

Hadary's views are not supported by Keddie's (1971)⁸¹ work; she believed that the impact of Western relations on Iran from the late 19th century caused the living standards of the peasants in Iran to deteriorate. Keddie's historical approach indicates

⁸¹ Keddie published her article first in 1950 and it was republished for the second time in Charles Issawi 1971.

that there was a misinterpretation of history in Hadary's work that blamed only the internal conditions of agricultural production as the cause of low productivity and rural poverty. Accordingly, his findings appear to be biased which leads us to discredit his suggestions about the effectiveness of land reforms that he assumed would eliminate the rural-urban gap.

It should be noted that the problems in Hadary's work regarding the misinterpretation of Iranian agriculture were not his problems alone. It seems that the non-Marxist literature in the 50s followed the same line and identified the low productivity of agriculture as a problem which, it was assumed, would be alleviated via the transformation of agrarian structures.

Adibi (1955:98-100) for example, investigated the problem of low productivity in addition to reviewing the level of illiteracy and low living standards in rural areas. He indicated that the majority of the rural population in the 1940s lived in isolation from the leading groups, and from the major political, economic and cultural currents (Adibi, 1955:124). In a comparison with other countries, he argued that in the 1950s the productivity of Iranian agriculture was among the lowest (Adibi, 1955:128). Twelve million people, or 70 per cent of the total population were working in the agricultural sector (Ibid) and they produced two-thirds of the population's food, whereas 18 per cent of the U.S. population (1950s), who were involved in agriculture, produced food for the total population (Ibid). He maintains;

...the factors responsible for such poor efficiency and low level of agricultural output fall into the following groups: natural conditions, especially insufficiency of cultivated land and water, agrarian structure, i.e., the relation of the farmer to the means of production such as land, water, farm equipment,

etc., and the farmer's position with respect to the land's operation and distribution of farm products -or in short, the land tenure system and land tenancy- and finally, the number of farm workers and the farmer's farming habits and techniques (Adibi, 1955:128).

With regard to inefficiency of techniques of production and low productivity of the labour force, he used the results of a survey which indicated that for Iranian peasants "eight times as many hours of labour are required to grow one hectare of cotton and twelve times as many for wheat as in the United States" (Ibid:134 footnote 48).

However, Adibi appeared reluctant to identify the social processes that manipulated the production process and contributed to low productivity. For example, it can be argued that the above numbers also indicate the level of drudgery and exploitation of the labour force which was prevalent in pre-capitalist rural Iran⁸². If the contribution of the labour force to production process as Adibi shows was so high, it meant that the labour force was used more than other means of production and consequently it should have received more share of the product. Lambton (1969*b*) and Hooglund (1982) indicate in detail that most of the time the labour force did not, however, receive its share because of too much power that the landlords exercised in the production process. Therefore, there is a lack of consistency, in Adibi's discourse, between the identification of the problem and the conceptualization of the Iranian economy, in general, and peasant economy, in particular.

Adibi was aware of the difference between various fractions of the population

⁸² Chayanov's (1966.xiii) theory of peasant farm provides more detail on self-exploitation of peasantry.

(i.e., urban, rural and tribal) and their economic activities. In total, 80 per cent of the population (including urban settlers) was engaged in agriculture (Adibi, 1955:100). He quotes Young who argued that the Iranian elite constituted a small fraction of the population in the 1940s and the 50s but enjoyed the ownership of land and economic and political advantages (Ibid:113). This knowledge, however, does not lead him to provide a full account of the causes of rural underdevelopment, i.e., he does not use the above rural-urban differences as one of his analytical tools.

Among the non-Marxian writers, Lambton (1969*b*) is perhaps the best detailed source that describes the totality of socio-economic life in rural Iran from the pre-Islamic era until early the 1950s. She explains her intention of doing a detailed work of rural Iran as follows:

The object of the present work is to examine in broad outline the position of landlord and peasant in contemporary Persia and the historical factors out of which the existing situation has developed (Lambton, 1969*b*:v).

It is not her intention to theorize the cause and effect relations which prevail in the socio-economic structures. In the first part of her book, she focuses instead on "...the history of land tenure and land revenue administration ." until 1906 (constitutional revolution) and the same procedure is followed for the period after 1906 (Lambton, 1969*b*:v). In this part she makes an assumption about the immutability of landlord-peasant relations that continued into the twentieth century until the late 40s (Ibid).

In the second part she acknowledges that "... a comprehensive examination of the economic position of the landlord and peasant" is not feasible due to lack of

necessary statistics (Lambton, 1969b:v, 178-393). Therefore, she confines herself to a description of the above area based on her own knowledge. The heart of her debate lies in the second part, where she describes the different types of landed properties and where she introduces the sharecropping system and its characteristics (Lambton, 1969b:295-349).

From these descriptions she identifies two sets of problems in Iranian agriculture prior to the 1960s⁶³. The first set consists of:

The problems which affect the crop-sharing peasant and the peasant proprietor alike arise from natural conditions and technical deficiencies. Poverty of the soil, soil erosion, pests, occasional floods and deficient rainfall can, to some extent, be mitigated by improved techniques. But large-scale measures to counteract soil erosion, control pests, and improve irrigation require a capital expenditure well beyond the means of the peasant. His technical problems concern agricultural methods, financial question such as the provision of credit, commercial questions such as marketing methods, communications, the fixing of rents, and security of tenure (Lambton, 1969b:359).

The second set of problems are more social than technical. She indicates that the structure of sharecropping arrangements is such that it increases the impoverishment of peasantry through debt structure (Lambton, 1969b:379-401). The important point here is that she makes an assumption in the first set of problems, arguing that the low productivity due to the implementation of primitive methods was inevitable. In the second set of problems the focus is placed on the fact that the tiny agricultural production that resulted from the low-productive sharecropping was unequally redistributed among the various groups due to the structure of the tenure

⁶³ She published her book in 1953 and 1969 with slight changes. This suggests that the information were valid during the two periods.

system that put the landlords at the top of the social hierarchy (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:379-401).

With the recognition of these problems she develops some technical suggestions that she (Ibid:396) maintains are crucial if production is to be increased, but they are not of concern to us at this time. With regard to the tenure system, however, she has some recommendations that she maintains will affect the peasants' prosperity (Lambton, 1969b:398) and can be briefly summarized here. The security of tenure for the peasants, the replacement of the crop-sharing by fixed rent, elimination of labour service, and putting limitations on the size of landownership are amongst the most important suggestions that she makes in order to argue that the peasantry without these changes would not be able to overcome the problem of poverty (Ibid,1969 398-401).

Despite the descriptive (or prescriptive) essence of Lambton's discourse, Udovitch (1981:12) argues that she shows " how the maintenance of the irrigation system upon which agriculture depended imposed 'a certain pattern in society' and constituted a motive force toward dependence on the state". In this sense, Lambton's identification of the relationship between the administration of the irrigation system and the agrarian structures likens her discourse to the theoretical work of Wittfogel (1957), i.e., 'Oriental Despotism' that emphasized the role of the despot in the development process of the East.

It is helpful to note that not only did Lambton's work enrich the subsequent theoretical works on pre-capitalist Iran, but it also gave rise to a series of debates on

Iran that were present as late as the 1980s. For example, Katouzian (1981) indicates that the nature of the despotic state in 2500 years of Iranian history has been affecting the development processes. His work is interesting to note here, because he tries to criticize the Western intellectual categorization of Eastern societies based on the two common categories of Feudalism and Oriental Despotism (Katouzian, 1981:7-21). Yet, he fails to develop a new category that would address the specificities of Iranian agrarian structures. The only difference, for example, between his model and feudalism is that the despot in Iran not only restricted the ownership of land but also he was able to threaten the landlord's title and right of enjoying ownership (Ibid:19-20). Or, criticizing Wittfogel's thesis about Oriental Despotism, he argues that the involvement of the state in the water supply has not been the state's major function (Ibid).

Katouzian (1981:21) also indicates that he is concerned with not only the totality of the state's power but also with its arbitrary nature in a long period of two and a half millennia. No specifications between historical periods and between socio-economic contexts (i.e., rural/urban differences) are provided.

Although Katouzian (1981:20) agrees with Marx on the Asiatic character of pre-capitalist Iran he appears too vague in situating himself as a Marxist. His contribution to the current argument, however, is undeniable. He notes that there is something specific about Iran that still needs to be clarified, i.e., specificities of the Iranian socio-economic structures. He also notes that uncertainty among both Marxist and non-Marxist scholars, about the nature of pre-capitalist Iran continued into the

1980s.

To sum up, the first major assumption that almost all non-Marxian writers agree on is the prevalence of low productivity in pre-capitalist agriculture in Iran. The second assumption is concerned with the transition of the Iranian agricultural economy which was considered inevitable. The combination of these two assumptions culminated in the conclusion that the problems of agriculture would be solved via technological change whether in its general terms, i.e., industrialization or in its more particular terms, i.e., mechanization of agriculture. The problem, however, is that the causes of low-productivity were not addressed properly and that was due to a lack of consideration of urban-rural relations, i.e., the same problem that drove Marxist literature to fluctuate between the notion of feudalism and Asiatic or even a general term such as pre-capitalist relations.

Despite these shortcomings, the non-marxist literature and especially the work of Lambton does provide the insight that historical elements can be re-examined, for example she successfully refutes the application of feudalism to iqta (Lambton, 1969b:53)⁴⁴. This is especially important because most of the Marxist literature which advocated the feudal thesis based their argument on iqta.

1.3 A Model for Studying Iran's Pre-capitalist Formations:

After the above review of Marxist and non-Marxist literature on Iran and with the introduction of the strength and weaknesses of this literature it may become

⁴⁴ I will discuss iqta in later chapters.

possible to present new ways of conceptualizing pre-capitalist agrarian structures of Iran. This could be done by encapsulating some elements of the above perspectives while isolating others. Foran (1993), for example, presents a combination of conceptual works on the specifications of the pre-capitalist mode of production in Iran. He critically reviews Marxian and neo-Marxian scholars' conceptualization of the pre-capitalist social formations and their views on the transitional character of the Iranian social formations in the current decades. Foran, in fact, reflects the 1990s scholarly reaction to the incapacity of these theories for understanding the specificities of pre-capitalist Iran. His critique results in a new multi-causal and multi-dimensional assumption that considers pre-capitalist Iran as a combination of different modes as he argues that:

The present study will argue that the Iranian social formation in the sixteenth century already consisted of a combination of more than one mode of production and that from the seventeenth century onwards, through contact with the expanding European capitalist mode of production, can be usually analyzed as a transitional social formation in which several modes of production combined to produce a complex and changing class structure (Foran, 1993:7).

Excluding its erroneous periodization that attributes a long period of three centuries as a transitional period his discourse engages in identification of independent modes. Foran's approach is close to Ashraf's (1967:18-19) the difference being that Ashraf failed to identify his three ideal types (feudal, Asiatic and Moluko-tawa-yefi, i.e. tribal type) as three modes of production. The work of Foran also contributes to resolving some other uncertainties that existed even a decade ago.

His approach, for example, solves the problem that Turner (1984:4-10) mentioned about the lack of multi-factorial and multi-causality in approaching the

analysis of the East. Foran (1993:3-15) solves this problem by presenting a combination of analytical tools for understanding socio-economic change in Iran. Also, he agrees that several modes of production dominated the rural economy of Iran. Moreover, Foran's work does not follow Marxist works on the articulation of modes of production; in the Marxist literature on Iran the articulation is considered to be a result of the development of capitalism. Foran, as argued earlier, indicates that the combination of various modes co-existing in rural Iran is an old phenomenon and is not solely a consequence of capitalist development.

Inspired by Foran's articulated work it can be argued here that although his work was concerned with politics in Iran and the nature of dependent capitalist development, he conceptualized the peasant economy in general and crop-sharing practices in particular, as a mode of production that came to terms with the urban economy as an independent socio-economic context (Foran, 1993). The notion of 'sharecropping' agriculture as an explanatory device was used by Lambton (1969b:295-349), Hooglund (1981 and 1982), Najmabadi (1987) and Demin (1971:221-4) long before it was used by Foran. However, sharecropping was often considered as a component of feudal or Asiatic mode. It did not play an independent theoretical role, as a tool, in explaining the socio-economic structures of pre-capitalist Iran. One can suggest, however, that today an analysis of sharecropping as the dominant agricultural enterprise that embraced all relations of production, is one solution to the old Iranian agrarian question, i.e., the question of rural underdevelopment and the low productivity

of agriculture (e.g. see Demin, 1971:222-3)⁸⁵. Also, contrary to Ashraf's thesis of the existence of the unity between city and countryside⁸⁶, sharecropping existed only in rural areas⁸⁷ and it is one specific characteristic of the pre-capitalist period, i.e., the period before 1950s in rural Iran. It is on this basis that, it is contended, the step taken by Foran opened the door for studying the pre-capitalist rural Iran in a way that does not necessarily need to encapsulate all existing socio-economic structures in one concept such as feudalism or despotism and the like.

The causes of rural underdevelopment and low productivity are issues that are not part of the work of Foran. In the following chapters we will examine the question of the peasantry as it operated under socio-economic structures independent of the urban economy but interconnected to it⁸⁸. The role of the representatives of the urban and rural economies in the socio-economic changes will be examined. I contend that this is where the question of low-productivity and underdevelopment of rural Iran resides. It is also my contention that this is what has not been addressed properly or has been interpreted inaccurately in the literature reviewed.

In order to arrive at a new analysis that will address these missing facts, it is

⁸⁵ Demin (1971:22-3) specifically refers to the distinctive function of the sharecropping in exploitation of labour force under the dominance of semi-feudal landlords, as he calls them

⁸⁶ See also Vafadari (1979:94) who introduces a new idea about the interpretation of history by necessitating the consideration of specificities as opposed to conventional models although fails to avoid contradicting himself as he employs the Asiatic mode through describing urban-rural unity.

⁸⁷ Ashraf (1974) identifies a proximity between rural and urban areas in the process of urbanization, and does not consider them as two separate socio-economic structures. Perhaps, it means urban and rural areas shared similarities.

⁸⁸ During the 20th century the independency of rural and urban economies diminished but it was relatively present during the period under research, i.e., until the reform of 1962

crucial to periodize the processes under which the above urban-rural relations took place. Having said that, the period before the 1962 land reform will be a period in which agricultural production was dominant. And, the period of the late 19th and early 20th century has a specific significance in the sense that social and economic structures began to change with the specific impact of the merchants and the development of absentee landlords.

It should also be noted that there are grounds on which we can agree with Lahsaiezadeh's approach to unequal development but in the form of unequal exchange between rural and urban economies and in the context of pre-1962 period. There are also grounds on which we can agree with Foran about the articulation of modes in pre-capitalist period. Regardless of which approach is used the relationship between absentee landlords and the merchant's capital needs special attention because this is what has been neglected although, it is contended, it provides a better understanding of pre-capitalist socio-economic formations in Iran.

Following this discussion of the Marxian and non-Marxian scholars' treatment of the pre-1962 development of Iran Chapter Two will provide a critique of the absolutist state thesis which has attempted to explain Iran's relative underdevelopment. An attempt will be made to replace the assumption of unlimited power by the state by indicating the significance of the class structure in pre-capitalist Iran in the development process. In Chapter Three this argument will be followed by a debate on the development of absentee and merchant-landlordism which will indicate the implication of class relations on the development of private land. Chapter Four will

focus on the formation of the units of production, i.e., on the bonehs in which sharecropping was practiced. The modes of surplus extraction by the absentees will also be examined. Finally, Chapter Five will examine the role of commercialized agriculture which was a reflection of the mechanism of exploitation by the absentee landlords who transferred the extracted surplus product to the market.

Chapter Two

The Absolutist State: A Critique

The model offered in the previous chapter rested its central question on the significance of social classes in pre-capitalist formations which will be discussed below. Oriental states have often been considered as the determining forces contributing to the reproduction of pre-capitalist economic formations of the East due to their absolute power and their control over the means of production (e.g. Taylor, 1979:179; Shaygannik, 1985:76, 78)⁸⁹. It is often assumed that private property could not have developed because of the dominance of the absolutist state⁹⁰ and that the ground rent and tax were coincident (see Melotti, 1977:63-64). Therefore, it is argued, the development of classes was not possible within Eastern societies (e.g. Alatas, 1993:475; Nakhaie, 1986:36-44; Turner, 1984:23-24; Ashraf, 1967:6, 8-9; Wittfogel, 1967:78)⁹¹. In this chapter this premise, i.e., the presence of an absolutist state, will be examined focussing on the case of Iran. This is an attempt to indicate that the notion

⁸⁹ See also Abrahamian (1974).

⁹⁰ Abrahamian (1974:8) refers to the legal absence of property which implies the absence of private property because under despotic power lack of law deprived the expansion of private ownership

⁹¹ It should be noted that Alatas, Turner and Ashraf explain characteristics of Asiatic society but they don't refer to the coincidence of land rent and tax. It should be also noted that Wittfogel's point on the power of the despotic state in restriction of private property is of interest here. Nakhaie (1986 36-44), however, indicates that one of the features of the Asiatic mode is the coincidence of rent and tax due to state ownership of land

of the absolutist state is based on a false assumption⁹² (i.e. unlimited power of the state and its ability to confine the development of classes and property relations) and distorts the very nature of classes and class relations⁹³ which were responsible for the reproduction of Iran's pre-capitalist social and economic formations. In this regard, it is my contention that the importance of absentee landlords and merchants in the socio-economic formations of pre-capitalist Iran is a factor which further requires a critique of the absolutist state thesis.

2.1 State Formation in Iran From a Historical Perspective:

Before going too far we need to know the origins of the above premise that has been included in the definition of oriental states. The definition of the absolutist state in Marxist literature has its origins in the Marxian notion of the Asiatic mode. Katouzian (1981) applies the Asiatic approach to the case of Iran but with a difference between his delineation of the total power of the state and that of his western counterparts. We now shed some light on this difference. Taylor (1979:173) indicates that the Western Marxian notion of oriental state focusses on the presence of a centralized state. The same logic is developed in Godelier's reference to the centrality of kinship which gives rise to the centralized state (Ibid). However, in Katouzian's

⁹² This false assumption has been partly dealt with by Keddie (1971) and Abrahamian (1974) by referring to the absence of a standing army and bureaucracy in the despotic system of Qajar. But a more thorough analysis of the state as a self-aggrandizement institution rather than a historical fact in the formation of peasant relations can be found in Berkday (1991:242-66).

⁹³ The irrelevance of single-causality of Wittfogel's irrigation work, for example, has been critically reviewed by Bodley (1994:164) who indicates irrigation-based agriculture results in inequalities and class formations. We will deal with the question of class in later chapters.

(1981:21) approach the Iranian-oriental state is more than a centralized political institution;

The distinctive characteristic of the Iranian state is that it monopolized not just power, but arbitrary power-not the absolute power of laying down the law, but the absolute power of exercising lawlessness⁹⁴.

Both western Marxists (e.g. Taylor, 1979:173) and Katouzian (1981:21) refer to the presence of such an institution in Iran but Katouzian's version of the state goes beyond the notion of the centrality of political power, i.e., the state maintained its centrality through exertion of unlimited arbitrariness⁹⁵. We will examine Katouzian's definition of such an institution⁹⁶ because his definition not only includes the centrality of political power embedded in the literature written on the Asiatic mode but also bears on the presence of the Asiatic mode in Iran. The question now is how is it possible to examine the presence of an absolutist state? Since Katouzian (1981:21) indicates that he considers a continuity of despotism or absolutism in Iran for two and half millennia I focus on the conditions that could possibly guarantee its development and continuity⁹⁷. It appears that an absolutist power, based on what is understood from the existing definitions, could continue its existence once, at least, the following conditions

⁹⁴ Abrahamian (1975:155) also refers to unlimited power of the ruler in the East that makes him a despot

⁹⁵ Wittfogel (1967:1) also argues that some western observers recognized the differential power of the Oriental despotic states presenting the harshest form of total power

⁹⁶ Definition of absolutism: based on the explanations of Katouzian (1981), Abrahamian (1974) and Wittfogel and Taylor (1979), I would consider absolutism to mean an unlimited and unchecked political power (embodied in a centralized state dominated by a shah) which controls social, economic and political affairs of the country.

⁹⁷ See also Katouzian (1974:222) for his conception of pre-capitalist history of Iran with a lack of the feudal system and the dominance of despotism

were met; 1) ability of the shah/the state to subjugate the internal competing forces⁹⁸, 2) the inheritance of power in a continuous manner so that absolutism was maintained and reproduced, 3) a lack of a legal system that could check the legal and political power of the ruler⁹⁹; and, 4) ability to encounter the external threats¹⁰⁰. Later, I will test the above conditions in the case of Iran. Now, some points will be made with regard to the notion of centralization of power in Iran and the independence of the state institution from the shah.

I shall begin with the position that the concept of 'state' appears central to the analysis of the socio-economic formations in Iran (e.g. Farhi, 1990; Foran, 1993:9)¹⁰¹. A co-equal analytical weight, however, should be put on the absence or weakness of the state in these formations¹⁰². Foran (1993:9-10) indicates that the scholars of the 'state' such as Skocpol have separated the state from class relations to introduce it as an autonomous structure that acts on its own. Skocpol's scheme, thus, introduces the state as a strong institution that can challenge the social and economic power of the dominant classes, i.e., the tenets that are often attributed to a centralized state. However, neither in the period before the Safavids for almost eight centuries (Arasteh,

⁹⁸ Wittfogel (1967:49) refers to the tendency of the Oriental-despotic state to prevent non-governmental forces from becoming independent

⁹⁹ Katouzian (1981:20) refers to "...the absence of legal code of conduct."

¹⁰⁰ See also Wittfogel (1967:101-08) for more details on the characteristics of a despotic state

¹⁰¹ Alatas (1993:491), for example, treats the Asiatic mode of production as the theory of state to explain interdependency of the state and socio-economic formations in Iran and Ottoman empires

¹⁰² For example, it can be argued that the 20th century changes in Iran were mainly due to a lack of strong state in the 19th century (e.g. Abrahamian, 1974; Keddie, 1971).

1970), nor after the Safavids, i.e., after 1736 (Foran, 1993:10) was the state centralized. This can be understood by contrasting the state of Safavids and that of Qajars. Lambton (1969b:105)¹⁰³ refers to the Safavids (1499-1736 A.D.) as a period that marked the emergence of a national state (i.e., centralized) and absolutism. (We will show in later chapters that the Safavids limited the development of landholding classes.) It was in the late 18th century that the state again became centralized with the rise of the Qajar dynasty (e.g. Bausani, 1971). However, in the case of Qajars, the state lost its strength to foreign influence in the 19th century and became a weak institution (e.g. Bausani, 1971; Motazed, 1988; Keddie, 1971; Turner, 1984:172) reflecting a rather decentralized authority (Garthwaite, 1981:160)¹⁰⁴. Also, the inherent characteristics of the Qajar state such as a fragmented revenue system and the inability to control distant affairs and offices (Alatas, 1993:480) were severe limitations on any system of centralized authority¹⁰⁵. Under these circumstances the absence of a strong state rather than the presence of it was more crucial in social and economic formations.

In the following argument we will try to shed some light on the issue of the state in Iran with an emphasis on the notion of the absolutist/centralized state. This is an important argument because, on the one hand, the existence of this type of state in the history of Iran could prevent the rise of parallel sources of power, i.e., classes,

¹⁰³ Arasteh (1970:13) talks about tribal invasion prior to the Safavids

¹⁰⁴ For more details see Garthwaite (1983)

¹⁰⁵ Alatas (1993:480), because of these tenets refutes the notion of Asiatic mode of production to be applicable to Qajar state

tribes, etc. In turn, the absence of such an institution could give impetus to the rise of these parallel forces to compete with the state's political and economic power.

Therefore, it is our task to determine if the development of an absolutist/centralized state occurred.

State formation in Iran may be viewed as having passed through five major stages; 1) the centralized states of the pre-Islamic period, i.e., Persian Empires; 2) the collapse of the centralized state in 642 A.D. and the ensuing disorders and fragmentation of social, economic and political structures¹⁰⁶; 3) the resurgence of the central state of Safavids between 1499 and 1736; 4) the development of local dynasties after the Safavids, i.e., recurrence of fragmentation of political structure¹⁰⁷; 5) and, finally the modern states of the 19th and 20th century¹⁰⁸ of which the latter was more centralized than the former¹⁰⁹. I do not intend to review all these stages here. The intention is to show that the notion of the absolutist/centralized state which is often used to explain that the notion that private property could not have emerged in Iran has no ground for support in the history of Iran. A review of the history of Iran indicates that the state in Iran lost its centrality after 642 A.D. (except for the Safavid

¹⁰⁶ One of these important events was the destruction of the country by the Mongols in the 13th century (see Khazanchi and Sadat, 1973:5).

¹⁰⁷ See Costello (1977:18) for more debates on the breakdown of the state after the Safavids.

¹⁰⁸ For more details about the history of Iran see Wilber (1975) and Arasteh (1970), Keshavarz (1984), Bausani (1971).

¹⁰⁹ It can be argued that the Qajar state (19th century) was also a centralized state, however, it was more of a single-state structure rather than a centralized state. In other words, there existed one state but it did not have control over the country. As Garthwaite (1981:160) indicates during the Qajars a decentralized political structure developed. And, this was simply because the state was not able to control all areas of the country as a centralized state and it shared the power with the tribes (Ibid)

Period) and consequently, the dominant political structure borrowed the characteristics of a multi-central system in which only some centralized authority was imposed by the dominant rulers in the state (e.g. Keshavazz, 1984; Bausani, 1971; Motazed, 1988) Khosravi (1976:60-61) compares the political system of post-642 A.D. to a patriarchal and Khan¹¹⁰ system that replaced the centralized state. The same system was carried over into the 19th century Qajar and reflects little difference in the historical periods of Iran in terms of the absence of absolutist/centralized states. Abrahamian (1974) explains this in a detailed way by referring to the policy of 'divide and rule' used by the Qajars in order to offset their weakness outside Tehran.

Having dealt with the notion of centralization of political power we also need to elaborate on the unity of the state apparatus and the ruler which would make the state to become absolutist. It should be noted that the state and the shah (as the embodiment of kingdom) are considered two separate institutions here. The shah in Iran in the 19th and 20th centuries could be characterized as a source of political and legal power, power which was not regulated by law. Therefore, there was no actual check on his power (Arasteh, 1970:36, Abrahamian, 1974:9-10)¹¹¹. The state (especially prior to 1906 constitutional revolution) was an institution through which the shah implemented his personal ideas about the country and by which the ruler-subject

¹¹⁰ Khan usually refers to the tribal leader. Apparently they had control over the area they lived in and may be this is the reason Khosravi uses that system to describe the situation as one being controlled by these local powers instead of a centralized state.

¹¹¹ Lambton evaluates the existence of tyranny in the history of Iran based on the absence of a contractual base. This in turn, contributed to the interference of social institutions in one another's fields of activity which increased tyranny (quoted by Banani, 1969:152). Shajri-ee (1977) also provides insights about the absence of law and the tyranny of the rulers.

relations were facilitated¹¹² (e.g. Banani, 1969:58; Abrahamian, 1974:9-10). This was a personalized institution revolving around the notion of shah¹¹³. In this sense, there was no practical frontier between the state and the shah, or according to Amanat (1991:577) between the Court and the state, by which one would control the other.

Starting with Amir Kabir who was the shah's (Nasir-oddin shah) grand Vazir between 1848 and 1851 (Upton, 1961:7), the state began to separate from the shah and acted as a political body that tried to restore Iranian dominance over national interests. The Reuter¹¹⁴ concession of 1872-3 and then the tobacco concession of 1890 to the British¹¹⁵ fuelled a range of opposition by the clergy (e.g. Gilbar, 1977:279; Wilber, 1975:67-8; Avery, 1965:95-125) with the support of the people (Arasteh, 1970:12) and brought the notion of foreign dominance to the centre of the political orientation of the opposition movements¹¹⁶. These new aspirations were crystallised in the constitutional movement of 1906-11 which erected a political body that started to check the power of

¹¹² Taylor (1979:182) indicates that the systems where the monarch dominated the state apparatus were particular to the Asiatic system.

¹¹³ Amanollahi (1978:165-66) also identifies the same tenets for the pre-1800 period.

¹¹⁴ It was a seventy-year concession in which the British subject, i.e., Reuter was granted the right to construct a railway from north to south and undertook its administration (Motazed, 1988:316, Bausani, 1971:169).

¹¹⁵ The concession that was given to Talbot, a British subject, gave a control over production and trading of tobacco for 50 years (Gilbar, 1977:288). In return, the government received 15,000 pounds sterling and 25 percent of the net profit per annum. The Reuter and tobacco concessions were later cancelled due to the public reaction.

¹¹⁶ For a full detailed description of the Regie tobacco concession and the pertaining events see Kazemzadeh (1968:241-301)

the shah¹¹⁷. This was accompanied by the emergence of parliament, the first Majlis of 1907 (Banani, 1969:59), that legalized the state's actions. This is the time, it is contended, that the state appears separate from the shah¹¹⁸ despite the fact that it did not have enough political power to oppose the shah until the 1950s oil-nationalization movement.

The prime example of the declining political and legal power of the shah vis a vis the state was the outcome of the relations with the Russians and the British that changed as a result of the 1920's Majlis decision as described below. It started in 1907 when an agreement was reached that officially divided Iran between Russian and British zones of influence (Baldwin, 1967:7). In 1919, following the Russian revolution the Russians decided to withdraw from Iran (Ibid). This should have given the British more power and advantage in Iran. This depended on the Majlis, however, to recognize the new position of the British in Iran but the Majlis resisted it (Ibid 8). Baldwin (1967:8) indicates that it was the shah and the cabinet which approved the presence of British power in Iran while the Majlis resisted (Ibid).

Another example was when the Majlis reacted to the bribery that was carried out by the Minister of Roads in 1936. The Majlis passed a law to regulate the appropriate punishment for this bribery (see Banani, 1969 61). This was in contrast to the functions of the state during Qajar in which, as Banani (1969 58) writes, the

¹¹⁷ For more details on the constitutional movement see Upton (1961 36-39), Wilber (1975 69-73),

¹¹⁸ Alatas (1993 490) indicates that the same process of the separation of state from the ruler happened in Turkey in the 19th century when the conflict between the bureaucratic-military elite and the ruler arose.

operation of the state was based on Madakhel which was "...an officially condoned form of graft and bribery" (see also Faroughi, 1982:282-83; Bagheri, 1992:43).

Considering that the shah monopolised the state's political and legal power in the Qajar period the difference lies in the fact that the state becomes a source of political and legal power in itself during the 20th century. This was despite the fact that Reza Khan presented a more centralized authority than the Qajars. Therefore, the shah and its role in Iran's political history and the state and its role were two different issues.

These facts lead us to re-examine the nature of the old and modern states in Iran and, in addition, the existence of absolutist states, i.e., a situation where the ruler and the state were a unified and centralized body monopolising socio-political and economic formations. This is relevant to the question of private property that, on one extreme view of scholars, to some appears to have not existed in Iran. On the other extreme, some Iranologists of the former Soviet Union indicate that even as early as Mongolian times (1220-1336 A.D.) private property, although not as extensive as the state land, existed in Iran (Keshavarz, 1984:359). The same pattern of ownership (i.e., the state land alongside the private land) can also be traced into the Safavid period, 1499-1736 (Bausani, 1971:148-50). The existence or the absence of private property depends on the existence of absolutist states (e.g. Ashraf, 1978:314). In order to solve the controversy over the existence or absence of private property or a combination of both we will examine the existence of the absolutist state in Iran.

Now, we can return to the four conditions for the existence of an absolutist state. These conditions are treated as four factors that will be employed in order to

examine the possibility of the development of an absolutist state in Iran and to examine the level of socio-economic and political and legal power it exercised. These four factors consist of: 1) the existence of other sources of political power than the shah (or the state), 2) the inheritance of power¹¹⁹ which excluded rival groups from participation in the political structure; 3) the absence of law which created the grounds for absolutism (Abrahimian, 1974) while its emergence depended upon the individual character of the ruler, and, 4) the presence of external powers in the politics of Iran which imposed limitations to state power (e.g. Avery, 1965, Bausani, 1971). The above four factors are employed so as to indicate that their effects lessen the possibility of the emergence of an absolutist power as they contribute to the emergence of five competing power sources, mentioned below. We will use the same factors to explain the circumscription of the state's political power by these forces.

The combined effects of the above four factors contributed to the development of five competing sources of political, economic, legal, and, in the case of tribes, military power in the country towards the 19th and in the early 20th century: 1) the shah and the state, 2) the Russians and the British, 3) the merchants, 4) the landlords, 5) the tribes. Except in occasional references, the politico-economic power of the external forces will not be discussed in this dissertation due to its long history which really deserves a separate study. I shall now try to shed some light on the significance of the above forces in circumscribing the state's power.

¹¹⁹ The dominance of various dynasties which promoted inheritance of power according to one report dates back to the eleventh century (e.g. Keddie, 1971: 4).

To begin with the first factor, it should be noted that the merchants, the tribes and the landlords formed internal groups struggling for political power. However, the case of tribes is more eloquent in understanding power relations than the case of landlords and merchants, because as Keddie (1971:4) argues the landlords in the early 19th century overlapped the tribal groups, in many cases the landlords had tribal origins and the merchants began to insert their economic (hence political) power only in later periods¹²⁰. Accordingly, the tribes constituted a determining force as a power bloc as will be further described below¹²¹.

At the beginning of the 19th century the tribal population constituted almost 50 per cent of the total population (Foran, 1993:117; Nowshirvani, 1981:559). They lived in remote areas and provided the state with military forces (Lambton, 1987:96; Garthwaite, 1981:160)¹²² and received land in *tuyul* (e.g. Garthwaite, 1981:170) in return for their military service. During Qajars, the tribes were ranked next to the rulers (Lambton, 1987:95-6). Bakhtiaries, Kurds, Afshars, Qaraguzlus, Arabs,

¹²⁰ The big merchants (*tojjar*) did not develop a contradiction with the state until the late 19th century when their economic power was threatened by the state (e.g. Gilbar, 1977). Gilbar (1977:282) argues that before this date the state neither showed an interest in the country's economy nor had the ability to play a role. Thus, the economic power of the merchants was unchallenged. This was reflected in their political orientation. In the 1850s they were reluctant to transform their economic power into political power. For example, they did not support the 1850s clergy's resistance against the government neither did they show any interest in resisting the 1873 concession to Reuter. Stack (1882:270, vol. 1) indicates that as late as 1881 the merchants (his example from Yazd) were still reluctant to enter politics.

¹²¹ To the internal forces that threatened the state one can also add the social and political power of the clergy who were supported by the public. Since their effects on modern Iran deserves a separate research I will not, except occasionally, deal with them in here.

¹²² Garthwaite (1983:64) in his recent work documents provision of 200 cavalymen for Tehran and 200 for the governor of Shiraz only by the Bakhtiari tribe. This tribe dominated central and southern areas and became an important military and political force in the 19th and the 20th century.

Qashqa'i, Baluchs, Turkomans and others were among the most influential tribes of the 19th century and came after the Qajars in terms of power (Lambton, 1987:96). Their leaders sometimes moved up to the level of provincial governorship and in some areas "were virtually local rulers" (Ibid)¹²³. Even members of the bureaucracy who were associated with the state were inferior to the tribal leaders and the landowning class (Ibid:99). Despite the highly ranked position of some tribes within the state structure the tribes were external forces vis-a-vis the state and had socio-economic, political and military power. They had independent and well-instituted social, economic and political structures (e.g. Amanollahi, 1989) which created the grounds for an ongoing tension between the tribes and the state.

Given the tribal population of 50 percent for the early 1800s, and 33 percent for 1850s (Foran, 1993:117) and given the historical tension between the tribes and the states, one can understand, as Momeni (1980:32) argues, that the tension between the tribes and the state was a struggle between the tribes' desire for political autonomy¹²⁴ and the state's desire for centralization (see also Garthwaite, 1981; 1983). This tendency has been documented repeatedly. Where the state did not have enough force, the politics of the region was in the hands of the local tribe or the landlords. Upton (1961:22) writes:

Up to the mid-twenties tribal leaders had exercised a large measure of independence in their respective areas. They covered the entrance and egress

¹²³ See also Amanollahi (1987:169).

¹²⁴ The tribes had a political system that was based on, 1) prevailing order within the tribesmen, and, 2) defending the interests of the tribe and tribesmen against the outsiders (Amanollahi, 1989:177). This was similar to a state's functions and matched their tendency for autonomy.

routes to rich areas, extorted payment from anyone using the paths across their territory, and indulged in varying degrees of pillage and feuding¹²⁵.

Tribal leaders such as Muhammad Taqi Khan from the Bakhtiari tribe had the potential to challenge the Qajars (Garthwaite, 1981:62) indicating a long history of desire for total political power among the tribes. The conflict of interests between the state and the tribes continued into the 20th century and was not entirely solved even by Reza Khan's militant state (e.g. Keddie, 1971:5) until the 1950s when Qashqa'i tribes, for example, in the south were destroyed in favour of the centralization of the modern state of Reza Khan's son (e.g. Royce, 1981:289-90)¹²⁶.

So far, the relationship of the state with the tribes and its inability¹²⁷ until Reza Khan to control the competing sources of power, especially the tribes, has been treated. The question now is, if absolutism existed in the history of Iran how did these rival groups develop into the 20th century without being interrupted by the absolutist states? It was argued before that it was partly due to the absence of the characteristics of absolutism in the state. However, one of the most important elements of the state in Oriental societies is the ruler. Hence, we need to examine the position of the rulers in relation to rival forces in order to determine whether or not these rulers contributed to the development of rival forces or to the development of absolutism.

I shall begin with the position that only a strong monarch such as Abbas in the

¹²⁵ See Wilson (1942) for more details about the political power of tribes.

¹²⁶ Amanollahi (1989: 244) also refers to post-1953 coup as the period that had an unprecedented impact on tribal lifestyle in Iran.

¹²⁷ Inability in the sense that the state was not able to prevent the tribes to exert their political power into the political structure until the 20th century.

Safavid period manifested the characteristics embedded in the notion of a centralized authority (e.g. Foran, 1993:22; Alatas, 1993:477). For instance, under him the provincial governors had less autonomy and after him they rule more autonomously (Foran, 1993:22). This is an indication of the significance of individual rulers and their power, in addition to other factors, for an absolutist state to be present, but not every individual shah exercised the same power. In this sense, the development of an assumption about the state in Iran without considering the varying power of the shahs has limitations especially since the Qajar shahs are known for their incompetence (e.g. Sultanzade, 1931:84)¹²⁸.

These limitations are more evident when one considers that the shah was one and perhaps the most significant, but not in any sense the only, element of the political structure. During the 19th century Qajar, for example, the local governors, and even military forces resisted centralizing reforms (Nowshirvani, 1981:560). And "... Only the existence of factional rivalries in each region enabled the government to assert some limited authority and to prevent even further disintegration" (Ibid). In other words, without the tension among the officials of the provinces the state and the shah were not able to subjugate them.

Having treated the presence of rival forces and their effect on the development of absolutism we now move to the second factor, i.e., inheritance of power. This factor also deals with the question of tribes but from a different angle. This factor is

¹²⁸ Agha Mohammad Khan (1779-1796), Fath Ali Shah (1797-1834), Mohammad Shah (1834-1848), Nasir-oddin shah (1848-1896), Mozaffar-oddin (1896-1907), Mohammad Ali Shah (1907-09), and Ahmad Shah (1909-1925).

used to explain the mechanism of the exclusion of tribes from politics and their inclination towards resistance against the state.

The inheritance of power would have facilitated the lawlessness and arbitrary rules because of the absence of the element of public participation. This factor, however, needs to be analyzed in order to illustrate whether or not it resulted in arbitrariness. Until the overthrow of the last shah in 1979 each dynasty (mostly from tribal origins) which came to power bequeathed it to its own descendants until somebody from a different dynasty overthrew the ruling one (see Arasteh, 1970:7-12; and Wilber, 1975:16-73). This meant that the legitimacy of the state originated from tribal interests rather than national interests. The implication of this type of political system was, as Upton (1961:22) points out, the presence of tribal groups as a source of disunity even when they were not in power. This disunity resulted from the fact that through the mechanism of inheritance of power many groups were excluded from political power and this resulted in their alienation. The absence of a national state which would include every group in the political system increased the risk of tension and insecurity. As a result, the state as a hereditary system was always in threat from the tribes, even under centralised authority of Safavids (Alatas, 1993:477), simply because it did not include them in the power structure except in lower ranking positions compared to the shah, and except in those areas outside of the reach of the central state (e.g. Lambton, 1987:96). The tension between the state and the tribes forced the state to take measures for containing the tension. The Qajar state, for example, developed a hostage-taking policy as they held the tribal leaders as hostages

in Tehran in order to keep the rebellious tribes in control (Ibid; Keddie, 1971:4). The potential threat from the tribes, however, remained the main characteristic of the political structure prior to the 20th century state of the Pahlavis (e.g. Alatas, 1993:477, Lambton, 1987:96)¹²⁹. This continuous insecurity of power contributed to a lack of grounds for the development of absolutism. Instead, the hereditary political system provided favourable grounds for the decline of the state's power due to its inherent mechanism of exclusion policies. Mozaffar-oddin who inherited power in the late 19th century was physically and politically weak and is primarily known because of his illness and for his frequent trips to Europe. It was during his reign that the constitutional revolution happened and he died in 1907. The last of Qajar who inherited power was a 12 year old child (1909-25). This was coincident with World War One and helped provide the grounds for the demise of the Qajar dynasty (see Banani, 1969:31). Both cases represented a political system that relied on inheritance of power but in neither case did they achieve the success of arbitrary rule. Returning to the practice of inheritance of power it can now be said that it was not a factor that consolidated absolutism rather it was detrimental to the state.

To sum up, from the history of state formation in Iran in the pre-capitalist period until the 1950s the most one can assert is that the term 'absolutist state' is rather a relative term and varied in different rulers and different periods and also was subject to geographical limitations, i.e., sometimes it only applied to the capital. What

¹²⁹ Alatas provides an example of tribal threat during the powerful state of 16th century Safavids and Lambton provides an example from the relatively weak state of 19th century Qajar.

remains true, however, is that the state was an urban phenomenon not only in Iran but in the Middle East as a whole, as the centre of many governments have been in the cities (Gulick, 1969:123; e.g. Khosravi, 1976:35-42). The city was the centre of the development process at the expense of an exploited countryside (this will be treated in later chapters)¹³⁰.

In terms of political structure, therefore, two different (but interconnected) types of political structure operated in urban and rural social settings up to the 20th century. While the state remained relatively powerful in the cities it communicated with the countryside through the dominant classes who sometimes were its agents. These classes were holders or owners of the means of production, i.e., land, and exercised their power independent of the state. This was especially true in the case of tribes. The land was given to the landholders as *tuyul* or *iqta* and it did not bring them total ownership of land except in *suyurghal*¹³¹ (e.g. Shaygannik, 1985:79-84; Keshavarz, 1984:526-27)¹³² and the latter was limited during the Safavids (Keshavarz, 1984:526-27; Ashraf, 1978:314). Nevertheless, as we will argue later, there was a movement towards the development of private land and, this was in addition to the already present limited amount of private land; this reflected the independence of the

¹³⁰ Of the factors involved in the growth of urbanization in the Middle East, the favourable treatment of urban inhabitants has been one major factor that encouraged the peasants to move to the cities where security was higher (see Issawi, 1969:105)

¹³¹ During the Mongolian invasion another type of landholding developed called *Suyurghal* which allowed the owners to possess the land forever (Keshavarz, 1984:526-27). Some have considered it as a hereditary grant (Shaygannik, 1985:83)

¹³² Although Shaygannik (1985) tries to account for the land tenure in medieval Iran, he covers the period after Islam which created the same tenure system that lasted until the current century.

dominant classes from the state. Given the above argument, it can be said that the power of the state in the rural areas was shared by the landlords and landholders or state agents. In other words, the state's direct political, legal and economic power was secondary in rural areas and if any at all only exercised through intermediates. If one considers the fact that more than 80 percent of the population in Iran lived in rural areas marked by an absence of direct state power, then it makes sense to argue that state power of any kind was not as determining to the development process in the rural areas as that of the landholding class¹³³ (e.g. Lambton, 1987:54). This situation held until the land reform of 1962.

State political power, then, was usually limited to the urban areas where the shah had easier access to the urban population. Hence, during periods of power turnovers when a ruler died or seemed to have little power to enforce the state regulations¹³⁴ an opportunity for the local leaders to form their own territorial regulations was created; this was especially true in the more remote areas. These regulations immediately affected the economic arena where agriculture formed the basic element of local economies¹³⁵. So far, we have seen that, on the one hand, the presence of rival groups did not provide the necessary condition for the development

¹³³ The land-holders as opposed to landowners were temporary figures in the land tenure system of the pre-20th century, but they operated similar to the landlords, i.e., as exploiters

¹³⁴ It should be noted that regulations in legal terms may not have existed before the 19th century but as Shaji-ee (1977) indicates customary law (Orf) existed. I would go further to argue that the presence of state institution denotes the presence of various regulations because that is the way the state prevails its dominance.

¹³⁵ Ashraf's system of Moluko-tawa-yefi is one similar type to these local autonomous powers (see Ashraf, 1967)

and continuity of absolutism and, on the other hand, the process of passing on power via inheritance provided favourable grounds for the decline of the state power, this was much noticeable in the case of weak rulers such as Mozaffar-oddin shah. There is also another factor which could also contribute to the development or reproduction of absolutism in Iran, i.e., an absence of law. We now turn to this issue.

The third factor in the history of state formation in Iran has been the lack of law (e.g. Banani, 1969:58)¹³⁶. Fath Ali Shah Qajar the monarch of 1800s told a British diplomat that the difference between a monarch in Iran and in England was that the Iranian monarch enjoyed unrestricted power while the law limited the power of the monarch in England (see Arasteh, 1970:36)¹³⁷. To those who are fascinated by the concept of absolutism, this would provide enough evidence to attribute absolutism to such a lawless situation (e.g. Katouzian, 1981:20-21). For example, Shaji-ee (1977:39) considers the political systems of pre-1906 constitutional revolution as period in which absolutism dominated Iran due to an absence of law and of fixed regulations (see also Nava-ee, 1978:165-66). Generally speaking, however, the Qajar dynasty that ruled Iran from 1796 to 1925 (Arasteh, 1970:12) did not show that the unlimited power was practically used (Banani, 1969:58). "Arbitrary and entirely free from any legal restrictions, the government was nevertheless powerless in the

¹³⁶ Nava-ee (1978:165), with a general approach to the pre-1906 period, argues that political and administration formations were not complicated and were dominated by the shah's ideas. The implication of this approach is that absolutism originated from the absence of law. Upton (1961:17) believes that the government since 1900 is characterised as being run by the individuals and groups rather than by law.

¹³⁷ The absence of law was also evident in other aspects of the society and the economy (e.g. Upton (1961:27).

discharge even of its normal functions" (Banani, 1969:58). This means that the absence of law per se did not provide the necessary conditions for the state to exercise its unlimited power. The state apparatus was an extension of the shah's authority whose personal characteristics determined the level of state absolutism. And, not all the Qajar shahs had the ability to use the lack of law and exercise their monopoly of total power. Nasir-oddin shah who ruled for fifty years came to throne when he was seventeen (Wilber, 1975:67). He was the one who agreed to kill Amir Kabir who was one of the most prominent national figures in the history of Iran and whose reforms are still known as a symbol of national pride. Mozaffar-oddin was another Qajar shah who was ill and did not take politics seriously, and Ahmad shah was only twelve when he came to throne. It is not surprising, then, that Keddie (1971:3) can argue that contrary to the belief that Eastern societies are characterized as dominated by Oriental despotism the shah in the 19th century Iran had little power outside Tehran.

Generally speaking, during Qajar period (1800-1914), the Court was so corrupt that the state bureaucracy was divided among the rival groups of the Court (see Foran, 1993:138). At the local level, in contrast to the Safavid period, the provincial governors established a copy of the Court that existed in Tehran while they exercised considerable political and economic autonomy including controlling the surplus generated in their jurisdiction (Foran, 1993:138).

The fourth factor that demarcated state power and diminished its chance to develop into an absolutist power was the rivalry between the British and the Russians from the early 1800s. Iran lost two wars with Russia in 1813 and in 1828 which

resulted in Russian influence in Iran (see e.g. Wilber, 1975:66). And the actual influence of Britain in Iran began in 1839-41 when British troops in an attempt to convince Iran to withdraw from Afghanistan landed at the head of the Persian Gulf and Russia failed to support Iran (Ibid:67; Upton, 1961:6-7). As a result, a struggle between Britain and Russia over influence in Iran began affecting the socio-economic and political formations in Iran. The Russian influence was terminated by a treaty in 1919. The British influence, although diminished between 1920s and 1940s, lasted until the 1950s and ended in the 1951 oil nationalization movement (Upton, 1961:82-88).

The period between World War One and World War Two marks the weakening power of external forces and the growth of the relatively absolutist state of Reza Khan (e.g. Banani, 1969:147)¹³⁸. It was a relatively absolutist state because of the effects of the residue of external forces that remained in Iran and forced the state back to demarcated areas of socio-economic activities. The oil company, for example, did not come under the control of the state during Reza Khan and, therefore, the state failed to launch a full fledged industrialization plan (see Banani, 1969:112-145). The export value of oil which was controlled by the British-dominated Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was never revealed (Upton, 1961:85)¹³⁹.

¹³⁸ Banani (1969:147) maintains that Reza Khan used an absolutist method of control and gave a secondary role to the element of nationalism to support his legitimacy. But, it seems with the presence of international power influence in Iran manifested in the operation of Anglo-Iranian Oil Company the elements of nationalism were automatically limited unless he could gain control of the Company which he tried in 1932 and failed (1960:142).

¹³⁹ For more examples and details on the foreign dominance in Iran see Upton, 1961 and Wilber 1975

In such a socio-political situation as explained above (whether in the 19th century or in the 20th century), the state retreated from its traditional position such as during the Safavids, i.e., being involved in economic production, and was confined to the urban centres. We should shed some light on the issue of state involvement in economic production. We are referring to the independency of the state from foreign pressure and its implication for economic production, i.e., something that was lost during the period of the Russian and British influence in the 19th century. The state's lack of access to all resources (i.e., lack of control on terms of trade in the 19th century and oil revenues in the 20th century) reduced its economic and political power implying a lack of conditions necessary for the state to practice a regime of total power. Confined to urban centres, the state only facilitated the effects of politico-economic dominance of foreign power, i.e., granting concessions, taking part in denigrating trade and other economic policies¹⁴⁰. It was not accidental that the constitutional movement (1906-1911) and the oil nationalization movements (1952-53) and even the modern movement of 1979 were anti-foreign¹⁴¹ before they were anti-

¹⁴⁰ Bausani (1971:170) documents the destructive actions of the incompetent Muzaffar-ud-din Shah (1896-1906) who was responsible for the degeneration of the economy as he travelled to Europe at the expense of borrowing money from Russians. In 1900, some 2,400,000 pounds sterling was borrowed from Russia in return all the customs revenue of the country excluding Fars and the Persian Gulf was granted to the Russians.

¹⁴¹ It seems, however, that the constitutional movement expressed some elements of anti-state sentiment in that the movement concentrated on the creation of Majlis (or Parliament). It should not be overlooked that the state was not able to resist foreign influence and the need for a parallel force tempted the movement to realize its anti-foreign component through creation of a parallel power source to that of the state. It seems that the same pattern was once tried by the efforts of Amir Kabir in 1848-51 but failed due to the lack of a power pole within the state apparatus that would have supported him. In the constitutional movement the anti-foreign campaign was materialized by creation of this power pole, i.e., Majlis.

state¹⁴². In other words, the public saw the state as the agent of foreign forces rather than as an independent national institution.

Therefore, to return to the notion of an absolutist state, it was by no means only the presence of the absolutist state (or a strong shah) that constructed the internal formations of the rural economy/agrarian structures. In fact, politics in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century in Iran, except for the period of Reza Khan¹⁴³, represents a period in which the absence of an absolutist state contributed to the shift of more power to the local agents (e.g. Turner, 1984:172; Foran, 1993:138).

We noted earlier how this shift came about under the Qajars and Upton (1961:89) provides a later example for the period between 1941 and 1946. He argues that for four and a half years, the central state's authority was so limited that the provincial governments were free of the central government regulations. This, of course, was because of the War and because of the fact that foreign powers such as the Soviets entered Iran and affected the conditions. The consequence, as Upton (1961:89) argues, was that Anglo-Soviet forces monopolized the communication systems outside Tehran. This limitation of state power illustrates that events such as a war have limited the development of an absolutist state in Iran. Even Ashraf (1981:87) with a general approach to the history of the post-Islamic period refers to the continuous disruption of the political structure. He uses this to describe the lack of development of a European type of feudalism in Iran (Ibid). At the same time,

¹⁴² See Upton (1961:82-88) for the details on 1951 anti-British movements

¹⁴³ See Ghazi (1993) for more details about the state of Reza Khan and his arbitrary rule

however, it confirms that in the post-Islamic period, except for short periods, the rise of an absolutist state in Iran has been only remotely possible

To sum up, there have been two problems with the literature dealing with the history of state formation in Iran. The first problem is that the state has been considered a uniform absolutist institution in Iran's long history. It has been argued here that absolutism was not a continuous phenomenon therefore, it could not be considered as a uniform institution that was present throughout a long history because it failed to reproduce centralization by arbitrary rulers. The second problem is that the conditions for reproduction of such an institution have not been considered. By reviewing the process of state formation in Iran it becomes evident that there was fluctuation in the dominance of powerful states, i.e., absolutism in a continuous manner did not exist. We can use this absence of absolutism to build an argument on the development of private land.

In order to answer the question of the development of private land we will need to examine class structure, as suggested in Chapter One. The next section, will focus on the question of class and class typology in pre-capitalist Iran in order to replace the notion of a powerful state with the concept of class as the centre of our analysis. This will also indicate the complexity of the class structure in pre-capitalist Iran, especially after the independence, but interconnection, of the rural class structure from urban class structure is shown.

A good example of the effects of the absence of an absolutist state on the development of private land can be found during the Qajar. In that period, a

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combination of incompetence of Qajar shahs and foreign dominance gave rise to the transformation of tuyul land into private land as we will argue in later chapters. In addition, an even more important factor in the privatization of land process will be examined, i.e., the involvement of merchants in landownership.

2.2 Rural-Urban Classes and Class Structure; The Development of Absentee Landlords

In the previous section the presence of an absolutist state as a catalyst to the social and economic formations of pre-capitalist Iran was put to the test and it was concluded that the state has been present in Iran more as an urban phenomenon, as a relatively weak institution and only intermittently as an absolutist power. This would suggest that there should have been a surrogate source of economic and political power that affected socio-economic formations more effectively than the state, especially within the context of the rural economy. This means that an answer may be provided to the question of classes which were involved in the exploitation of the Iranian peasantry.

In order to answer this question, the first step will be to provide a class typology for the period of the 19th and 20th centuries that will indicate chronological changes in the Iranian class structure. It is my contention that one of these changes has been the development of absentee landlords as a class whose members' origins were rooted in the old tuyul-dars, the state officials, the tribal leaders and the late 19th century merchants. In this sense, this section will provide the background necessary for the next step, i.e., an examination of the development of absentee landlords as the

prime sources of economic and political power in the agrarian structures of pre-capitalist Iran. To indicate the full implications of this phenomenon, i.e., the development of absentee landlordism, the future chapters will deal with the nature of exploitative relations in rural Iran under the dominance of the absentee landlords.

Since 'class' in its common Marxian sense is to be used in the following argument we will classify groups of people based on their relation to the major means of production (e.g. Elster, 1985:322; Bill, 1972a; 1972b:419)¹⁴⁴. In the urban economy of the 19th century in which some 10 to 15 percent of the Iranian population lived (e.g. Foran, 1993:123)¹⁴⁵ the major means of production were land¹⁴⁶, labour, merchant capital (this type of capital was not primarily part of the means of production because it was used in trade but in later periods it was used to buy land and produce cash-crops) and the technology used in the traditional manufacturing sector and in trading activities (e.g. Bonine, 1981:233-58). In the rural economy the major means of production were land, water, oxen, labour and seed (Abdollaev, 1982:242; Vali, 1980:32)¹⁴⁷. Since land (in combination with water)¹⁴⁸ was the determining factor of

¹⁴⁴ This could also be argued in terms of the position (or function) of individuals in the organization of production (e.g. Benedix and Lipset, 1966:7).

¹⁴⁵ Abrahimian (1975:139) indicates that towards the end of the 19th century 21 percent of total population lived in urban areas.

¹⁴⁶ This is a specificity of Muslim cities that have used land for gardening and agriculture and Iran was not an exception (e.g. Lapidus, 1969:64). Kirman, one of the oldest cities in Iran carried this legacy into the 20th century. In 1956, about 13 percent of Kirman's workforce was engaged in agriculture (Gulick, 1969:124). See Issawi (1969) for more debates on urbanization in Iran and in the Middle East.

¹⁴⁷ Extending Marx's theory of class formation to rural societies is not new. Stinchcombe (1966:182-90) also extends Marx's theory of class formation to rural settings. His categorization of agricultural enterprise even includes pre-commercial agriculture

production, its ownership or its temporary possession was more important to differentiate groups of people than were the other means of production¹⁴⁹. Therefore, depending on the relationship of one group or another to the land (and water) the group will be separated from other groups and will be identified as a class. Before identifying the classes some general background information on the transitional period of the 19th century must be provided.

The 19th century for Iran, especially the second half, marks the acceleration of the transformation¹⁵⁰ of Iranian economy into a new economic context with the expanded merchant capital as the dominant form of capital¹⁵¹. The transformation process was fuelled by the involvement of external forces (Britain and Russia) which further affected the socio-political structures (e.g. Foran, 1993:109-16; Najmabadi, 1987:44; Turner, 1984:172-73). Among the striking characteristics of this period was

¹⁴⁸ Vali (1993:43) argues that Qanat networks almost everywhere in Iran were owned by the landowners. Lambton (1991:476) indicates the link between land and water by arguing that if a strong landlord deprived a weak landlord of water it often led to the abandonment of the property

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, Drowill (cited by Ravandi, 1978:56-57, vol 3) who travelled to Iran in the early 19th century.

¹⁵⁰ 'Transformation' is not a proper concept to be used for explaining the changes that happened in the second half of the late 19th century Iran because transformation in the sense that a new mode of production replaced the previous one can be seen only after the pre-capitalist relations were wiped out by the radical land reform of 1962 (e.g. Clawson, 1980:149-55). That is the reason we used the concept of expanded merchant capital to explain that the 19th century changes were a 'partial transformation' from the pre-19th (even the pre-1850s) century merchant capital into a more active and expanded one. Briefly, the latter inclined to possess means of production in the second half of the 19th century in both rural and urban economies. In this sense, it was a partial transformation of social and economic formations that resulted in partial transformation of the class structure. The merchants became involved in landownership while no changes occurred in the majority of urban and rural classes.

¹⁵¹ Chapter Three will elaborate on the growth of the big merchants. More details on the trend towards expansion of commercial activities of the 19th century under foreign influence in Iran can be also found in Motazed (1988:264-83). See also Katouzian (1981:27-52), Issawi (1991:590-607, 1971)

the commercialization of agriculture and the growth of merchant capital (e.g. Nowshirvani, 1981, Gilbar, 1978, Foran, 1993:117-132, Seyf, 1984). Along the lines of this transformation the land became subject to the commodification of the major means of production (Abdollaev, 1982:243-44)¹⁵².

We will explain in later chapters that merchant capital that had developed in the cities found its way into the countryside (i.e., by participation in production of cash crops) where the production of major national commodities was carried out¹⁵³. It also facilitated the circulation of these products¹⁵⁴. Here we use this to argue that these two functions of merchant capital (i.e. its unusual involvement in production of cash-crops and its traditional function in circulation of agricultural products) were combined in the late 19th century and enabled the merchants to control the agricultural means of production, i.e. land (e.g. Ashraf, 1981:94-5; Najmabadi, 1987:44). It created the new class of merchant-landlords who remained part of the prime exploiters of the rural economy until the 1950s when merchant capital found 'land' was less

¹⁵² Foran (1993:120) explains this in terms of the need of the upper and middle classes for income and that the land became the 'ever more prized source of wealth and prestige'. Sultanzade (1931:190) also refers to the growth of commercial activities and resulting growth of agricultural land.

¹⁵³ Hambly (1991:573) describes the merchants and the Ulema (religious leaders) as "...the most prosperous and stable element in early Qajar Iran". Reports of Jaubert (the secretary of Napoleon) in 1805 indicate that trading activities were carried out by a large proportion of the population (cited by Motazed, 1988:250). The city of Tabriz was one of the growing centres of merchant capital. Consul Abbott (1863) indicates that in 1863 Tabriz's imports amounted to 1,460,000 pounds sterling while exports amounted to 534,000 pounds sterling (Amanat (ed.), 1983:235-37). This city was the second trading city of the country even in the first half of the 19th century (Motazed, 1988:268).

¹⁵⁴ See Gilbar (1976, 1978), Motazed (1988) and Stack (1882) for their accounts of the development of cash crops specially opium and its trade. Stack (1882) travelled from Bushehr in the Persian Gulf to the North in 1881 and witnessed the growth of opium cultivation and its trade. Vali (1993:233) indicates the connection made between the landlords as the extractors of surplus and the merchants who bought the surplus and distributed in the domestic market.

profitable than before (e.g. Momeni, 1980:172-73, 181-83, 208-16; Amjad, 1993:38, Nakhaie, 1986:138)¹⁵⁵.

It is the objective of this section to provide a brief explanation for the formation and the qualities of classes and class relations in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries up to the land reform of 1962. This argument will show the connection made between the rural economy as the producer of economic value and the urban economy as the holder of merchant capital (and land by the absentee landlords). The urban-rural relations were affected by the involvement of some urban classes including the merchants in the rural class structure (i.e., the development of absentee landlords) while other rural classes remained intact (i.e., the dominated classes of the peasantry).

The question, now, is how can the partial transformation of socio-economic formations of the late 19th century and resulting transformation of some classes be used to explain the development processes in Iran? The focus will be on the differences between the urban and rural economic development in Iran¹⁵⁶. Focusing on

¹⁵⁵ Vali (1980:22-23) also investigates the development of new landowning class in the late 19th and the early 20th century. His investigation confirms the development of an alliance between the old nobility and the merchant capital (Ibid). Nakhaie (1986:138) also suggests that during Reza Khan (1921-41) there was a growth in the size of bourgeois-landlords at the expense of feudal landlords. The former were originally from urban merchant families while the latter were from landlord families. Black (1948:425) also refers to involvement of the merchants in landownership.

¹⁵⁶ Although rural-urban development in Iran has always been in favour of urban areas for example, Karshenas (1990:37) reviews the medieval Iran and argues that even then the agrarian surplus was transferred to cities, in the 19th century this became more apparent. The differential development process of the urban and rural areas in this period can be understood for example by the migration which is taken as an index for the presence of poverty. From the late 19th century the effects of foreign influence appeared and Abdollaev (1978:18-27) indicates that a movement of rural labour began towards the cities and abroad. General poverty existed both in urban and rural areas but the peasants formed the prime source of available labour in the early 20th century (Ibid:18). Abdollaev (1978:20) reports that hardship in the rural areas was spreading more quickly than in the cities. He also argues that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries hundreds of thousands migrated abroad every year (Ibid:1978:21). Migration of tens of thousands of peasants to Russia was a normal incident (Ibid). As

the unity of rural-urban areas this question has been overlooked by some (e.g. Ashraf, 1967, 1974:10)¹⁵⁷. The following argument will indicate grounds of dissimilarities of the development process in urban and rural economies, i.e., the specificity of development process in Iran. There are some studies which indicate that a number (rather than one) of socio-economic formations could be identified in pre-capitalist Iran. For example, Foran (1993:5-9) considers these socio-economic contexts as different modes of production which come into interplay with one another (see also Turner, 1984:165-68). We can agree with Foran's approach on the issue of separate (but interconnected) rural-urban socio-economic formations. Having said that, the current argument will lay its focus on the rising classes in the urban centres which became dominant in the context of the rural economy as the absentee large landowners of the 20th century (see Abdollaev, 1982:243-45) and contributed to, as mentioned above, a differential development process in urban and rural areas. I will begin with a classification of various classes and then I will outline the formation of absentee

a result, in 1893 some 11 percent of the workers of the oil industry in Russian Azarbaijan were Iranians, and ten years later they formed 22.2 percent of the total work force in this industry (Ibid:23).

The consequences of the differential development process continued until the land reform of 1962. Binder (1962:168) characterizes Iranian peasantry of the 1950s as living in "...poverty, disease, ignorance, indebtedness, dependence, and exploitation..." (see also Adibi, 1955). Some maintain that in the same period 99 percent of the country's wealth was in the hands of such urban classes as ministers, senators, army officers, big merchants, factory owners and large landowners" (e.g. Ravandi, 1978:65 vol. 3). Before the reform, in 1959, "the ratio of urban to rural income per head was estimated as 4.6 to 1" (Kazemi, 1980:42). Considering that the rural economy contributed to the economy by a 33 percent of share in GNP (Ibid:32) the gap of income was not justifiable. More details about the cause of the differential development processes in urban and rural areas will be discussed in future chapters.

¹⁵⁷ The same position is taken in Ashraf's 1974 article where he clarifies his earlier statement about this unity by suggesting that for 14 centuries of the post-Islamic period there has not been a division of labour between city and countryside (Ashraf, 1974:10). In the theory chapter we argued that these type of analyses originate from the emphasis on the political instance which created dependent cities (see also Ashraf, 1974).

landlordism as the main formation that was responsible for the above urban-rural differential development process prior to the 1962 land reform

2.3 Classes at the National Level in the 19th and 20th Centuries:

The transformation of the economy of the late 19th and early 20th century as noted earlier affected the class structure. It was in this period that some classes emerged (i.e., new landowners and big merchants) while others disappeared (tuyul-holders) or were replaced by new ones. The categories of population before and after the transitional period will be listed below as they appeared to be the major classes. They will, then, be broken down into separate classes (focussing on classes involved in agricultural production) and will be dealt with separately in order to indicate the changes undergone by various classes as they developed into the 20th century. In this regard, it will be argued that the 20th century classes (i.e., between 1920s and the 1950s) became more stable and resilient social formations than those of the 19th century and early 20th century. And the urban classes became more easily differentiable from the rural ones in the post-1920s (until the land reform of 1962) than before¹⁵⁸. Nevertheless, the urban class structure in the post-1920s still included some elements of the rural class structure such as the absentee landlords and the merchant-landlords. In other words, the dominant classes of the peasantry were also

¹⁵⁸ While no working classes existed in 1800 (Foran, 1993: 136, table 4.4) they first appeared in the urban class structure in the late 19th century. By 1914, about 3-4 percent and by 1941 about 10 percent of the population was involved in this sector (Ibid: 136, 242). And Nakhaie (1986: 136, table 4.1) indicates that while the urban sector in the late 1930s was recruiting more working class (16.69 percent of urban population) the rural sector continued to be based on an agricultural work force (67.61 percent of rural population).

part of the urban class structure and could not be identified as entirely urban or entirely rural classes (e.g. Millspaugh, 1946 11-12). For this reason, for the period of post-1920s until the land reform of 1962, only those urban classes who remained involved in agriculture will be discussed.

To begin with, we shall first see how the classes were described by observers of the early 20th century. There is not much consensus over the similarity between the class structure in the 19th and the 20 centuries. To Foran (1993:135-37) for example, the major difference between the early 19th and the early 20th century classes may be found in the 3-4 percent capitalist classes which were added to the early 19th century classes to make up the class structure of the early 20th century¹⁵⁹. Foran's classification indicates that by 1914 the rural dominant classes still remained the same as 1800 consisting of private landlords, tuyul-holders and vaqf administrators (Ibid). Contrary to Foran, we will argue that the change in the size of capitalist class was not the only change; we will indicate that a major transformation occurred in the landed classes and tuyul-holders disappeared.

Two examples of the early 20s century class typology are discussed below. The first example is presented by Upton. The population at the time of constitutional movement of 1906 was classified by Upton (1961:23) into three major parts:"

¹⁵⁹ Bill (1972b:7-9) adds industrial working class and professional middle class to the traditional classes, as the only changes that classes underwent in the 20th century. See also Bill (1972a) for more debates

- 1) the Shah and the Court¹⁰⁰,
- 2) the aristocracy (including tribal leaders), the clergy, and the merchants,
- 3) the bulk of the population, the peasants, including the tribesmen devoted to animal husbandry"

Upton's classification has three shortcomings 1) His failure or inability to identify the difference between independent groups or classes which he categorized under one category. His category of aristocracy could include the state officials, the ordinary landlords, the tribal owners and the merchants who were not necessarily in alliance and were independent classes Vali (1980), for example, indicates that there was an on-going conflict between officialdom and the landlords In fact, Upton's three categories each included several independent classes (e.g. Bill, 1972b 9-15). 2) His classification fails to include some classes such as members of the civil service sector and artisans (pishivaran). The dominant classes, for example, consisted of the large landowners, the merchants, the tribal leaders and the aristocrats engaged in the Court and the civil service sector (Halliday, 1979 14) And, 3) also, he fails to consider the relationship between the classes and its significance for understanding class relations This failure was due to his general classification in which several classes were put in

¹⁰⁰ In this case members of the court included state officials, regardless of the fact that some of them were not necessarily related to the shah In this dissertation, however, I consider the state officials to be members of the court only if they were related to the shah's family This is because the shah's family members were on the list of priority to receive favours and accumulate wealth In this sense I see the shah and the court members as one group and the rest of state officials as a different group This difference can be seen in the political discourse of the 19th century Hajj Mokhber-o Saltaneh in his book 'Khaaterat Va Khatarat' (memories and risks) confirms this difference by indicating the changing direction of political structure towards recruiting groups of people who were not originally from the shah's family (Ravandi, 1978 59, vol. 3)

the same category

Upton (1961:23-27) gives a general idea about the difference of relations between classes by arguing that the three groups of the second part stood between the shah and the peasants. However, the size of the landlord class and their political and economic power¹⁶¹ and also the economic power of the merchants had a more important impact on the peasants' life¹⁶². The economic and political power of landlords (including the tribal landlords) originated from the ownership of land and livestock as two major sources of wealth (see e.g. Upton, 1961:23). The merchants' economic power despite their smaller size originated from " ...the fact that their services in buying, collecting, exporting, importing, or distributing major national products, such as rugs and opium, and imports, such as sugar and tea, directly affected the incomes of the shah, the aristocracy, and the bureaucracy" (Upton, 1961:26, see also Foran, 1993:117-132). The merchants also had such economic power that they actually became the major source of loans even to the government (see e.g. Upton, 1961:26; Lambton, 1987:167; Ashraf, 1981:96)

The differential level of economic (or social and political) power between

¹⁶¹ Foran (1993:136) argues that one of the changes between 1800 and 1914 was the growing hegemony of the private landlords in sharecropping sector. The size of the landlord class of the early 20th century is not known but one of the reasons that the landlords became so powerful was the growing interest among various groups to engage in ownership of land. This can be considered as an indication of the growing size of the landowning class. Further details will be provided in future chapters.

¹⁶² The merchants according to some were economically as wealthy as the landowning and tribal groups but were politically subordinate (Afshari cited by Foran, 1993:124). The fact, however, is that the merchants' interests and the state's interests never collided until the late 19th century and this is the time that the political power of the merchants should be measured (e.g. Gilbar, 1977). Nevertheless, this is true that the merchants as the new comers to the landowning class had a more economic role than a political.

groups and classes affected the peasantry differently. For example, as Gilbar (1978) indicates, it was the involvement of the merchants in opium cultivation and trade that contributed to some improvements in the living conditions of the peasantry in the late 19th century (see also Seyf, 1984:237-38)¹⁶³. The living conditions of the peasantry under control of the landlords (or *tuyul-dars*) and the state, as Lambton (1987:57) argues, were at the subsistence level. This is in contrast to their condition when the merchants became involved in marketing the agricultural cash crops (see Gilbar, 1978). It should be noted that the point here is the differential effects that various groups had on the peasantry, but as far as the exploitation is concerned both merchants and landlords who later joined in the same landowning class exploited the peasantry, as I will show in later chapters¹⁶⁴.

The second example of classification of the early 20th century classes appeared in Majlis's election rules in 1906 and can be contrasted to those of Upton's. According to Majlis's election rules the electors of the nation were from the following classes,

- 1) the shah and the court and the Qajar tribe,
- 2) doctors of divinity and students, or religious groups;
- 3) nobles and notables;

¹⁶³ One should not be misled by this because Gilbar's example is from only one province (i.e., Kermanshah).

¹⁶⁴ Besides, Gilbar (1978:331) argues that incomes from opium during 1900-1905 decreased from 750,000 to 144,000 pounds sterling due to a decline in opium exports. Therefore, even if opium production and the involvement of merchants had a positive impact on the peasants before 1900 it could not have been a continuous phenomenon. Abdollaev (1978:10) argues that the late 19th century had negative effects on the peasants. See Lambton (1969b:262-63) for more details on the modes of exploitation by old and new landlords in the 1950s.

- 4)merchants,
- 5)landed proprietors and peasants,
- 6)trade-guilds or artisans (pishvaran) (Browne, 1910:355; Binder, 1962:164-65; Ashraf, 1981:72)¹⁶⁴

This is not a sociological typology but it is a useful one and was a point of departure for some scholars such as Ashraf (1981), Binder (1962) and Bill (1972b:6-7). We will review it here to suggest that this typology also had some limitations because, as discussed below, various classes were lumped together.

Excluding the ruling classes as Ashraf (1981:73-7) indicates, the classes were identified by Majlis's election rules on the basis of their wealth and relations to the urban economy. A review of the social ranking in this period indicates that this was a prevalent phenomenon. Ashraf (1981:79) argues that Ulema (clergy), Ummal (state officials) and Tojjar (the big merchants) were all ranked as nobles and notables (A-yan). They were all from urban areas and as he (1981:94) indicates had access to land, i.e., the most important source of wealth. That was the reason why the bulk of population (i.e. the peasants and the low-ranking urban population) were not listed as independent groups and were not classified. This means that while some 80 percent of the population lived in rural areas their status in the society was so attached to their position within the rural economy as producers of value for their lords that they were not recognized as an independent group of people. This is more obvious in Article

¹⁶⁴ Ashraf considers merchants and landlords in the same class but Browne indicates that the Majlis's election rules considered them as two separate classes

Two of Majlis's election rules. In order to be eligible to vote, people from the agricultural sector including the peasants had to own a property that was worth at least 1000 tomans, i.e., 200 pounds sterling (Broome, 1910:355). This meant that the peasants without land were excluded from participation in political activities while their landlords became the political agent of this sector. The peasants were practically identified with their landlords and not independent from them.

If one were to use the above classification, it should be noted that, it was not a representation of the class structure of the transitional period of the late 19th and early 20th century due to its emphasis on urban classes. Also, we will argue that, it definitely did not reflect the class structure of the early 19th century. It also had some other limitations similar to Upton's classifications as follows,

- 1) the religious groups can not be considered a class although they had access to land. They were not a class in economic terms, their status originated from their legitimacy among people as religious leaders (e.g. Upton, 1960:25). They administered *vaqf* land¹⁶⁶ which was not inheritable and also there is no evidence to suggest they controlled capital or they participated in the market. However, it can be said that they had political power (see Avery, 1965, Gilbar, 1977, Kazemzadeh, 1968).
- 2) unless their weak economic position vis-a-vis other dominant classes is explained,

¹⁶⁶ It seems their role in a long historical context was the same. Khamisi (1968:13) argues that only part of the revenues from *vaqf* land went to religious institutions and the *Motavalis* (administrators), religious leaders, jurors and others associated with religious institutions received another part. See also Bausani (1971:114). Ashraf (1981:94), however, provides a different view about the religious leaders. He categorizes them among nobles and notable who had access to land (Ibid). However, he indicates that their access to land was possession (*Tasarruf*) and not ownership (*Malekiyat*).

the shah and the Court (shah's family members) were not a class in economic sense; this is especially important to note because they are considered as the dominant classes without considering their actual economic power. As mentioned in the previous section, the shah and the Court's status depended upon the economic and political conditions of the state. The economic and political conditions were not under the control of the state especially in the second half of the 19th century. First, the banking system was controlled by a fraction of merchants called 'Sarrafan' until it was dominated by the British and Russian-dominated banks in the late 19th century (Ashraf, 1978:326-27; Motazed, 1988; Issawi, 1971:346). Even then, the merchants in general and Amin-o-zarb in particular governed the circulation of Iran's currency (Motazed, 1988:575-99). Second, the majority of foreign trade was in the hands of foreigners (Motazed, 1988:282)¹⁶⁷. Third, 'land' was also becoming subject to private ownership. Therefore, the shah and the Court were left with a shaky political power but even that was limited to Tehran (see Keddie, 1971) and under pressure of the political movements to be further demarcated. Fourth, during the late 19th century and early years of the 20th century, the shah and/or the Court could not contribute to economic earning of the state and were in need of money (e.g., Avery, 1965:74-94)¹⁶⁸,

¹⁶⁷ According to one estimate 63 percent of Iran's trade in 1850 was with Russia (Motazed, 1988:280). Considering that by the end of the 19th century Britain had also tightened its pressure on Iran, it is reasonable to say that the majority of Iran's trade was in the hands of foreigners. In the early 20th century one half of the foreign trade was in the hands of the Russians and one-quarter in the hands of the British (Ashraf, 1978:324).

¹⁶⁸ Katouzian (1981:45) reviews consumption and savings in the late 19th century and concludes that; "Most of what little saving there could have been was probably made by a few 'enlightened' big landlords and, especially, a few big merchants...".

hence, borrowed from the Russians and the merchants (Motazed, 1988:437, 580, 632, 699)¹⁶⁹. Therefore, unless the weakness of the shah and the court are considered, it is unrealistic to categorize the shah and the court as a class specially when in 1906 at the outset of constitutional revolution they were in the most vulnerable political and economic situation. In fact, the reason that the shah and the Court were counted by Upton and Majlis's elections rules, as a class was because of the political authority that was attached to the shah.

Having discussed the early 20th century classes listed by Upton and Majlis's election rules and their shortcomings, an attempt will be made to suggest two independent lists of classes for the 19th and 20th centuries. I will begin with a new list of the 19th century classes before they began to undergo changes in the late 19th century. The 19th century classes consisted of¹⁷⁰;

- 1) the tuyul-holders¹⁷¹ (including tribal leaders);
- 2) the landlords¹⁷² (including absentees);
- 3) the state officials and local governors (including the shah and the Court);
- 4) the merchants and the money-lenders;

¹⁶⁹ For contribution of the merchants, see also Upton (1961:26); Lambton (1987:167); Ashraf (1981:96).

¹⁷⁰ This list of classes has been organized in terms of landownership and importance. The state officials and the local governors had large plots of land and enjoyed political power but compared to tuyul-holders and landlords probably were not as important.

¹⁷¹ Although Lambton (1969b:157) introduces the lands under the control of the tribes as a separate class of land but it was basically tuyul land. It should be, however, mentioned that tuyuls for tribes meant private property because of their autonomy and military power.

¹⁷² This class included the religious groups.

5) the artisans (pishivaran);

6) the small-landowners, petty commodity producers¹⁷³;

7) the peasants (i.e., the rural classes which will be discussed later).

8) the urban poor

(e.g. Stack, 1882:260-61, vol. 2; Foran, 1993:135-37; Amjad, 1993:36; Lambton, 1987:51-71; 1969:155; Abdollaev, 1981; Ashraf, 1981; Keddie, 1971; Avery, 1965:51).

The social classes in the course of the 19th century were different in some regards from the ones Upton or Majlis's election rules listed for the early 20th century. Some classes underwent radical changes in the second half of the 19th century. For example, the effects of foreign dominance began to affect some classes¹⁷⁴ such as the merchants in the second half of the 19th century, particularly in the late 19th century. Before this time the merchants were a pampered class supported by the state (e.g. Avery, 1965:76; Gilbar, 1977). In the second half of the 19th century some groups of the merchants developed into big merchants, as it will be noted in later chapters, while others remained the same.

In the course of the 20th century classes (such as the landowning classes) started to develop based on their new relationship to the means of production, i.e., more as the owners than the holders (i.e., assignees who held tuyul land temporarily) of the means of production, i.e., land (e.g. Ashraf, 1981:94-5; Abdollaev, 1982:238).

¹⁷³ See for example, Stack (1882:254-55, 260-61, vol. 2)

¹⁷⁴ The development of middle classes (the big merchants) is attributed to the so-called colonial period (e.g. Bausani, 1971:172).

This very fact brought the dominant classes, especially the landlords, more independence from the state than before¹⁷⁵.

The 19th century classes were different from the ones Upton or Majlis's election rules listed for the early 20th century. It should be remembered, however, that the changes in class structure between the two periods (i.e., between the pre and post transitional period of the late 19th century) were much more drastic within the dominant classes than within the dominated classes. For example, there was a sharp difference between the changes that the peasantry underwent and those of the landowning class. While the dominant classes mostly transformed from landholders (tuyul-holders) into landowners (private landlords), the subordinate classes remained unchanged (e.g. Vali, 1980; Bausani, 1971:173; Lambton, 1969b:139, 261-62, 296-305)¹⁷⁶. The peasants of the 20th century (until the land reform of 1962) functioned in the rural economy and within the production process the same as the peasants of the 19th century (e.g. Stack, 1882:247-82, vol. 2; Lambton, 1969b: 296-305). In both periods, crop-sharing was the dominant form of tenure and the peasants were mostly landless and the crop was divided between the landlords and the peasants based on the question of who provided each of the five means of production (e.g., Vali, 1980; Safi-

¹⁷⁵ Before this time, the landowning classes received tuyul from the state, i.e., something that required dependence on the state (Chapter Three).

¹⁷⁶ While Vali focuses on the period between 1891 and 1925, Lambton focuses on the period before the 1962 land reform. Bausani particularly refers to the tendency of tuyul-holders to become proprietors of land during Qajar.

nejad, 1978:105-331; Lambton, 1969b:295-96, 306-07, Stack, 1882:247-82, vol. 2)¹⁷⁷.

Returning to the above typology it should be noted that the focus of this debate is on the formation of the 20th century landlords. These landlords, it is contended, originated from the 19th century merchants¹⁷⁸, state-officials, tribal leaders and the old landlords. Accordingly, the position of each of the mentioned classes will not be elaborated in detail. A brief review of them, however, will follow and further debate will be provided in later chapters.

To begin with the tuyul-holders, the best information about the size of tuyul land (i.e., granted-land) has been provided by Eastwick. Eastwick (cited by Lambton, 1991:484) in 1861 reported that one-third or according to some one-half of the country's land belonged to the state. This would explain the fact that many lands were *khaliseh* (state land) and were given to the holders as tuyul¹⁷⁹. Therefore, I consider the tuyul-holders as the first class of the pre-1890s. Tuyul-dars (tuyul-holders) consisted of the Court members, the state officials and the tribal leaders (e.g. Lambton, 1991:488-505).

In order to characterize the private landlords and the size of their holdings, I will briefly look at the conditions of private property in the pre-1890s period. As

¹⁷⁷ Safi-nejad (1978) presents 227 documents that have been dated between 1292-1365 Islamic Calendar (1875-1948 A D). Most of these documents belong to the 19th century sharecropping contracts between the peasants and the landlords (most of them state lands and some private lands).

¹⁷⁸ Ashraf (1978:308-32) explains the involvement of the merchants in landholding as they were defeated by the external forces (see also Turner, 1980:88).

¹⁷⁹ The other half belonged to the crown family, state officials, traditional landlords or was already under tuyul. We will discuss this in later chapters

Ashraf (1981:94-95) argues, landlord lands were few in the first period of Qajar (i.e., up to 1850s and 1870s). According to Lambton (1969b:155) up to one third of villages prior to the 1880s were categorized as *arbabi* (landlord) and *Khurdeh Malik* (small owners) villages. Since she (1991, 1987) repeatedly refers to insecurity of land, I would assume that prior to 1880s-1890s during which the changes (e.g. sale of state land) began to take shape there were a limited number of private landlords and peasant proprietors. Lambton (1969b:155) shows that *tuyuls* were even allotted out of private property. Formerly "these were in some cases allotted out of *Khaliseh* lands and also on private property, which might or might not belong to the person to whom the *tuyul* was granted" ¹⁸⁰. That is perhaps the reason she later argues that peasant proprietorship was not widespread (Lambton, 1987:53). Therefore, the landlord class as a class of private landowners was smaller in size than the *tuyul-dars*. In estimate, the amount of land controlled by the *tuyul-dars*, we will argue this in next chapter, was also higher than the private land.

The state officials also were important in terms of ownership (or temporary *tuyul*) of means of production (Lambton, 1987:53, 1991:489), although the greater extent of political and economic power that they exercised made them distinct from the overall *tuyul*-holding class. From the time of Agha Mohammad Khan, i.e., the first shah of Qajar in the late 18th century, until constitutional revolution of 1906 numerous *tuyul* lands were given to various government-related individuals. Lambton (1991:489) refers to Ali Quli khan and Jafar Quli Khan in 1781 who received land

¹⁸⁰ See also Lambton (1991:489).

from Agha Mohammad Khan (first shah of Qajar). Also Yusuf Khan Gurji's, i.e., a governor and an army commander, estates were confirmed as tuyul by Fath Ali Shah in 1828-9 (Ibid). Lambton (1991:495) also refers to Mozaffar-o-din shah in the late 19th century who gave lands to individuals in tuyul (we will return to the issue of tuyul in later chapters).

The fourth class was formed of the merchants, whose position in society will be reviewed later, and the money-lenders. It should be noted that there was some overlap between classes who made up money-lenders. The money-lenders were usually landowners, merchants, corn-chandler, peddlers or religious groups (Lambton, 1987:57). They also functioned within the urban economy as a fraction of the merchant class (e.g. Bonine, 1981:234).

The peasants (rural classes) were at the bottom of the social structure living in a state of poverty shared by the urban poor (e.g. Millsbaugh, 1946:11-12). (In the next section we will elaborate on rural social classes.)

Of the above classes, the merchants and/or the absentee landlords developed in the second half of the 19th century as more powerful owners of the means of production than before (e.g. Abdollaev, 1982:238; Lambton, 1969b:259-64)¹⁸¹. The majority of these landlords, however, were tuyul-holders in the earlier periods (Amjad, 1993:36; e.g. Lambton, 1969b:139).

¹⁸¹ Stack (1882:247-81, vol. 2) refers to the presence of absenteeism in a large scale. For example, he refers to large plains of Iran being owned by absentees (Ibid:277). One should, however, be careful with these generalizations because he (Ibid:247-48) only sees two classes of lands; arbabi (landlord) and divani (state land). It is obvious that he includes tuyul-dars as landlords which is a misleading factor. His work, however, can be used to indicate that in the 1880s absenteeism was present although in the form of tuyul-holding.

Now that we have established the class structure of the 19th century and the fact that it was different from the ones listed by Upton and Majlis's rules we can draw a new list of classes that developed into the 20th century and formed the basis of Iranian class structure until the land reform of 1962.

After the changes of the late 19th and early 20th century some classes began to decline, such as the tuyul-dars and instead some classes developed such as the landowners (as opposed to old tuyul-dars). Except for absentee landlords, I will not be treating the urban classes in the following list. Having said that, the Iranian class structure of the post 1920s can then be suggested as follows.

- 1) The non-rural landowning classes which consisted of: the merchant-landlords, the state officials, the tribal leaders, and the state (Khaliseh and crown land)¹⁸². Their shared characteristic was that they were absentee landlords owning large plots of land in the form of whole village ownership. Except for the state, this landowning class was new by virtue of ownership (rather than holding) of land;
- 2) the native landlords including peasant proprietors and originally rural landlords. As discussed earlier, a landowning class existed in the 19th century but its size was small. As opposed to absentee landlords they were part of the rural social structure.
- 3) the peasant classes including nasaq-dars (i.e., peasants with land-use rights) and Khoshneshins (i.e., landless agricultural labourers);
- 4) the non-agricultural rural classes, i.e., craftsmen (carpenter, bathkeeper, blacksmith), shopkeeper;

¹⁸² For details on the political power of the merchants and landlords see Naraghi (1966 6-7)

5) the urban classes As mentioned above, I will not discuss the urban classes.

It should be noted that the above class structure remained the same until 1962.

Referring to the dominant classes Binder (1962:66-67) focuses on an aristocracy whose roots were:

...tribal leaders, owners of large tracts of land, descendants of the Qajar clan or of their more prominent servants, descendants of honoured and outstanding religious dignitaries, friends and servants of Reza Shah, and a few people who have exchanged commercial wealth for landed wealth, though the latter group are increasing in number.

Binder (1961:67) concludes that the Pahlavi dynasty which came to power in 1925 did not change the make-up of this class until the 1960s. There are other studies on the class structure of the 1950s which may not present accurate data but do provide enough insight about the nature of the class structure in the 1950s and its similarity with that of Binder. In terms of wealth, Ravandi (1978:65, vol. 3) argues that the first class consisted of large landlords, big merchants, factory-owners in the 1950s. They formed 200,000 (1.11 percent) of Iran's 18 million population (Ibid). Ravandi (Ibid) later includes senators, ministers, lawyers, army officers to this list and argues that they controlled 99 percent of the country's wealth¹⁸³. Ravandi's first class included merchants and absentee landlords who shared their origin with Binder's aristocracy making up most of the dominant rural classes.

Having discussed the rural dominant classes in general I will now focus on the absentee landlords and treat the dominated classes later.

¹⁸³ Gastil (1958:325) puts the landowners, the merchants, the manufacturers and the army officers in the 1950s in the category of supporters of the state

As mentioned above, these absentee landlords consisted of the state officials, merchants and tribal owners and even the state itself ¹⁸⁴. I have already argued that merchants formed one of the basic elements of absentee landlordism. Binder provides some clues about the nature of absentee landlordism and its link to the merchant capital and urban economy. His aristocracy is represented by someone who:

...will have large holdings in land, and in addition some commercial, industrial, or possibly banking investments (Binder, 1962:68).

One should not be confused by Binder's statement which includes the landlords in industrial development. As Momeni (1980:154-55) indicates, there was a new trend among the landlords (or merchants) in the 1950s to find interests in other areas (i.e. industry) than agriculture. The bulk of absentees in Binder's aristocracy were, hence, formed by the merchants and other old members of the landowning classes.

To sum up, there was a dramatic change in the dominant classes during the pre and post transitional period of the late 19th and early 20th century. While the tuyul-holders disappeared the absentee large landlords emerged. Having argued that, we now need to turn to the rural classes which remained intact. Before we review the rural classes it is important to note the connection that developed between the merchants, the landlords and the rural classes (we will discuss it later). This connection is important to consider in understanding the exploitative relations. It is also another aspect of the complexity of pre-capitalist socio-economic formations.

¹⁸⁴ In the case of the absentees who were not related to the state, Khamsi (1968:48), for example, analyzes the 1956 census and concludes that the province of Kurdistan with 92.3 percent and Baluchistan with 43.2 percent presented the highest and the lowest concentration of absentee landlords

2.4 The Resilient Pre-capitalist Rural Class Structure:

Earlier an argument on class typology was provided to suggest the complexity of the class structure in Iran. Complexity arises because rural-urban class structures were distinct but there was an interconnection between the urban and rural areas through involvement of absentee landlords in landownership.

Contrary to the dominant landowning classes, i.e., the absentee landlords, the rest of the rural population did not undergo much change during the 19th and the 20th centuries. The peasantry, however, was not a homogenous class (Vali, 1980:24, 29; Khosravi, 1976:126). Between 1891 and 1925 petty-landownership was not common and less than 10 percent of the rural population could be deemed to be peasant proprietors (Vali, 1980:26). The sharecroppers (peasants with land-use rights), the landless agricultural labourers (peasants without land-use rights) and the peasants who paid rent constituted 85 percent of the population (Ibid). Since the third group, rent-paying peasants, was not a common group among the peasantry (Vali, 1980:24) the majority of the peasants could be categorized under sharecroppers (nasaq-holders with land-use rights) and landless labourers. The remaining five percent must have been non-agricultural forces such as shopkeepers, blacksmiths, bathkeepers etc.

According to one type of categorization of rural classes, the rural population in Iran up to and during the early 1960s¹⁸⁵ included almost the same classes; 1) peasant-

¹⁸⁵ Hooglund does not show if he considers any distinction between the period before and after 1962 land reform. Accordingly, it is contended here that, some of his information about the rural class structure applies to the period after the reform including the peasant-owner class which was a post-reform phenomenon. In his later works he categorized those owning less than one village prior to 1962 land reform as small-owners (Hooglund, 1982 12, 16). If this is the case then, as Lambton (1969b:275) argues and as Hooglund (1982 16) also refers to it in his latest work, even some small-owners were

owners (peasant-proprietors) and peasant-renters, and; 2) landless non-farmer labour forces (Hooglund, 1973:229).¹⁸⁶ The second category will be treated later because we intend to develop a more elaborate classification of the landless groups. The first category, in the pre-land-reform period, had two major parts: the owner-operators and the sharecroppers, peasants with land-use or *nasaq* rights.

Generally speaking, while the size of owner-operators was small, estimated as some five percent of all the rural population (Hooglund, 1982:17) prior to the land reform of 1962, the sharecroppers (peasants with *nasaq* or land-use rights who worked on landlords' lands) and the landless agricultural labourers, and/or landless non-farmers according to Hooglund (1973:229), constituted the majority of the rural population (also Lambton, 1969b:295). In 1960, for example, of the total of 3,218,460 rural households some 60 percent were categorized as *nasaq*-holders (sharecropping peasants who only had land-use rights and worked on landlords' lands) and some 40 percent were landless (Hooglund, 1982:22)¹⁸⁷. Ricks (1976:29) underscores Hooglund's figures

absentees which means they might have been large-owners who owned several plots in several villages. Besides, some small-owners practiced crop-sharing (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:314) which means they did not operate independent from the dominant form of agricultural production. Small-ownership in the sense that the peasants became independent owners was more of a post-land-reform phenomenon (see for example Nakhaie, 1986; Lahsaiezadeh, 1984; and Amid, 1990). In short, one needs to make a distinction between the pre-land-reform and post-land-reform landowning classes.

¹⁸⁶ Hooglund in his early work (1973) does not indicate specifically in which time period the peasantry has consisted of these classes, but it is obvious from his text and his later work (1982:10-35) that the period is between the late 50s and the late 60s. This is important to know because after the 1960s the number of landless labourers decreased in rural Iran due to implementation of land reform which excluded them. Therefore, as Lahsaiezadeh (1984) indicates the rural class structure in the 1970s changed. It should be noted that the term '*Khooshneshin*' which applied to agricultural labourers is a pre-land-reform term and its usage requires relevance to that period.

¹⁸⁷ The above figures have been calculated using the non-land-owning categories of the peasantry. In other words, the sharecroppers and landless peasantry comprised the majority of rural population but not all of it.

for the sharecropping population of 1950. He (Ibid) maintains 50 percent of Iran's population was landless peasantry/tenant and migrant cultivators, but he adds to his list the landed peasantry/middle peasants who accounted for some 10 percent of total population¹⁸⁸. The rest must have been non-farming labourers.

The landless rural classes (i.e., those without land and without land-use rights) engaged in a variety of activities in service, commerce, and manual or labouring work (Hooglund, 1973 229). These landless classes were called Khoshneshin¹⁸⁹ and similar terms (such as Aftabneshin) may be found in different areas to describe them (e.g. Hooglund, 1973 241).

Before elaborating on the khoshneshin population it should be noted that Hooglund's 1973 classification of the rural population, if one uses it to describe the classes of pre-land-reform era, is rather general and distorts the classification of various groups of landless classes. Hooglund's classification does not put in separate categories the petty-landowners who owned small plots of land and the sharecropping *nasaq-dars* (i.e. Ray-yats or Zare-een)¹⁹⁰ who were landless. In the 1960 agricultural

¹⁸⁸ Adibi (1955 100) for example argues that based on the estimates of the Department of Census in 1949-50 some 18 million lived in Iran of which 80 percent was rural and 20 percent was urban population. Based on Ricks argument 9 million (50 percent) of the above population was landless tenants (sharecroppers). Since 80 percent of the total population was rural (14.4 million) then the percentage of 9 million within the 14.4 million was 62.5 percent which is not much different from their percentage (60 percent) presented by Hooglund.

¹⁸⁹ Hooglund (1982 17) translated it as "those who sit comfortably". Further elaboration on this class will be done later.

¹⁹⁰ The concept of *Zaa-re* (Zare-een is the plural form for *Zaa-re*) is a general term which means, that who cultivates. This concept was not a self-explanatory concept and could be attributed to those involved in agriculture or to those with *Nasaq* rights. Therefore, it did not have the same connotations as Ray-yat when it was used alone and usually it was used with *nasaq-dar* to describe Ray-yat.

census (Khosravi, 1979 11-14) the nasaq-dars were also known as ray-yat who had sharecropping contract with the landlords (arbabs). In this sense, when the concept of ray-yat is used it implies the involvement of the Arbab in a mutual relationship with the nasaq-dars. In other words, the ray-yat and the arbab in a paradoxical context had contradictory class interests. According to more recent sources the population of rural Iran was divided into three (as opposed Hooglund's two) parts as follows, 1) nasaq-dars or sharecroppers, 2) petty-owners or owner-operators; and 3) Khoshneshins (Ashraf, 1982 11)¹⁹¹. In this classification the nasaq-dars and Khoshneshins were both landless labourers but only the nasaq-dars enjoyed land-use rights (Ibid, Lambton, 1969b 295)

Returning to the concept of 'khoshneshin' it should be noted that this term is not a sociological term but rather it was used by the locals to describe those who were temporarily (i.e. landless agricultural labourers) or permanently (i.e., non-agricultural forces such as blacksmiths) not involved in the agricultural activities. The term, as I personally experienced it in the Eastern cities of Iran implies the notion of available labour¹⁹² as opposed to those already engaged in the production process, i.e., nasaq-dars. The landless classes (those without land and without land-use rights) were usually considered by the locals as available labour because they were not nasaq-dars (peasants with land-use rights). However, the landless classes (i.e. those without

¹⁹¹ As mentioned earlier, Hooglund (1982 22) in his latest work also divides the rural population into landless groups and nasaq-dars. Contrary to his previous work the peasant proprietors are accounted for. He argues that the peasants who owned land constituted 5 percent of all peasants (Ibid 17) and the rest of the small-owners, including absentees, are not accounted for in percentage terms (Ibid 16-17)

¹⁹² It can be referred to probably as day-labourers or casual labourers

nasag) sometimes included blacksmiths, carpenters, religious groups or shopkeepers (Hooglund, 1973:229, 230) who were not directly working in agriculture. Having said this, the definition of khoshneshins presented by Hooglund needs to be revised so that the criteria of available manual labour and its relations to agricultural production are used in order to identify Khoshneshins¹⁹³. This is the true meaning of khoshneshins contradicting Hooglund's usage of the term for non-farmers which included non-agricultural forces. Hooglund (1982:18) in his later work realizes the difficulties that application of the notion of khoshneshin to non-farmers bears. In this latest work he argues that khoshneshins were not a homogenous class and composed three distinct groups; 1) tradesmen and creditors (6 percent of all non-agricultural groups)¹⁹⁴; 2) servicemen such as blacksmiths (Ahangar), carpenters (Najjar), bathkeeper (Hammami) (10 percent of all non-agricultural groups); and, 3) agricultural labourers who "... had no regular occupation but were dependent upon seasonal farm work for their livelihoods" (Hooglund, 1982:18). This latest attempt clarifies the fact that khoshneshins did not constitute a homogeneous class. However, as it is obvious, even this attempt does not solve the problem that: the application of this term to a number of groups creates analytical difficulties. Contrary to Hooglund's consideration, our definition of Khoshneshins based on the availability of their labour for agricultural purposes would allow one to study the khoshneshins with the exclusion of those rural

¹⁹³ This implies that those rural classes (such as landless agricultural labourers) which were not directly involved in agricultural production process, due to lack of land-use rights, were considered available labour.

¹⁹⁴ Hooglund argues that 40 percent of rural households were khoshneshins or those who did not have land-use rights. Accordingly, the above 6 percent is a proportion of this 40 percent.

classes who were not related to agriculture, i.e., blacksmiths, moneylenders, carpenters etc.

Moreover, As Hooglund (1973:230, 236) also noted in his definition of khoshneshins, the majority of them, i.e., 80 percent, have been agricultural labourers who did not have land-use rights (see also Momeni, 1980:73). In his later classification, Hooglund (1973:231) separates different fractions of khoshneshin population under three categories of rural bourgeoisie, non-agricultural workers and agricultural labourers. He does not, however, indicate that the above mentioned majority of landless agricultural labourers should be used as one of the bases for his typology of the dominated rural classes. In the following argument we try to exclude servicemen and so called rural bourgeoisie (shopkeepers and moneylenders) from khoshneshins. Contrary to Hooglund's general classification of Khoshneshins, the attempt made earlier to exclude landless labourers as a distinct class of khoshneshins provides grounds to study their relations with the dominant classes in concrete terms.

Based on the above it is now possible to use the concept of khoshneshin so that it only applies to the landless (and without land-use rights) agricultural labourers. It should be mentioned, however, that various scholars have included Barzegaran or wage-labourers in the definition of Khoshneshin (e.g. Momeni, 1980:73; Lahsaiezadeh, 1984:258-59). In the 1960 agricultural census the concept of khoshneshin was not used and, instead, the same traits that were applied to khoshneshins by scholars were also attributed to Barzegaran (e.g. Khosravi, 1979:13). However, more precise research on this group of rural population has revealed that in some sharecropping

practices only when the peasants provided their labour were they called Barzegaran (e.g., Ata-ee, 1965b:150). In this regard, one needs to know that Barzegaran were part of the nasaq-dars and can not be considered as khoshneshins (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1989:118)¹⁹⁵ and wage-labouring was a new phenomenon prior to the land reform of 1962 hence did not have a significant effect on the class structure of the rural economy (e.g. Clawson, 1980:148-53). This was because in the pre-land reform period the agrarian structures reproduced the dependency of direct producers to the major means of production through sharecropping (Ibid). These circumstances delayed the development of wage-labouring as a separate class (Ibid)¹⁹⁶. Therefore, khoshneshins were a class of landless labourers with no nasaq who were used in bonehs (i.e., agricultural productive units in which peasants with nasaq rights worked as sharecroppers) and were paid often in kind.

According to one estimate the Khoshneshin population (Hooglund's definition) formed 40-50 percent of the rural population in the 1960s (Hooglund, 1973:230, 241 endnote 2). A more recent study indicated that nasaq-dar population constituted some 70 percent of the rural population (Golabian, 1977:xiii). This is, however, a general figure and includes the khoshneshin population because the actual percentage of nasaq-dars was less than 70 percent (e.g. Ashraf, 1982:11). The remaining 30 percent must

¹⁹⁵ It seems Barzegar was the title a nasaq-dar peasant gained in accordance with his position in the bonehs as the lowest strata of nasaq-dars (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1989:123). Therefore, it did not imply their relations to the land as a separate group whereas Khoshneshins were landless labourers. Nonetheless, it could be the case that in various parts of the country Barzegar could be used to refer to the lower strata of nasaq-dars or to non-nasaq-dar landless labourers. The important fact, if that was the case however, is that in both cases the economic conditions of them was low and comparable to one another.

¹⁹⁶ Black (1948:426) reports that wage-labouring was not common, at least, in the late 1940s.

have been petty-landowners which also included khoshneshins. Some of the nasaq-dars, however, were actually agricultural labourers but due to mis-classification they were considered nasaq-dars. Therefore, the total number of khoshneshins must have ranged between 30 to 40 percent of the rural population (e.g. Ashraf, 1982:11; Turner, 1984:180; Hooglund, 1982:22).

If the number of non-agricultural forces is deducted¹⁹⁷ it is estimated that the total percentage of landless agricultural labourers prior to land reform would have been between 35 to 45 percent of the rural population¹⁹⁸. This estimated range can be examined in the case of individual villages. For example, at the beginning of the 1962 land reform the khoshneshin households of Eastern Azarbaijan formed 37.7 percent of the total rural households (Momeni, 1980:73). At the same time they formed 52 percent of households in Western Azarbaijan, 31 percent in Mazandran, 39 percent in Khuzistan (Momeni, 1980:73; Research Group, 1964:188) and 23 percent in Kamalabad Near Ghazvin (Khosravi, 1976:82).

Whether the percentage of landless labourers (khoshneshins) ranged between 30 to 40 percent or between 35 to 45 percent they constituted 80 percent of the total number of non-nasaq-holding rural population (e.g. Hooglund, 1973:236), or more

¹⁹⁷ Next to the landless agricultural labourers, i.e., khoshneshins, were other groups of landless but non-agricultural forces. Some five percent (according to Hooglund (1973:234) some 7 percent of adult males) of the rural population were engaged in other activities than agricultural production. This group was divided into: a) those providing personal services to the peasants, such as bathkeeper (Hammami), shoemaker (Kaffash) and barter (Salmani); and, b) those providing the peasants with daily needs in artifacts, such as blacksmith (Ahangar), coppersmith (Mesgar) and carpenter (Najjar) (Hooglund, 1973:234).

¹⁹⁸ We had two sets of estimated percent of population of agricultural labourers: a) 30-40 percent, and, b) 40-50 percent. I deducted 5 percent from the maximum percentage of each range making our estimate to be 35-45 percent.

accurately they constituted 80 percent of the landless classes (who did not have land-use rights either) in rural Iran¹⁹⁹.

The number of *khoshneshins* in individual villages depended on the prosperity of the village. Smaller villages usually did not have a solid economic base and the economy was likely to be based on subsistence. In these villages the existing population (i.e., up to 200) solely produced its subsistence needs and that is why Hooglund (1973:230) argues that in smaller villages the *khoshneshins* were few or non-existent.

In a different classification, Khosravi (cited by Hooglund, 1973:230) excludes the landless non-*nasaq*-holder classes and defines them as two different classes; the rural bourgeoisie and the rural proletariat. While the former class consisted of moneylending, peddlers and shopkeeping groups, the latter class whose members were the majority in the rural areas worked for cash or in-kind payments (Ibid). It is not clear whether the term proletariat was used to describe the labourers of the pre-land reform period, but Khosravi (1976:69) indicates that this class emerged following the land reform of 1962. For the purpose of the current argument, therefore, it is helpful to argue that, only the rural bourgeoisie was a resilient class that even continued into

¹⁹⁹ The annual per capita income of this class in the mid-1960s was \$30 to \$45 compared to the 1973 per capita income of \$500 in the country as a whole, it was very low for the landless labourers (Hooglund, 1973:237). In 1964 the average daily income of the landless labourers in Zeidan-loo of the province of Khorasan and during three months of peak agricultural season was about 40 to 50 rials (Research Group, 1968:193) or about \$40 in total three months. In Do-hesaran and in the same province *Khoshneshins* sometimes worked for six months in a year and their average daily income was lower, at the range of 5 to 20 rials (Research Group, 1968:235).

the post-land reform period²⁰⁰. This class was responsible partly for the extraction of the capital discussed below.

We will argue in the following chapters that the dominant classes extracted profit from two rural classes; 1) landless agricultural labourers with no land-use rights, i.e., khoshneshins, or the majority of the landless rural classes; and 2) the peasant cultivators or peasants with land-use rights. In this argument Hooglund (1973:231) provides us with the primary knowledge about the rural bourgeoisie (mostly rural shopkeepers) whose members' concern was to circulate their wealth through buying, selling and lending in order to make profit. It should be noted that this group is different from the landowning classes who put the main assault on the peasants' income. In other words, the exploitation of the peasantry occurred at two levels;

1) through sharecropping practice (to be discussed later) where the relations of production put the peasants with land-use rights in the position of labourers in the collective agricultural labour process. At this level the peasants received part of their labour product and the other part was reaped by the dominant classes, i.e. landowners (e.g. Lambton, 1969b)²⁰¹. Following their loss in their relations with the landlords another part of their labour product was appropriated by the moneylenders, the pre-buyers of the product and other groups (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:379-84).

²⁰⁰ After the land reform, the sharecroppers became small landowners but agricultural labourers were excluded which led to their displacement

²⁰¹ More argument on the effects of sharecropping practice and modes of extraction of surplus will be presented in Chapter Four.

At the same time the concentration of the land in the hands of the absentee landlords had created the landless labourers with no land-use rights (khoshneshins) who were used occasionally in the bonehs. Comparing their wage (in kind) with the share of the nasaq-dars (sharecroppers) the khoshneshins had to exchange their labour for a cheaper price (part of the product) than nasaq-dars' share of the product which explains another level of exploitation (e.g. Research Group, 1968:187). For example, in money terms, the annual per capita income of the nasaq-dar population in Zeidanloo (Khorasan) in 1964 was about \$69 (Ibid:195) whereas the landless labourers sometimes made 3,000 rials (i.e. \$40) only in the peak season (Ibid:193) which had to be divided among five to six members of his family. In some cases their average annual income ranged between \$26 to \$28 (e.g. Ibid:224-25). We will show later, Chapter Five, that the khoshneshins were able to exist by engaging in variety of non-farming activities such as carpet weaving in order to increase their income.

2) the second level of exploitation took place through participation in the market where the peasants had to sell their products or pre-sell them before harvest in order to make ends meet (e.g. Research Group, 1968:187; Lambton, 1969b: 379-84). None of these debates, however, can be understood without a delineation of the rural classes which has been partly dealt with above. We introduced the overall rural class typology before but this time we focus on the position of the rural classes in relation to the bonehs (i.e., the agricultural units of production) and production process. This is an important step, because most of our future arguments will revolve around the

production process through bonehs.

The hierarchy in the village in terms of economic and political power and relations to boneh was as follows:

- 1) the absentee landlords, the bailiffs or surrogate landlords who represented the absentee landlords;
- 2) the nasaq-dars (classified into: the Abyars or heads of bonehs, the assistant Abyars, Barzegaran or the low rank labourers) (e.g. Khosravi, 1976:79, Safi-nejad, 1989:118),
- 3) the landless agricultural labourers or Khoshneshins (who did not have nasaq); and,
- 4) the servicemen.

In this sense, the small-landowners²⁰², the moneylenders, the shopkeepers and the non-agricultural forces operated outside of the boneh but were indirectly related to it. Their economic status in the village was probably comparable to that of the bailiffs. Of these groups only the small-landowners were not related to the bonehs' production process because they cultivated their own land. Excluding the small-landowners, the remaining rural population was engaged in a constellation of relations determined by the above groups and classes which developed in order to contribute to reproduction of the pre-land-reform rural economy of Iran. With this overall picture we can now review the rural dominated classes in relation to the bonehs.

Safi-nejad (1989:117-29, 201-10) in his latest research on the 'boneh' divides the rural population into external and internal groups in relation to the bonehs. Those

²⁰² For supplementary income, small-landowners sometimes helped the bonehs, hence they were related to bonehs indirectly.

peasants who had nasaq (or land-use rights) were considered internal classes and the khoshneshins and non-agricultural forces were considered external, i.e., they were not members of bonehs. From his classification one can determine that the external groups of rural population, as Hooglund (1973:231) interprets the early works of Safi-nejad, consisted of three groups; 1) Khosravi's bourgeois class, i.e., shopkeepers and moneylenders 2) the indirect components of production such as village headman, bailiff (mobashir), the harvest watchman (Dasht-ban), blacksmith (Ahangar), carpenter (Najjar), the bathkeeper (Hammami), barber (Salmani), the oxen grazer (gav-cheran) and the assistant workers (see Safi-nejad, 1989:201-10); and, 3) the agricultural labourers and the wage earners. The internal groups consisted of all groups of peasants who enjoyed nasaq rights including Abyar (head of boneh) who was in charge of irrigation but who was also the liaison between the boneh and the landlords; the Abyar assistant and finally the cultivators who were in charge of cultivation (Safi-nejad, 1989:117-29). It should be noted that Safi-nejad's classification emphasizes the relationship of the groups to the bonehs which is the reason he puts the bailiffs and the village headmen in the same group as non-agricultural groups. Vali (1980:26) classifies the village headmen (Kadkhoda), the bailiffs (Mobashir) and the oxen-owners (Gav-band) under the category of rich peasants while Hooglund (1973:232) does not categorize the village headmen and the bailiffs although the oxen-owners are listed as a fraction of rural bourgeoisie. Regardless of the position of these three groups in the literature on rural Iran it is obvious that they were part of the dominant rural classes.

The bourgeois class comprised six percent of the rural population and included

"...itinerant peddlers, shopkeepers, merchants, wholesale dealers, moneylenders, grist mill owners..." and the oxen owners (Hooglund, 1973:232). The most important feature of this class was its ability to control rural capital and credit circulation which implied its dominance over the production process (Ibid). The rate of interest amounted to 50 to 63 percent in a nine months period of harvesting time (Ibid; Amid, 1990:45). The loan system worked in favour of the moneylenders and affected the peasants' lives through the debt structure and increasing dependency of the peasant on these lenders (Bonine, 1981:234; Lambton, 1969b:380-84)²⁰³. One of the major effects of the debt structure was the engagement of peasantry in *salaf-Khary*, i.e., foreselling the produce (Bonine, 1981:234; Amid, 1990:45-47); the moneylenders lent money to the peasants and bought the produce before the harvest (Hooglund, 1973:232; Amid, 1990:45-47). It helped the peasant to repay his dues, but he did not have any control over the produce at the time of harvest. This meant that when the after-harvest prices went up the peasant could not claim the difference between the pre and post harvest prices²⁰⁴. This is in addition to the fact that the *salaf-khar*, who was the shopkeeper or the moneylender or everybody to whom the peasant owes money, buys the produce in the winter before the harvest time begins at prices that are between 30 to 60 percent

²⁰³ Bonine (1981:234-35) indicates that this practice was not confined only to the rural moneylenders and that urban bazaar merchants also used the same strategy to buy the peasant products for cheap prices but he also argues that this practice was exercised in the 19th century Qajar

²⁰⁴ It might be asked whether the post harvest prices were ever lower than the pre-harvest prices. This could be possible but the direction of the economy was towards industrial production and the population was increasing constantly (e.g. Bharier, 1971; Arsalan-bod, 1992:37-52) and this put pressure on agricultural sector to produce more. In the market this produced a good ground for agricultural products, therefore, there was always demand for more products which regulated the prices towards constant increase.

less than the prevailing prices (Hooglund, 1973:232) or 20 to 40 percent less than what could be earned after the harvest (Amid, 1990:47). In other words, the direct producer became subject to exploitation through different processes and various stages in one process, i.e., the borrowing of money. For example, by borrowing money in this way the peasant paid 1) up to 50 to 63 percent interest rates depending on how much he owed; 2) lowered the actual price of his produce by 30 to 60 percent at the prevailing prices in the winter before the cultivation began; and, 3) lost money because of the differential price rates between the winter and the harvesting time prices, in the winter the products were valued at a lower rate by the *salaf-khars*. We will explain this in the context of sharecropping in future chapters.

Among the second category of the rural population, i.e. the indirect components of production, the role of village headman (or *Kadkhoda*)²⁰⁵ is especially worthy of review although the other classes will be reviewed as well.

By the 1920s the old Iranian state had collapsed and the modern state began to take the direction of intensification and centralization of power. Accordingly, the state of Reza Khan (1921-1941) took its bureaucratic system into the countryside in order to establish the state's power. Following this tendency during Reza Khan a law was passed in 1935 which necessitated the establishment of an institution in the village that would represent the majority of landowners and was in charge of the execution of government regulations in the village (Hooman, 1962:292).

²⁰⁵ *Kadkhoda* and *Mobashir* (bailiff) were among the dominant classes (e.g. Hooglund, 1982:12-17). I have considered *kadkhoda* as a member of the village social structure as opposed to absentees. Therefore, the above categorization does not mean that *kadkhoda* had the same social and political status as sharecroppers or landless labourers.

There were four types of village in Iran; 1) state villages (Khaliseh), i.e., the village was owned by the government; 2) vaqf villages (religious endowments); 3) Arbabi villages (private large and absentee lands); and, 4) combined villages (i.e., owned by small-owners). A village headman (kadkhoda) was chosen by the local finance office for the state's villages (Khaliseh lands), one was chosen by the religious administrator for the villages that had Vaqf land (religious endowment), and one was chosen by the landlords for the villages owned by the private landlords (Arbabi villages) and in the villages with small landowners one was chosen by the majority of the landowners (Hooman, 1962:292). The duties of kadkhoda were similar to those of the local governors (e.g. DelVecchio Good, 1981:274) but on a smaller scale and included the registration of births and protection of the book for conscription registration purposes (Hooman, 1962:292-93).

The kadkhoda (village headman) was thus the missing link of the chain that connected, politically, the countryside to the state. It should be noted that it did not exist, as an institution, in the history of Iran prior to Reza Khan's period (1921-1941). His salary was determined according to tradition and by the local governor and the landlords were obliged to pay it (Hooman, 1962:293). For example, in Asad-abad each boneh in harvesting time allocated 15 kilograms as the share of the village headman, or in Boroojerd each boneh paid 6 kilograms and some cash was paid by the landlord (Ibid).

After the state managed to link the countryside to its apparatus some other changes occurred in the village. In economic terms the village headman became a

new source for the extraction of surplus and he was also a state-protected agent for strengthening the position of landlords. Before the 1930s the landlords had to reinforce their power using their own means which was costly and not as effective because the peasant could resist them whereas in the new arrangements it was the state that used its means (i.e., bureaucratic and military forces) to regulate the relations between the peasants and the landlords. In political terms the peasants found it difficult to resist the state and accepted the terms set by the landlords.

The mobashirs (i.e., bailiffs or the agent of the landlord) were also among the second category, i.e., the indirect components of production. They were, in fact, the substitutes for the landlords' power (e.g. Hooglund, 1982:15). In some instances they were so powerful that the village headman (Kadkhoda), village watchman (dasht-ban) and all heads of bonehs took orders from them (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1989:202).

Dasht-ban (or the harvest watchman) was also a member of this second class. He protected the landlord's properties and assets in the village (Safi-nejad, 1989:203) and also protected the bonehs' assets (Ibid) and could become a member of the dominant classes.

Following the kadkhoda, mobashir and dasht-ban were the servicemen who were part of the classes external to the bonehs. This group consisted of blacksmiths, the carpenters, the bathkeepers, the barbers and the oxen-grazers and were service-providers to the bonehs. In terms of income and status they were lower than the bailiffs (mobashir), the village headman (kadkhoda) and the harvest-watchman (dasht-ban) (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1989:201-10). While the former group (the village headmen, the

bailiffs and the harvest-watchmen) received its salary from the landlord or a salary which was determined by the landlord the latter group received its salary directly from the boneh members (Ibid). This helps us to understand the dependency of the village headman, bailiff and dasht-ban on the landlords and their potential to become members of dominant classes whereas the dependent relations of the servicemen provides the ground to argue that they were no different than sharecroppers in their status. In fact their dependency on bonehs put them in a lower position than the sharecroppers who were members of the bonehs.

Having discussed the position of bourgeois and middle class members (i.e indirect forces in relation to boneh) the third class consisted of the landless labourers or khoshneshins. The details about landless labourers were discussed above, however, it should be noted that Safi-nejad includes them under external classes (i.e., classes not directly related to bonehs). We will indicate later how they were used in bonehs and how they were exploited.

With regard to the internal classes, the nasaq-dars, peasants with land-use rights who engaged in sharecropping agreements, were in fact, the only class in this category but they can be divided into sub-groups depending on their position in the boneh. For example, heads of the bonehs had relationships with the landlords and sometimes received special privileges (e.g. Khosravi, 1976:78-9). To this group the oxen-owners (gav-band) should be added because they gradually developed into a dominant and independent class. This group, however, was not extant in many parts of the country and as Lambton (1969b:374-75) argues they appeared in Tehran area as an

intermediary class between the landlords and the peasants.

The above classification, as noted earlier, was carried out in relation to the 'bonehs'. The interwoven nature of class formations and the boneh requires this typology although it has some limitations in indicating the structural relations in which these classes functioned with the dominant classes. In other words, these classes ultimately, in the context of the pre-land-reform rural economy of Iran, came under two major classes and functioned to generate profit for some classes at the expense of other classes. These rural classes consisted of; 1) the dominant classes who owned the means of production; and, 2) the subordinate classes. The first category covered various groups and classes of which the owners of means of production consisted of; the absentee landlords, the money-lenders, the shopkeepers, and the oxen-owners. The bailiffs, the village headman, and the harvest watch-man did not necessarily own the means of production but, in fact, their relations to the landlords provided the grounds for them to become members of the dominant classes. The second category included; nasaq-dars, landless labourers (khoshneshins), and the servicemen (blacksmiths, bathkeepers, barbers, carpenters and so on).

While between 70 to 80 percent of rural population was formed by the second class (e.g. Golabian, 1977:xiii), they were all living under-budget for production purposes. For example in 1960, 56 percent of nasaq-dars in Khuzistan borrowed money at a 50 percent²⁰⁶ interest rate from shopkeepers and other non-governmental

²⁰⁶ According to Hooglund (1982:19), the interest rates sometimes in some areas of the country were as high as 100 percent.

sources (Research Group, 1964:192) and in the same year, some 50 percent of the peasants were indebted (Amid, 1990:45). Looking back it becomes evident that this situation had existed for a long time. Vali (1980:28), for example, categorizes *nasaq-dar* as poor peasants and describes their situation in the late 19th and early 20th century to be dependent upon borrowing for living. One of the reasons the direct producers were forced into this on-going condition was the manipulation of the sharecropping practice by the dominant classes over the centuries which continued into the 20th century. In order to understand the process in which sharecropping resulted in the worsening of the conditions of the rural subordinate classes in relation to the dominant classes we will examine the land tenure system and crop-sharing practices in chapters which follow after the next chapter. At that time we will examine the practice of sharecropping in detail and examine how the various rural classes fared in the production, appropriation and outflow of surplus product from the rural economy prior to the land reform of 1962. In the next chapter the nature of landowning classes and their historical development as absentee landlords will be examined as well as the fact that a significant part of the absentees were urban merchants.

Chapter Three

The Development of Absentee and Merchant-Landlordism

In Chapter Two it was illustrated that the development of private land became possible because of the absence, or lack of continuous presence, of an absolutist state in Iran. It was also suggested that the role of dominant classes should replace the role of the state in any analysis of social formation of pre-capitalist rural Iran. Hence, we focussed on the development of landowning classes before and after the transitional period of the late 19th century. In this chapter, we will discuss: 1) the development of private landownership; 2) its particular form, i.e., absentee large landownership; and, 3) the involvement of merchants in landownership, especially, following the transitional period of the late 19th century. They formed a fraction of the absentee landlords. We will support our assumption about the absence of a continuous absolute state and consequent development of private land by examining the development of private landownership and the changes in land tenure (landholding and landowning) in various periods. Private landownership began to develop as early as the entrance of Islam into Iran in the 7th century and in medieval Iran both landholding and landowning systems co-existed. Beginning in the late 19th century most types of landholding (e.g. tuyul) began to transform into private landowning²⁰⁷. In order to clarify the importance of both landholding and landownership in the process of the

²⁰⁷ It should be noted that not all types of landholdings were converted to private-ownership, i.e., some lands even in the 20th century were still, as we will argue, in control of the state.

development of the private ownership of land these two concepts will be treated before the rest of our analysis.

3.1 Landholding and Landownership in Iran; A Continuum and a Transforming Relationship to Land:

The concepts 'landholding' and 'landownership' have often been misunderstood or misplaced in explaining the Eastern land tenure systems²⁰⁸. In the case of Iran, for example, some emphasis has been put on the existence or absence of the private ownership of land²⁰⁹ while the significance of landholding (possession as opposed to ownership of land)²¹⁰ and its implication on the process of exploitation of the peasantry has been overlooked. In other words, a long history of land tenure has been often treated as a uniform history (e.g. Keshavarz, 1984). Petroshevski (Ibid) sees this uniform history in terms of existence of feudal land and Katouzian's (1981) approach implies a lack of feudal land. Obviously, more weight has been placed on the absence

²⁰⁸ To define 'landowning' I consider it to entail an absolute control of an individual landlord on land and its revenues; while, 'landholding' can be defined in terms of possession of land (i.e., right to collect revenues of land for a period of time) (e.g. Shaygannik, 1985:78). Landholding types were not the same, therefore, some types such as suyurghal created more rights than just a right to collect revenues of land, we will discuss it later.

²⁰⁹ For example, Ashraf (1978:314) indicates that by the Safavids some form of semi-feudal system had developed based on grant of suyurghal land and was stopped by the safavids in favour of the state control. In his earlier work, Ashraf (1967:8) argues that Iran has been experiencing a fluctuation between feudalism and Asiatic system. Others refer to the existence of an incomplete private ownership of land (e.g. Nakhaie, 1986:78). It should be noted that suyurghal land was granted by the king and it was in possession of the individual and was exempted from tax (e.g. Hooman, 1962:216). Keshavarz (1984:480) refers to inheritability of suyurghal. See also Abrahamian (1974, 1975)

²¹⁰ Landholding does not depend upon a continuous ownership of land by individuals, it is based on a temporary (albeit for a long time) relationship to the land.

of private landownership since Marx (Melotti, 1977:77)²¹¹ categorized Iran among the countries which experienced the Asiatic system (e.g. Katouzian, 1981; Abrahamian, 1974)²¹².

By referring to the lack of the security of ownership, others emphasize that despite the existence of landownership the property rights were not secure (Nowshirvani, 1981:561; Lambton, 1981:283; 1987:74; 1969*b*). This view suggests the weakness of private ownership.

Even if we agree with Petroshevski that feudal land existed in Iran we can not ignore the fact that his judgments were based on iqta land, i.e., a type of land assignment (Keshavarz, 1966:46, 45-92; Keshavarz, 1984:184-85) which Lambton (1969*b*:53) argues was different from land in feudal Europe in terms of the circumstances and causes that gave rise to iqta²¹³. Besides, the landowning class did not have a constant and stable position in Iran (Shaygannik, 1985:87). Therefore, similarities between iqta and conditional feudal land existed, although there were other factors that were not similar to feudal Europe, such as a feudal class.

The underlying assumption in other approaches to land tenure in Iran (i.e., Asiatic approach or those referring to insecurity of landownership) is the absence of a strong class vis-a-vis the state which could have controlled land without the

²¹¹ See also Berktaý (1991:244) who refers to the classical Marxism and its tendency to attribute the absence of private land to the east.

²¹² Foran (1993:40-41) indicates that attempts were made to match pre-capitalist Iran with that of feudal mode. He (Ibid) and Lambton (1969*b*:53) indicate that dissimilarities, however, still existed

²¹³ See also Lambton (1971*a*; 1971*b*:9) for more debates on the difference of land tenure in Iran and Europe

intervention of the state (e.g. Pirooz, 1993:104; Nakhaie, 1986:74)²¹⁴. Is it, however, really the case? We do not plan to answer the question of class formation, here, because it has been dealt with elsewhere. We will, however, argue that landholding types (iqta, tuyul, suyurghal) played the same role in differentiating groups and classes as landowning would have²¹⁵. The issue in the pre-19th century period in which landholding was dominant, in fact, is not the presence or absence of private land or the security of land tenure. Rather, it is the question of whether extracted products²¹⁶ left the countryside by the non-state agents and/or by the state and the state agents²¹⁷.

It should be noted that from the late 19th century on landownership began to become the dominant form within the land tenure system in Iran. While the old landholders (tuyul-holders or iqta-holders) exploited the land due to their position as

²¹⁴ To Pirooz, a lack of hereditary aristocracy and a lack of formation of classes is one of the characteristics of Asiatic systems. Nakhaie critically reviews Marx's views on the Asiatic system that considers these systems as lacking private ownership and class structure.

²¹⁵ For example, Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984:447-49) indicates that during 14th and 15th centuries not only was there a difference between suyurghal and iqta as suyurghal entailed more legal rights but also the beneficiaries of suyurghal gained more military power. The beneficiaries of land were from the army, nobility, clergy and the state bureaucrats (Ibid). Political influence of the beneficiaries of land was dependent not only upon the size and revenue of their land but also depended upon the number of their servants. Petroshevski (Ibid) argues that the small feudals served the bigger feudals. To this should be added that the peasants remained the same paying taxes to these so-called feudals (Ibid) but we call them beneficiaries of land or landholders to avoid Petroshevski's faulty assumption of calling pre-capitalist formation a feudal land tenure. Therefore, landholding was a source of differentiation of groups and classes.

²¹⁶ Surplus, here, can be what is transferred from the rural economy under economic or extra-economic coercion to another context, i.e., urban economy. Therefore, surplus in the sense that the rural economy was able to produce for market is not necessarily the case.

²¹⁷ Shaygannik (1985:79) provides information about plundering the peasants by temporary landholders under Sassanids in pre-Islamic period. He also refers to the same process in post-Islamic period (Ibid:81). Lambton (1969b:53) also argues that in the 11th century the assignees appropriated as much profit as they could from land in a short time.

the beneficiaries of land who enjoyed its possession for a specific period (e.g. Shaygannik, 1985:81), the landlords of the 20th century exploited the rural economy as private landowners. There was a difference between the old landholders (such as tuyul-holders) and the new landlords who had absolute control of the land, however, the consequence of their dominance for the rural economy was the same, i.e., outflow of rural surplus.

It should also be noted that the presence of old landholders, as the dominant classes, provided the grounds for the outflow of extracted product which was the same under landowning system. However, the landholders did not provide the conditions necessary, i.e., they were not permanent, for the development of class relations meaning they were not the permanent owners of land, hence, in large measure, were not concerned with long term consequences. Thus, their relations with the subordinate classes were not based on the reproduction of labour force. This means, at one extreme, the dominance of landholders could result in over-exploitation of the peasantry and the rural economy, as Shaygannik (1985:83-4)²¹⁸ suggests. At the other extreme, this relationship could take the peasants' living standards into consideration. In any case, however, it was not a constant process due to the temporary (they held land for a specific period) character of the ruling classes despite the fact that in some cases they controlled the land for several generations²¹⁹ (Keshavarz, 1984:283).

²¹⁸ One type of devastation occurred during Mongolian period of 13th century. See Keshavarz (1984:335-38) for information on Mongolian period in which arbitrary division of land and arbitrary and unlimited exploitation of the peasantry took place.

²¹⁹ Iqta, suyurghal and tuyul could all be hereditary.

Unlike the landholders, those who became the owners of means of production, the landowners, began to extract surplus in accordance to the necessities of the reproduction of labour force. This meant that a stable relationship between the landlords and the peasants developed in the production process which guaranteed surplus outflow by the landlords at the expense of the subsistence of peasants. This is even more evident once the involvement of merchants in landownership is considered. We will argue that the involvement of merchants in landownership connected the rural economy to the urban and the market economy, hence, the peasants became subject to exploitation via the market economy. Under this system the labour force continued to produce despite the exploitative relations whereas under the Mongolian invasion, as described in Keshavarz (1984:337, 359-65; 1966:306-07) the peasants fled and the rural production declined.

The institution of land tenure, therefore, has gone through two major stages, i.e., landholding and landownership. The consequences of the dominance of landholders and landowners on the rural development process has been the same, i.e., the appropriation of surplus, although in the former elements of extra-economic coercion played a role whereas in the latter elements of economic coercion (i.e., the involvement of merchants) contributed to the extraction²²⁰. Also, while class

²²⁰ This means that in the case of landholders extraction was driven by political coercion whereas in the case of landowners of post-19th century Iran economic coercion in the form of merchants' involvement in landownership provided the impetus. Some do not agree that economic coercion was the driving force for extraction (e.g. Vali., 1993:208) because the direct producers had land-use rights, i.e., "... partial possession in separation specific to sharecropping". It is contended that, this approach does not address the effects of the 19th century merchants on conditions of extraction. Vali (1993:233), surprisingly, denies that the merchant capital affected the organization of production. For more debate on the question of economic and extra-economic coercion see Foweraker (1978:141-43).

differentiation existed under landholding systems²²¹ it became a constant structural phenomenon under landownership. The two institutions, nevertheless, remained identical in that they both included the element of absenteeism (e.g. Lahsaiezadeh, 1984:96).

At this time we will discuss the origins of land tenure systems in Iran, the growth of private land vis-a-vis the state, i.e., a necessary condition for the extraction of surplus not by the state but by the dominant classes, in this case the absentee landlords. In later chapters we will examine the question of surplus extraction focussing on the unit of production, i.e., the *boneh*, which was based on the centuries-long practice of sharecropping. In addition, the question of surplus extraction via sharecropping by the landholders will not be covered in this dissertation. It should be noted, however, that since the dominance of sharecropping dates back to several centuries ago²²² and continued under both landholding and landowning systems the results were identical except that under landholding the landholders' rights resulted in over-exhaustion of the rural economy²²³.

²²¹ In Marx's Asiatic system the exploited class includes all members of the village (Melotti, 1977:59). The question of exploiting class remained obscure (Ibid:60) although the state appears to be the main force. Therefore, the Asiatic system is a classless society due to this homogeneity. We will indicate that various landholding systems (*iqta*, *suyurghal* and *tuyul*) have been creating various types of beneficiaries of land at the expense of the state control of land.

²²² See, for example, Keshavarz (1984:185, 529).

²²³ Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984:283) writes that the conditions of the peasantry under hereditary *iqta* was worsened in the 11th and the 12th centuries. And Shaygannik (1985:81) refers to the fact that in medieval Iran the temporary position of landholders resulted in squeezing the peasants in a short time

3.2 Historical Development of Landholding and Private Land:

Since landholding types which began to develop in the Islamic period (642 A.D.) continued into modern times we can begin with this period although some references will be made to the pre-Islamic period. The dominance of the Islamic state on Iran which was completed by the 8th century brought all land under control of the Islamic state (Keshavarz, 1984:158-59).

During the Islamic state (7th and 8th centuries) there were four types of land (Lambton, 1969b:20; Hooman, 1962:211-212)²²⁴;

1) the lands which were controlled by those who converted by will to Islam or those lands conquered by Moslems and distributed among Moslems. The owners or the holders paid one-tenth of the product as tax (see also Shaygannik, 1985:81). These lands were called *Ushri Lands*, which meant one-tenth land or tithe lands;

2) the lands seized by the Moslems while their ownership had not been denied, in other words, the original owner kept the land. Not only did the owner pay taxes for the agricultural products, usually one-tenth, but he also paid an extra tax called *Kharaj*²²⁵ (see also Shaygannik, 1985:81)²²⁶;

3) the public land which could not be transferred and its revenues were used for public

²²⁴ Lambton (1969b:20) has two different categorization of land but I tried to present them in combination.

²²⁵ The majority of lands after the entry of Islam were Kharaj lands, however, it declined in later periods as more and more Iranians accepted Islam as their religion (Hooman, 1962:212)

²²⁶ The rate of Kharaj tax differed from one parcel of land to another and from area to area (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:33). In later periods, as Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984:481) argues, Shah Ismail Safavi (1501-26) decreased the rate of Kharaj to one-sixth of the total product. Therefore, Kharaj did not have a specific rate

purposes. One type of these lands were *vaqf* land (religious land) ; and,

4) the lands taken from the previous kings and seized by the new rulers, i.e., the crown land.

Lambton (1969b:20) explains that the *Ushr* land could be owned whereas the *Kharaj* land was used solely for its revenues (i.e., usufruct)²²⁷. Crown land began to become the major source of land assignment in the post-Islamic period. It began when Mo-aviyeh, the Ummayid Caliph (661-80 A.D.) turned the former crown lands of the Sassanids into crown land and assigned them to his family members (Lambton, 1969b:20) and we will follow its changes into the later periods.

From this time, i.e., after Islam entered Iran beginning in 642 A.D. one of the landholding types that was introduced to Iran was called 'Iqta' which took its complete shape as a land assignment method in Saljuqs (11 century A.D.)²²⁸ (Ashraf, 1967:59; Lambton, 1969b:53-4; 1987:33)²²⁹. Iqta was used to refer to a piece of land that was

²²⁷ In the 7th century the majority of lands were *Kharaj* land but the conversion of Iranians to Islam quickened and the *Ushr* land became the dominant type of land in the 8th and 9th centuries which led to a decrease in state revenues (e.g. Hooman, 1962:212). It should be noted that the time periods are not exact and Hooman (1962) did not include them in his argument. The above dates were taken from other sources such as Arasteh (1970) and Wilber (1975).

²²⁸ As Lambton (1969b:53-76) explains iqta became regulated to be granted out of the state land for specific reasons mostly military and other services to the state.

²²⁹ Iqta was introduced under Ummayids (661-750 A.D.) and it referred to division of land (Shaygannik, 1985:81, Keshavarz, 1984:185). Examples of granting land by Ummayid Caliphs are , Mo-aviyeh sent some 50,000 Arab families (in 671-72 A.D.) to Neishabur, Marv and Balkh in the north-east and gave them land and housing (Keshavarz, 1984:165) He also gave land to his family members (Shaygannik, 1985:81) His son Yazid (in 680-83 A.D.) granted large plots of land to the Arab ruler of Nahavand, Dinvar and Halvan (Keshavarz, 1984:165). One Century later, During Abbasids, Harun the prime minister gave land to those who participated in his daughter's wedding (Shaygannik, 1985:81) He had written the name of villages on small balls of perfume and poured them over his daughter's head and those who collected the balls took the possession of these villages (Ibid).

handed over to an individual forever by the Caliphate in return for his efforts or services (Hooman, 1962:212; Tannous, 1944:32)²³⁰. Iqta was, hence, granted in two ways; 1) either in return for the military services. In some cases 500 villages were granted as iqta to the army officers (Keshavarz, 1984:259), or: 2) in return for services to the state bureaucracy (Vali, 1993:230; Shaygannik, 1985:82)²³¹. Some maintain that the origins of this type of landholding (i.e., iqta) is rooted in the clash between two modes of production, i.e., the Asiatic mode and the tribal mode of production (Khosravi, 1976:60-61). The consequence was the collapse of the old land system in Iran which was based on the concentration of land and used to be the only type of land tenure prior to 642 A.D. In the Islamic period, the country was divided into various Ayalats (provinces) (Khosravi, 1976:60-61)²³² and so the land was divided into parcels unlike the previous periods²³³. In earlier periods the land was concentrated in the hands of seven families including the Royal family (Hooman, 1962:209). In the Islamic period, however, as a result of the division of the country, parcels of land became ready to be granted to those who contributed to the reproduction of the new political power. From this time on the landholding system began to change towards

²³⁰ The term 'forever' should not mislead us. Land at that time could not be granted forever because as the rulers fell the lands also came under the control of the next ruler. Jafar Barmaki's and his family's lands in 803 A.D. were confiscated as he was accused of plotting against the state (Keshavarz, 1984:179). Also, after Arab Caliphate declined in the 10th century the Buyids recaptured all lands of the caliph and his family and they only gave him a piece of land as iqta (Keshavarz, 1984:235). This provides enough reason to argue that the situation was worse among the low-ranking landholders.

²³¹ See also Keshavarz (1984:185, 259).

²³² This means that the country although it existed it lost its unity and the Arab rulers divided it.

²³³ For further debate on the origins of iqta including its existence prior to Islamic period see Ensaf-pour (1976:408).

the development of private land as some granted lands became hereditary (Hooman, 1962:214)²³⁴

The tendency of landholding to become private, from the beginning, was so strong that even in the 8th century the growing number of iqta-holders provided the grounds for the formation of independent political regions and the rise of local dynasties (Hooman, 1962:213; Keshavarz, 1984:193-94; Ashraf, 1967:59)²³⁵. This tendency was contemporary with the gradual increase in the number of iqta lands at the expense of state land. Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984:185) indicates this fact as he argues that in the 8th and 9th centuries iqta lands gradually increased corresponding to the decrease in the state lands.

Under the iqta system the assignees were from amongst the local tribal chiefs,

²³⁴ Lambton (1969b:28) argues that from the earliest time (642 A D) crown land, waste land etc were granted as a heritable property subject to taxation (iqta al-tamleek). Therefore, the element of inheritance was already practiced in transfer of occupancy rights of some iqta lands to the next generation. In the 10th century the iqta-holders of Khorasan tried to make their iqta lands hereditary (Keshavarz, 1984:245). This meant that the ownership rights as opposed to occupancy rights were being sought. Four generations of Symjuri family controlled Kohistan district as their iqta land (Ibid). In the 12th century, in the province of Fars, in the south, private lands had become more than other types of lands (Ibid:244-45). Up to the 13th century the tendency of a decrease in state's lands continued (Ibid). There is no other reason for this decrease unless the iqta lands which had been alienated from the state land in previous periods are considered. Not much can be said about the 13th and 14th centuries which were Mongolian and Timurid periods except the introduction of suyurghal. In the safavid period (1499-1736) suyurghal was a type of hereditary land grant with more property rights than iqta (e.g. Keshavarz, 1984:480). One should not be misled by this information, because the fact still remained true that the melki (private) lands were not forever secure and the state was not totally dispossessed. For example, when Buyids captured the province of Fars they turned the melki (private) lands into iqta and as a result iqta lands in that province increased (Keshavarz, 1984:245). The same process occurred in Qum (Ashraf, 1967:61). The above information only indicates the tendency of landholding to become private land, but it does not indicate that private land actually continued for several generations.

²³⁵ More information on the local dynasties can be found in Wilber (1975:39-44)

the army, the court *attache* or the ruler's favourites (Tannous, 1944:32)²³⁶. There were two types of *iqta* before it was transformed into *tuyul* during the Safavids, 1) *iqta-al-tamleek* which referred to a property that the ruler granted to a person, and, 2) *iqta-al-isteghlal* which referred to a property whose revenues were granted to another individual by the ruler (Hooman, 1962:216; Ashraf, 1967:59)²³⁷. In other words, the land, its revenues or the right of an individual for collecting taxes from the peasants were the subjects of exchange between the state and the individual who received them (Tannous, 1944:32). It should be noted that *iqta-al-tamleek* had more potential to become inheritable than *iqta-al-isteghlal* for as Lambton (1969b 28) explains Abu Yusef, one of the jurists of the 9th century, argued that the holder of this type of land could not be dispossessed unless the land was left uncultivated. *Iqta* remained the prime type of landholding before the Safavids²³⁸.

By the Safavids (1499 A.D.)²³⁹, however, *suyurghal* another type of landholding similar to private land had developed (Ashraf, 1978:314)²⁴⁰. Both *iqta* and *suyurghal*

²³⁶ It should be noted that although *iqta*-holders had unlimited right on the use of land and it could be inherited (Hooman, 1962:214) prior to the Seljuqs it came under regulations during the Seljuqs. Until this time *iqta* still belonged to the ruler and he could deprive the holders of the benefits (Ibid)

²³⁷ See also Vali (1993 84-5) and Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984 185)

²³⁸ During the 10th to 12th centuries the state land had decreased in part due to *iqta* grants (Keshavarz, 1966.7, 53). During 13th and 14th centuries, *iqta* continued to be granted (Ibid 55-66)

²³⁹ Between 1200 A.D. and 1499 A.D. Mongols and Timurids invaded Iran and the whole socio-economic structures were affected deeply as massacres and displacements ruined the country (see Keshavarz, 1984 and Lambton, 1969b, and Shaygannik, 1985 83). Apparently *suyurghal* was introduced by Mongols (Keshavarz, 1984 445, Ashraf, 1967 59)

²⁴⁰ Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984 447) argues that *suyurghal* was first heard of in the mid-14th century.

lands were free from taxes but suyurghal land also provided legal and bureaucratic privileges, i.e., all government agents for the area under suyurghal were determined by the person to whom the suyurghal was granted (Keshavarz, 1984:447-48). Agents were needed because suyurghal lands were very large. For example, Amir Shams-odin one of the tribal chiefs of a Kordish tribe, called Roozaki (Ghara-Yusef), was granted four whole districts of Armenia (Ibid:448).

There were also other types of lands such as Melk which was private property and also personal iqta which could become Melk (Shaygannik, 1985:82). However, the absolutist state of Shah Abbas demarcated the growth of suyurghal and similar lands which could be transformed into private land (Ashraf, 1978:314)²⁴¹ hence threaten the state revenues and its position in society (e.g. Keshavarz, 1984:480).

As a result, the tuyul land grew considerably during the Safavids (1499-1736)²⁴² and it was used as a source of revenue for the provincial governors to spend on the army, their offices and their other needs (e.g. Foran, 1993:28).²⁴³ In other words, it was the revenue that came out of this type of land that made it important and it indicated that the ownership of land, in the sense that the total ownership could be transferred, was not still a dominant system (see Keshavarz, 1984:480). This type of

²⁴¹ See also Alatas (1993:473-75).

²⁴² Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984:526) also refers to an increase in state lands in this period which further confirms the increase in tuyul or temporary lands

²⁴³ Hooman (1962:216) categorizes 'tuyul' as a separate category of landholding and maintains this type of land was granted to the army officers and soldiers in lieu of their salary. Hooman (Ibid) presents the same argument as Foran (1993:28-29) and Ashraf (1967:59) that towards the 18th and 19th century tuyul becomes the dominant form of landholding.

land (i.e., tuyul) was given to those with whom the state had some sort of official relation, for example, the military members and the land could not be transferred (Foran, 1993:28), at least formally. Foran (1993:28) indicates that this type of land was considerable and was the second largest type of land after the royal domain or crown land. It was argued in Chapter Two that the Safavid state was politically and militarily strong and this development in tuyul land confirms it. However, as we will see later, the land tenure system under the state of Safavids although similar in some ways (i.e., the dominance of the state on tuyul) to an Asiatic system was not an Asiatic land because the tuyul land was not the only type of land. This is, in fact, a matter of controversy as Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984:480-81; see also Vali, 1993:10; Shaygannik, 1985:83) even considers the tuyul land system to be a feudal system.

There was also vaqf land which formed the fourth category of land after crown land, state land and private land. Lambton (1969a:27) argues that vaqf land (religious endowment) increased in importance in the 16th century Safavids. Compared to the state land and its derivations, i.e., iqta, tuyul, suyurghal plus the crown lands, however, vaqf land did not account for much land. Its importance, however, lies in the fact that it was an indicator of the private ownership of land (e.g. Foran, 1993:29). Unless one had total control of the land it was not possible to put land under vaqf (Ibid) and as Shaygannik (1985:83) argues many private owners laid their land under vaqf in order to protect it from being confiscated.

To sum up, by the time of the Safavids iqta had contributed to a decline in

state lands by becoming hereditary, hence, alienating land from the control of the state. Also, *suyurghal* which was even closer to private land than *iqta* had also demarcated the state lands²⁴⁴. Land grants also affected the state's political power and Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984:282) indicates that the increase of *iqta* lands led to a decrease in the state's political power during 11th and 12th centuries²⁴⁵. The Safavids, however, prevented further development of *iqta* and *suyurghal* and developed the *tuyul* land which was similar but was more under control of the state²⁴⁶ (Keshavarz, 1984:480). The fluctuations in *iqta* land and its replacement by *tuyul*, therefore, was an indication of the state's power in various periods. As the pre-Safavids' dynasties experienced an increase in *iqta* lands, the state's political power began to decline. The Safavids identified the problem and limited the development of unconditional land grants (such as *suyurghal* and hereditary *iqta*).

After the Safavids not much happened to change the land tenure system except that *vaqf* land decreased as Nadir Shah (1736-1750) rejected this concept (Hooman,

²⁴⁴ For more information on *suyurghal* see Keshavarz (1984:447).

²⁴⁵ A brief account about the period before the Safavids can be provided by reading Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984). It can be said that the state's political power in this period (642-1499 A.D.) was fluctuating. After 160 years, in 800 A.D. the Arab state fell and it was followed by local dynasties which demonstrated a decentralization of political power. In the 11th century Turkish tribes came to power and then in the 13th century until 1499 Mongols and Timurids dominated Iran (Ibid). One conclusion about this period is the instability of political power and recurrent decentralization of the political power. The legacy of this period was the emergence of *iqta* in the 7th century and its completion in the 11th century. Also in the 13th century *suyurghal* and *tuyul* were introduced by Mongols (e.g. Keshavarz, 1984:446).

²⁴⁶ Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984:480) argues that while state lands (*Divani*), crown lands (*Khasseh*) and tribal lands increased, private and *suyurghal* land decreased. It seems the term *suyurghal* was used more than *iqta* because there is less mention of *iqta*.

1962:216)²⁴⁷. He added many vaqf lands to Naderi Roghbeh which meant these lands officially became state lands (Ibid). It can be said that the temporary landholders (or conditional tuyul) still constituted the most important feature of land tenure in Iran which remained, with more or less the same characteristics, up to and including the 19th century²⁴⁸.

During Qajar (1796-1925) the trend was towards bringing a vast area of the country's land under tuyul by the Qajar shahs (Hooman, 1962:217; Lambton, 1987:33-87)²⁴⁹ even though the first shah, Agha Mohammad Khan (1779-1796)²⁵⁰ was not in favour of tuyul (Khosravi, 1976:19).

During Qajar period almost all types of granted lands were termed 'tuyul' (Hooman, 1962:217) and were granted to many classes including the Court women and the people associated to the Court, army officers, religious groups and the tribal leaders (Khosravi, 1976:21). Tuyul had three major forms; 1) sometimes a tuyul consisted of the revenues of a property that was given to the holders of certain jobs; 2)

²⁴⁷ Vaqf land became important in the 16th century (Lambton, 1969a:27) Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984:526) argues that in the 17th century vaqf land increased.

²⁴⁸ Ashraf (1967:59) argues that tuyul which was introduced during the safavids was the basis of landholding until the constitutional revolution of 1906.

²⁴⁹ This could happen by conquest, usurpation, purchase, confiscation of lands and bringing them under the category of state land of which tuyul was granted (e.g. Lambton, 1987:60-61) Agha Mohammad Khan, for example, received some 3000 mares which were property of the former dynasty as a gift in return for his help to defend Fars (Fasa'i, 1972:46). Malkolm in *History of Persia* (quoted by Lambton, 1987:39) also reports in the 1820s that although property rights were respected by Islamic law there were forced sales of private land to the government. Aghassi, the Minister of Mohammad shah in 1840s was another example of a landholder giving up land to the state in order to protect himself against the next shah (Ibid:53-54).

²⁵⁰ Agha Mohammad khan was never officially named shah but he ruled from 1779 to 1796 (Wilber, 1975:65) and that is the reason that in the text the period of Qajars has been set from 1796 to 1925 (see Arasteh, 1970:12).

sometimes it was referred to as a land grant in lieu of the annual income of a person, and; 3) it sometimes meant that the tuyul-holder was granted the right to collect the taxes from certain lands including royal or landlord's land (Hooman, 1962:217).

Examples of tuyul are abundant but we will refer only to a few documented cases.

Agha Mohammad Khan gave a district near Atrek river in the north to the Torkmans among whom his father had taken refuge (Lambton, 1987:40). Later in 1806, Fath Ali shah granted a district of Kordistan to a refugee from Baghdad and his 5,000 followers (Ibid:40). They later received more land in the north as they participated in a war campaign against Russia; this is an example of a tuyul in category two above (Ibid). Fath Ali Shah also confirmed the estates of Yusef Khan Gurji as his permanent tuyul (Ibid:67-68)²⁵¹.

In the case of the tribes (second and third type of tuyul) the tuyul-holder was supposed to assist the government with military needs if it was called for (Hooman, 1962:217). The land grant and tax break was a common practice in the case of the tribes which provided the government with military assistance (Amanat, 1983:15). For example, Agha Mohammad Khan granted the district of Bastam to Jafar Quli Khan and the town of Semnan to Ali Quli Khan in lieu of their salaries (Lambton, 1987:67)²⁵². Similarly, Ilkhani of Shadilu in Khurasan was exempted from taxes for his efforts on behalf of the shah to guard the Atrak frontier in the north-east (Lambton, 1991:491). During Fath Ali Shah (1797-1834) the governor of Zanjan, i.e., Faraj

²⁵¹ He was a provincial governor and an army commander.

²⁵² Lambton (1987:67) indicates that *suyurghal* still was used in the late 18th century but she argues that *tuyul* and *suyurghal* had synonymous meaning.

Allah Khan, received 100 villages of Zanjan in tuyul in return he provided "5,000 horsemen who were paid, fed, and clothed by its produce" (Lambton, 1987:72). Also, the governor of Shiraz in 1808-09 provided some 20,000 horsemen (Bausani, 1971:172). In return for their service, the soldiers each received a plot of land to support their families by the produce they extracted from land (Ibid). Also, Abbott explains that some villages were granted to the tribal leaders to provide money in order to be able to pay their on-duty soldiers' salary which was between 8 to 14 tomans per year (about 4-7 pounds sterling or 80 to 126 shillings)²⁵³ (Amanat, 1983:15). Towards the mid-19th century, the greater part of Shabsavan in Azarbaijan was granted to a tribal leader (Lambton, 1990:491). There are also examples from the second half of the 19th century in which tribal leaders and state officials and soldiers received land as tuyul or exemption from taxes in lieu of their services (e.g. Lambton, 1987:69). The granting of these lands in lieu of salary and services rendered does not indicate that Iran was not a feudal land since Block (1968:164) has shown that lords in feudal Europe distributed lands among their followers. But as Shaygannik (1985:78) has shown the state in a feudal system had only a marginal role in landownership whereas in Iran at least in principle, the state was the owner of granted land.

Returning to the debate on tuyul, there is no reliable figure that would indicate the amount of land under each of the three categories of tuyul listed above but Hooman (1962:218) argues that those tuyuls which were granted as annual income

²⁵³ Every 9 tomans equalled 81 shillings in 1848 (e.g. Amanat, 1983:14) and every 2 tomans equalled one pound sterling (e.g. Ibid:11).

were the majority of lands during Qajar.

The importance to us of tuyul land grants is their role in the development of private land. The large landowners, if any, prior to the late 19th century, were those who had gained their lands in the form of tuyul during previous shahs (Khosravi, 1976:21). In this period (prior to the late 19th century) the tuyul-holders tried to make their tuyul land their permanent property and to lessen the state's control on tuyuls and they tried to pretend that their land was not tuyul whenever facing a government official (Hooman, 1962:218). In other words, there was an ever-increasing tendency towards the conversion of all types of lands into private lands.

Tuyul land declined in the second half of the 19th century when it began to lose its two major traditional functions: 1) economic function; and, 2) obligation for military service. Not all tuyul lands were supposed to generate direct revenues for the state's treasury (e.g., Lambton, 1987:71-72) but casual presents to the shah at the New Year, for example, was one common method of generating revenue (Ibid:69, 71-72). But since one-fifth of the land revenue was alienated by tuyul grants (Ibid:71) this meant that this casual method was not economically helpful to the state²⁵⁴. This

²⁵⁴ This is further obvious when the circumstances of the post-1820s and 1840s are considered. Iran underwent political and economic changes under the influence of Russian and Britain. This integrated Iran into the market economy. We will indicate in Chapter Five that imports had grown towards the end of the 19th century and the country did not have any other source to finance its growing imports but agriculture. And, as Curzon (1966:470, vol. 2) puts the land tax at 30 percent in the 1890s. Land tax in the late 1880s formed 15 percent of agricultural output and 12 percent of national output (calculated based on information provided by Katouzian, 1981:44, table 3.9). Even if one agrees with Ettehadieh Nezam-Mafi (1993:10) that land taxes on some khalisch lands were 42 percent it was difficult to use it against the growing deficit, we will discuss it in Chapter Five. To this situation one should add the decline in productivity of silk and also famine years of 1870s which put a big assault on the revenues of the state. Under these circumstances not only did the tuyul-holders continue to pay no taxes but they continued to regard the tuyul as their hereditary wealth (e.g. Hooman, 1962:218).

economic malfunction of tuyul can be understood in terms of the tendency of tuyul lands to become private land, a tendency that undermined the original objective of tuyul grants. Originally, the tuyul was supposed to be used frequently by the state as a source of revenue. There were differences, however, how the tuyul were handled during the Safavids and the Qajars. The Safavids eliminated the inheritability of tuyul (Keshavarz, 1984:480) in order to use tuyul as a source of state revenues especially when the state had to pay pensions (Foran, 1993:28). The Qajars, in contrast, assumed the inheritability of tuyul. Lambton (1987:71) writes: "Unless otherwise stipulated the *tuyul* was normally granted for life". Therefore, in the Qajar period the tuyul lost its revenue-producing potential, especially since tuyul-holders did not have to pay taxes (e.g. Hooman, 1962:218).

We should also note that tuyul lost its economic (revenue-producing) function in another way. As noted before, tuyul was granted out of Khaliseh land, i.e., state land (Ettehadiéh Nezam-Mafi, 1993:5). Assuming that not all Khaliseh lands were given as tuyul we will review the conditions of Khaliseh lands in general and its relation to tuyul, in order to indicate that tuyul had lost its traditional function of supporting the state revenues. Khaliseh lands (i.e., state lands) as the source of tuyul land had developed in the first half of the 19th century and became the major source of state revenues (Abdollaev, 1982:238) through renting them to the sharecroppers or by granting them in lieu of payments. Khaliseh lands although on the rise during Qajar, however, did not produce revenue for the state in the second half of the 19th century (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:152). "In general, the condition of these lands was

deplorable" (Ettehadieh Nezam-Mafi, 1993:7). Lambton (1987:63; 1969b:152-53) refers, for example, to villages of Khwar near Tehran (between 1878 and 1879) and 1,000 villages in Isfahan with various types of ownership (including Khaliseh) that were in a state of ruin. Ettehadieh Nezam-Mafi (1993:7) focuses on the conditions of Khaliseh lands of Varamin (near Tehran) in 1870s and refers to reports that confirm the returns (in the form of rent)²⁵⁵ were 2,000 kharvar (600 tons) in 1840s and had declined to none in the 1870s. The same result was observed in two other khaliseh villages. The mis-administration of the state lands finally resulted in their sale in the last 40 years of the 19th century (e.g. Lambton, 1987:61-64; Ettehadieh Nezam-Mafi, 1993:8-9). Considering that the state granted part of tuyuls to the governors and local officials²⁵⁶ in lieu of payment for their supervision of the khaliseh lands²⁵⁷ and these lands were now in ruin one can only conclude that the tuyul lands and the khaliseh lands were no longer economic, i.e., revenue-producing.

2) after Amir Kabir's reforms in 1851 the significance of obligation of tuyul-holders to provide soldiers was removed (Lambton, 1978:72). This meant that the state did not need to give up its lands in return for military services.

²⁵⁵ Nezam-mafi does not indicate in what form the returns were, however, since Khaliseh lands were rented out by the state, these returns must have been in the form of rent.

²⁵⁶ For example Zel-o-soltan, as a governor of Isfahan in the late 19th century, based on one report had some 2,000 villages with half a million population (Khosravi, 1976:25). Or Nasr Allah Mirza, Governor of Shulistan and Mamassani (in the South-central part of the country), who held a part of Ardistan as his tuyul for his subsistence (Lambton, 1987:68).

²⁵⁷ Lambton (1987:63, 1991:485) argues that the provincial governors were responsible for collection of taxes on khaliseh lands.

Since the two major functions of the tuyul land grant system were now virtually non-existent the existence of this system was threatened. As a result, the second half of the 19th century and especially the beginning of the 20th century witnessed;

a) the direct sale of land to individuals. It was Nasir-o-din shah who, in need of money, decided to sell the khaliseh lands, i.e., the state lands and in 1889-90 he approved the sale of Khaliseh lands excluding those located in the capital (Lambton, 1987:64)²⁵⁸. By the end of his reign in 1896 all the state lands located near Isfahan, for example, had been sold (Hooman, 1962:218; Jamalzadeh, 1983:138). His successor, Mozaffar-oddin Shah, followed the same procedure (Hooman, 1962:218)

b) the disposition of land to close relatives of the rulers. During Mozaffar-addin shah (i.e., early 20th century) many lands were granted to his favourites as tuyul with no expectation of direct returns to the state (Lambton, 1987:74). For example, he gave up a village with 2,000 houses, 10 mosques, 8 public bathrooms, 4 traveller stations (Karvan-sara), 80 shops and 20,000 Krans of annual cash tax and 300 tons of annual grain, 1.368 tons of straw as taxes in kind, to one of the acquaintances who rendered some services to the Court (Jamalzadeh, 1983:138).

This marked the end of the tuyul system because the constitutional revolution of 1906 and its first national assembly abolished the system (Lambton, 1987:74,

²⁵⁸ Seyf (1992:578) also refers to the fact that the state sold land due to its fiscal crisis

Nakhaie, 1986:119).

To sum up, the land system during Qajar had its roots in the previous periods (Lambton, 1987:33, 85) as tuyul land continued to perform its landholding role but in the late Qajar period landownership became more subject to private ownership than ever before. As far as the argument on the transformation of landholding in the 19th century is concerned, the state appeared as a politically weak institution contributing to the transformation²⁵⁹ of state lands (khaliseh) and tuyul-holdings to private landowning.

3.3 Landownership Patterns in Post-Transitional Period:

By the early 20th century the land was divided among five categories; tuyul, khaliseh (state land), crown, vaqf land, private lands and peasant holdings (e.g Amjad, 1993:36; Lambton, 1987:51). The situation began to change after the constitutional revolution of 1906 by questioning the tuyul and state's lands.

The changed situation resulted in; 1) the cancellation of the tuyul-holding system and no individual was entitled to benefit directly from state lands (Hooman, 1962:219 and Lambton, 1987:33-86); and, 2) an acceleration in private landownership. The old tuyul lands were seized by the former tuyul-holders, powerful tribal leaders and the state bureaucrats and the peasants received no benefits from the new distribution (Amjad, 1993:36). The Khaliseh lands were sold directly to the notables, religious leaders and to the merchants (Lambton, 1987:64).

²⁵⁹ Further argument on the sovereignty of the state and autonomy of the tribes and landlords can be found in Lambton (1991:467)

In 1915 the state officially decided to sell all the state lands, except those located around Tehran, approved by parliament (Majlis) but at the same time there was some difficulty determining the ownership of much of the state land because there was dispute over it between the state and ...individuals. Due to these political tensions the state's lands issue remained untouched for some time (Jamalzadeh, 1983:139).

In 1921 a law was passed to settle the dispute between the individuals and the state allowing the official transfer of those lands which; a) were registered as private land; b) were transferable; c) were occupied by the individuals for thirty years before 1921 regardless of the state's claim on them; and d) were occupied by the individuals for twenty years without the state's claim and interference (Hooman, 1962 219-220). The trend was quickened in the province of Khuzistan, first, when in 1927 khaliseh land was disposed of to individuals on the provision that they begin making use of land within a year; and, when in 1935 (1314 Iranian calendar) a law was passed that allowed the state to grant landownership to those individuals who had been cultivating the land (Ibid:223)²⁶⁰. The sale of Khaliseh lands also took place in the province of Systan in the South-East from 1932 to 1944 (Hooman, 1962:232-37). In other words, landownership became much easier in the 20th century²⁶¹. Momeni (1980 132) reports

²⁶⁰ Sultanzade (1930 137) argues that in the 1920s 60 percent of land belonged to 2,500 or 3,000 private landlords. To this, he adds another 14 percent which were owned by the tribal leaders (Ibid). Even if his figures are considered high they confirm the rapid development of private large landownership after the transitional period of the late 19th and early 20th century

²⁶¹ In the case of tribes this was not always a peaceful transformation. In 1932 the government made some deals with the Lurs (in the western parts) who were very resistant towards the state's policies (Banani, 1969:128). Among the land deals was the transfer of some of the state's lands to the Lur tribesmen (Ibid). These lands, however, were sold to them forcefully by the local authorities whereas they had been earlier earmarked for them (Ibid)

that in 1935, for example, in the province of Khuzistan some 1,500-5,500 hectares of *khaliseh* lands (i.e., state land) were given to the capitalists including a plot of 6,784 hectares which was granted to the South Agricultural Corporation. Also, those lands located near Tehran became the private property of the army officials and the owners of the area (Banani, 1961:114)²⁶² Again in the province of Khuzistan, some lands were granted to the peasants (one hectare each) in 1938-40 based on their residency and their birth certificate (Hooman, 1962:225). Although the distribution changed and became more complex in the 40s and sometimes contributed to the concentration of land in the hands of the large landowners, it never stopped (e.g. Hooman, 1962:224-231). Rather, it remained a major characteristic trend of the 20th century and resulted in the disappearance (or demarcation) of some categories of land such as the *tuyul* and crown lands.

By the 1940s Tannous (1944:32-3) was able to categorise these types of landownership in Iran and claims that the following types could also be found in other neighbouring countries: 1) state's land, 2) *vaqf* land; and, 3) Private Land. Based on Tannous's (1944:32-3) estimates of the first two categories, each embraced some 10 percent of arable land. The third category encompassed some 80 percent of the cultivated land which was owned, controlled and exploited by the individual owners (Ibid:33). These lands were owned by a few absentee landlords and a small minority of cultivator-owners (Ibid). There are other figures extant which can be used to trace

²⁶² Ettehadieh Nezam-Mafi (1993), traces the conditions of *Khaliseh* lands near Tehran and indicates that these lands had been an administrative problem since the late 19th century. She concludes that in 1937 these lands were sold off (Ibid:13)

the trend towards further development of private landownership up to the 1962 land reform.

In a recent and detailed method Babie-e (1988:42, vol. 3) argues that prior to the 1962 land reform, of the total 10 percent of the cultivable land in Iran some 50 percent of the good and fertile land belonged to the large landlords and wealthy classes (see also Kazemian, 1968:36). The rest was divided between vaqf land (20 percent), state and crown land (10 percent) and the peasant-operator lands (20 percent) (Babie-e, 1988:42 vol. 3). Whether or not peasant-operators owned as high a percentage as 20 percent of the land will be discussed below

The difference between 1944 and 1962 figures was in fact between the amount of vaqf land in 1944 and 1962 and it was due to continuous change in the status of vaqf land. In other words, a combination of small and large private land ranged between 70 to 80 percent of the total land between 1944 and 1962. And, the difference between the above figures (Tannous and Badie-e) should not mislead us. The following confirms that private land between 1940s and 1950s was on the rise and little decline could have taken place

1) The increase in the private land was related to the decision of the state in the 50s to sell state lands (Khaliseh), in order to encourage large landlords to participate in agricultural reform²⁶³ by giving up their land to the direct producers and to invest their

²⁶³ The state sought the support of landlords for its reforms. For example, Momeni (1980:136) quotes one of the state officials who maintained, encouraged by the state decision that gave up state and crown land to the peasants a group of landlords followed the state and announced that they were willing to distribute their land among the peasants

capital, instead, in the growing industrial sectors. The sale of Khaliseh was approved by the government following the bill of 1950 and its final approval by Majlis in 1955 (Momeni, 1980:138-39).

2) In 1951 the shah decided to sell 2,000 crown villages to the peasants (Momeni, 1980:139; see also the Middle East Journal, 1951:341)²⁶⁴ hence contributing to the growth in private landownership. Thus the increase in private land continued and by 1957 there were six categories of landowners (Table 1);

Table 1. Categories of Landowners in 1957

Type of ownership	Owners	Percentage of total land
Private	Absentee Large-landlords	15
Private	Absentee Medium landlords	17
Private	Petty-owners	20
Private	Peasant-operators	33
State	Khaliseh	10
Other	Vaqf (religious endowment)	5

Source: Constructed based on data provided by Momeni (1980:29)²⁶⁵.

²⁶⁴ The division of the crown land was very slow as Momeni (1980:141-42) indicates that by 1959 only 120 villages of the crown land had been distributed but the division of crown land was an indication of the decline of other types of lands vis-a-vis private land. By 1962 some 517 crown lands had been sold off (Lahsaiezadeh, 1990:149).

²⁶⁵ It should not, however, be mistaken that all 33 percent of peasant proprietors were owner-operators. The majority of land, no matter what the size, was operating under landlord-peasant relations encapsulated into the sharecropping practice. Moreover, Halliday (1979:107) argues that many of smaller units were also owned by the absentees and only 5 percent of the peasants owned the land they tilled (see also Lambton, 1969b). It should also be noted that the total percentage of land owned by the absentees is higher than Momeni's estimate. We will address this later. Also for more debate on village ownership in 1956 see Powelson and Stock (1987:69, table 5.1).

Up to some 85 percent of land then, fell under the category of private land ownership (table 1; see also Halliday, 1979:106, table 6)²⁶⁶. It should be noted, however, that not all lands were arable and fertile and that not all the plots were of equal size and many have confirmed that some landlords owned as many as one hundred villages (e.g. Kazemian, 1968:36; Halliday, 1979:107)²⁶⁷. In addition, some of the six categories should be combined because many landlords owned various plots in different regions which in some instances would type them as petty-landowners or even small-owners in one region and not in another. Therefore, the above data should be interpreted in terms of the number of villages owned by different factions (Table 2) According to Golabian (1977:199) some 15,000 villages (30 percent of total) were owned by petty landowners (Table 2) but one should not be misled by these data because as Lambton (1969b:281) notes some small-owners were in fact, absentee landlords.

²⁶⁶ Some argue that before the 1962 land reform some 76 percent of land ownership was in the form of private ownership (Nakhaie, 1986: 213, Golabian, 1977:199)

²⁶⁷ Halliday (1979:106) argues that 56 percent of all land owned by large owners of whom 33.8 percent owned more than 100 hectares. Some of 400-500 powerful families owned 300 villages (Ibid:107). Or, 37 families owned 19,000 (38 percent) out of the total 50,000 villages (Ibid)

Table 2. Landownership in 1962 According to the Number of Villages

type of ownership	No. of villages	percent	No. of owner households
*those owning more than 5 villages	19,000	38	37
*those owning 1-5 villages	7,000	14	--
*Vaqt land <i>a</i>	6,000	12	--
*Khaliseh or state land	3,000	6	--
*petty-landlords and landowner peasants <i>b</i>	15,000	30	--
total	50,000	100	--

a. Vaqt land was religious endowment. For example, the shrine of Imam- Reza in Mash-had had about 400 villages in the country.

b. It should be noted that peasant-landowners were a very small category because only 7 percent of the peasants owned more than three hectares.

Source: Golabian (1977:199) and Halliday (1979:106-07).

In 1962 the unequal distribution of private land was most evident in rural areas. On the one hand, less than one percent (0.86 %) of the rural population owned 21 percent of cultivable land while on the other hand, 53 percent of the population of rural areas owned only 15 percent of the land (Amjad, 1993:36)²⁶⁸. Although Amjad's figure is higher than any other estimate it is still useful to indicate the unequal distribution of land. This uneven distribution of land had resulted in insufficient allocation of land to the peasants in order to support their families. In turn, this

²⁶⁸ It has yet to be argued that not all the owners were necessarily cultivators. Some argue that only 5 percent of the peasants owned the land they tilled (Halliday, 1979:107).

became the reason that 80 percent of the population had to engage in some sort of sharecropping or other activities in order to benefit from agricultural production because of the heavy concentration of land in a few hands²⁶⁹.

Private landholding in Iran contributed to the emergence of three types of land tenure systems: 1) the renting of land to the peasants in return for a variable share from the crop; 2) the owner cultivated and employed the peasants; and, 3) the owner rented the land to a third party who came to terms with the peasants (Tannous, 1944:33). The first was the most common type (Ibid).

Having discussed the origins and the development of land tenure system we shall now focus on some of the implications of these developments for the peasantry.

3.4 Some Implications of the Development of Private Land:

One estimate is that immediately before the land reform only 10 percent of the peasants owned the land they were working on (Baldwin, 167:71), i.e., some 90 percent of the peasants were sharecroppers but our earlier figure of 80 percent seems more reliable because not all the peasantry, as we indicated in Chapter Two, were engaged in agriculture.

In terms of land ownership the peasants who were involved in agriculture, therefore, could be considered in two categories, viz: 1) sharecroppers, i.e., *nasaq-dars* who did not own land; and, 2) peasant-proprietors who owned small plots This

²⁶⁹ Up to 10 percent of peasants were non-farmers and another 10 percent were peasant-proprietors who had enough land.

concentration of land and consequent abundance of labour put pressure on the land farmed by the peasants. Azimi (1982:86) indicates that in 1960 some 60.1 percent of the sharecropping peasants worked on less than five hectare land²⁷⁰. For example, in Khuzistan 53 percent of units of production, which were governed by the peasants, comprised of lands less than five hectares (Research Group, 1964:189). Research Group (Ibid) also argues that some 13 percent of peasants-farmers worked on units under one hectare.

Even among the small peasant-proprietors the situation before the 1960s caused them considerable trouble because only seven percent of the peasants operated on more than three hectares of land (Golabian, 1977:199). In other words, 93 percent of the peasants were either landless or had to make their living out of less than three hectares of land. There is another way of illustrating this. According to Khosravi (1976:11-12) 68.6 percent (13,002,926) of total population lived in rural areas during the 1956 census. The total arable land which was practically under cultivation and not left fallow may be considered to be six million hectares (Baldwin, 1967:74, table 5)²⁷¹. Of this six million hectares 10 percent belonged to the peasant proprietors, i.e.,

²⁷⁰ Hooglund (1973:233) maintains that more than 70 percent of the peasantry farmed less than five hectares (in the 1960s) which was not sufficient for the peasant to make ends meet. This figure is apparently applied to the 1960s including post-land-reform period. Therefore, it partly reflects the situation of the small-holding peasants too whereas we want to account for sharecroppers, i.e., *nasaq-dars* who did not own land.

²⁷¹ For more debate on the total arable land in various years see Nazari (1993:36), Badie-e (1988:42); Khosravi (1976:11); Hooman (1962:331-32); Golabian (1977:85); Baldwin (1967:74); Mahdavi (1982:160); Halliday (1979:105); Okazaki (1968). According to Okazaki (1968:4-5) the total cultivated land before the land reform of 1962 was about 11.4 million hectares of which 40 percent was left fallow and 6.84 million was under cultivation.

600,000 hectares. Since only 10 percent of the rural population were peasant-proprietors, i.e., 1,300,293 peasants and they owned 600,000 hectares land then, on average the peasant-proprietors owned 0.46 hectares land, i.e., less than half a hectare or 1.2 acres. Even if Okazaki's (1968:4-5) total of 6.84 million hectares of sown land is used the average size of plot would only be 0.52 hectare. That is, on average the peasant-proprietors owned plots within the 0.46 and 0.52 hectare range.

In order to differentiate among landowners Banani (1969:121) has identified three types of private owners: the large owners who owned more than one village, the medium who owned part of a village and the small owners who were dependent on the land they could cultivate. In other words, aside from the large owners and the medium owners who had more than they needed for their livelihood the rest were cultivating solely for their own livelihood. But, the large landowners according to Hadary (1951) only amounted to 600 although Hooman (1962:243) disagrees and maintains there were only 200 large landlords. The number of large landowners was an indication of level of monopoly of land and also an indication of exclusion of the peasantry from landownership

There is one other aspect in the case of large landowning to which some attention should be paid, that is, the large landowners also owned water, forest, pasture etc. (Banani, 1969:121) which indicated 'ownership' was not solely limited to the major means of production, i.e., land. The traditional landlords had come to the conclusion that landownership alone was not enough for realization of surplus product unless it was accompanied by a limitation of the labour force to only one source of

livelihood, i.e., working on the land as sharecroppers. The social and economic mobility of the peasants as a labour force had to be determined by and limited to working on the land and this objective was reached through expansion of the landlords' power over the water sources and pastures. Lambton (1969b:219) argues that in large landowning areas the ownership of qanat (water sources) and land was coincident (also Vali, 1993:43; Sultanzade, 1931:141)²⁷².

The landlords' lack of control over pastures, for example, would have encouraged tribal life as a second option to the peasants who were willing to escape from the exploitative sedentary lifestyle in which the power of the landlords held them, that is, as a labour force which only produced for the landlords. This type of lifestyle was prevalent in Iran when, for example, of the total 7.5 million population in 1913 some 50 percent lived in rural areas and another 25 percent lived in tribes (Sobotsinski, 1971:33; see also Arsalan-bod, 1992:40).

Therefore, one of the functions of large ownership was to demarcate the labour mobility and to confine it to land through limiting the livelihood options of the peasants²⁷³. The same thing holds true for the water sources. As noted above, the large landlords usually owned or practiced rights on the water resources²⁷⁴ although in

²⁷² Lambton (1987:52) in another statement about qanat ownership argues that during Qajar the ownership of land and water for the most part occurred at the same time. In this more general account she also argues that land and qanat, however, could be owned separately too. In that case, the landowners had to buy water from the owners of qanats (Ibid).

²⁷³ The state sedentarization policies in the 20th centuries and also the tendency of the tribes to cultivate (due to land grants) had decreased the chances for the peasants to be involved in tribal life style. Therefore, the trend was towards agricultural production (see Chapter Five)

²⁷⁴ It was the case during Qajar as well where the water and land systems were interrelated and functioned in the same way (e.g. Lambton, 1987:51).

the case of qanats it also carried the notion of ownership due to the capital that the landlord had to spend on the construction and the maintenance of them (see Banani, 1969:121). Banani (1969:123) also indicates that the landlords were unwilling to invest or do anything that would have changed the subsistence-level of the peasant's life; this, of course, is in keeping with the landlords' practice of limiting opportunities for the peasants.

Small landowning emerged where the water was less available and in mountainous areas (Banani, 1969:121; Momeni, 1980:42), and also areas shunned by large landlords. In these areas the peasantry was less stratified around the element of land and more options were open to them to make their livelihood in areas such as forestry, bee cultivation, silk production etc. (e.g. Banani, 1969:121). Comparing the two types of landowning, i.e. large and small, one can realize that the large landowning created class differentiation as the landlords monopolized the ownership of the major means of production, i.e., land. One of the reasons that differentiation happened in small landownings in a less severe form than in the large landownings may be understood by a reference to the dominance of subsistence economy in those areas. The second reason was that the mountainous lands were limited due to roughness of the terrain, hence, land could not be expanded and the possibility for concentration of large plots was low. Finally, the large landowners were absentee and geared to the market pressure and attempted to extract as much surplus as they could whereas the small owners would provide only a minimum surplus. In the areas where large landowning was prevalent the land was concentrated in the hands of a limited

number of landlords²⁷⁵ while the majority of the peasants had to find another way to make their livelihood, i.e., working on the landlord's land. Therefore, the more land was concentrated and the more labour became available to the landlords the wider the gap became between the two classes.

To sum up the argument on the development of private land (section 3.1 to 3.4), a number of points can be made about the development of private land in Iran.

First, landholding types (iqta, tuyul, suyurghal) did not necessarily remain under the state's rules. Although the state since Islamic times granted land only to meet its military and financial needs (e.g. Lambton, 1969a:21), these lands under the pressure of the grantees became hereditary and functioned as private lands, i.e., non-state agents extracted surplus product²⁷⁶. Only Safavids managed to limit the alienation of state lands (in large scale) which tended to become private land. Instead, they developed tuyul lands which were controlled by the state.

This leads us to the second point, that is, only politically and militarily strong states demarcated the transformation of conditional lands (iqta, tuyul) into hereditary lands.

²⁷⁵ This was because the village-owning was the dominant mode of large landownership (e.g. Golabian, 1977:199)

²⁷⁶ It is true that the state could potentially regain these lands but it was not a recurrent phenomenon, especially in the case of iqta and suyurghal (tuyul was less secure and more temporary). In fact, a lack of this phenomenon led to the growth of independent landholders and consequent growth of independent dynasties of the 9th to 12th centuries

Third, *tuyul* (conditional land) remained the dominant type of land assignment from the Safavids until 1906 (see also Ashraf, 1967:59)

Four, although Qajars were politically and militarily weak compared to the Safavids (Chapter Two), *tuyul* developed during Qajar indicating the development of state land (*khaliseh*). The reason for this was not the strength of the Qajar state (Chapter Two)²⁷⁷. Rather, they had inherited the legacy of *tuyul* institution from the Safavids. Part of *tuyul* was inherited from previous dynasties (Lambton, 1969b:147)²⁷⁸.

Five, the Qajar weaknesses paved the way for the transformation of landholding into landowning. Under the two systems, however, the element of absenteeism remained the main character of the landholding and landowning classes. One implication of the landholding was that the peasants did not own land while the landholders did not work on their granted land (Keshavarz, 1984:480). The consequence was the prevalence of sharecropping (*Ibid*). Under the modern landowning system the same factors resulted in the continuity of sharecropping.

Having discussed various aspects of the development of private land in Iran we can now discuss the nature of the involvement of private agents in landholding or landownership. In other words, we need to know if the dominant classes under both landholding and landowning systems were members of the rural population or were

²⁷⁷ See Lambton (1991:467) for further details on the weaknesses of the state vis-a-vis the tribes and the landlords.

²⁷⁸ Also, in order to keep the political rivals calm they appealed to granting *tuyuls* to the rival groups in order to keep them obliged to the state. In theory the whole land was under the control of Qajar shahs but in practice, as Keddie (1971) argues, they were limited to the capital. In fact, as Lambton (1987:74) writes "It was, however, often when the central government was weakest that the *tuyul* became most widespread"

external agents who were related to the rural population through involvement in landholding or landownership.

3.5 The Specificity of Landholding and Landowning in Pre-capitalist Iran; Absentee Landlordism:

In this section the nature of private land in post-transitional period of the late 19th and early 20th century will be examined to show the development of large absentee landlordism. This is a crucial argument because it will examine the continuity of the element of absenteeism in the Iranian land tenure system under both the landholding and the landowning systems.

A cursory review of the argument on class formation among the dominant groups (Chapter Two) and our review of the development of private land, presented earlier, indicates that within the period of Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties, two sets of large absentee landlords can be identified, 1) the state; and, 2) the private landlords. While large absentee landholdism can be attributed to Qajar period, large absentee landlordism can be attributed to the post-transitional period of the late 19th and early 20th century.

During Qajar, the state as the prime owner of land had a clear position to the land as an outsider to the rural economy. Curzon (1966:474, vol. 2) writing in 1892 argues that "...in the majority of instances the Crown is an absentee landlord..." (see also Bharier, 1971:11)²⁹.

²⁹ Curzon (1966:470, vol. 2) does not classify state land under *khaliseh*, rather he refers to crown land. For this reason crown land and state land are taken as similar land. Bharier (1971:11) indicates that Curzon's statement is about state land.

The landholding and landowning classes were also absentees. Stack (1882:254, 263, 268, 277, vol. 2) reports of the dominance of absentees in various parts of the country. In a general approach Stack (1882:277, vol. 2)²⁶⁰ argues that

It is noteworthy that the large plains of Persia, with their extensive and regular systems of irrigation, whether from qanats or from a river, always contain a large proportion of villages owned by some one or two wealthy landlords who live in the large town or city which stands in the best-watered part of the plain

Among the landholding and landowning classes, the tribes had a particular situation in the sense that they were not necessarily urban but were not rural either because they depended on stockholding economy and moved back and forth between certain areas but in these areas they were virtual holders and/or owners of land. Many of the tribal leaders were tuyul-holders (Lambton, 1987:73) or held considerable land (Ibid:96). Since they were not directly involved in agriculture, their land (whether they held it as a tuyul or they owned it) can also be considered as absentee land

The religious groups usually were in charge of vaqf land and they can not be categorized as a separate group of landowning class although they might have owned land too.

Only small-landowners who resided in the villages can be excluded from the landowning class of the 19th century as a rural landowning class because they resided in the village and worked on their own land. The amount of land owned by this group must have been very small because, as Lambton (1987:53) argues, peasant proprietorship was not widespread (see also Abdollaev, 1982:238; Vali, 1980:24-25)

²⁶⁰ Stack (1882:247-48, vol. 2) only identifies two categories of land, state land and private land. It, therefore, should be noted that when he speaks of the dominance of absenteeism he includes tuyul-dars in the category of private land which is wrong

Between the late 19th and early 20th century it has been estimated at less than 10 percent of land (Vali, 1980:26)

The state, then, as the major landlord, the landholders (tuyul-dars or tuyul-holders) and the landowning (private landlords) classes in its general term mainly consisted of urban absentee groups in the 19th century Qajar. And, following the transitional period of the late 19th century, absentee-owner private land continued to develop until the 1962 land reform

According to one estimate, prior to the land reform of 1962 some 76 percent of the villages were listed as private holdings of which some 55 percent belonged to the large landlords with at least one whole village (Ajami, 1976b:190, Najmabadi, 1987:46)²⁶¹ Considering that the most common characteristics of the large landlords was their absence from the village they owned (Lahsaeizadeh, 1984:238; Lambton, 1969b:271, Azkia, 1990:88) most of the above lands must have been controlled by the absentee landlords. According to Hooglund (1982:14) all the large landlords were absentees, hence, 55 percent of land (villages) belonged to the absentees (Ibid:12)²⁶² However, the large landlords were not the only absentees. In some cases small landowners were absentees as opposed to peasant-operators (Lambton, 1969b:275, 281; Hooglund, 1982:16-17). For example, in one sample of villages at the outset of 1962 land reform some 27 percent of land belonged to small absentee landlords (Azkia,

²⁶¹ See also Chapter Three, Nakhai (1986:213), Golabian (1977:199)

²⁶² Momeni (Chapter Three, table one) indicates that if the three fraction of large, small and medium size lands are considered then 52 percent of land belonged to the absentees. Arasteh (1970:121) considers 50 percent of land as absentee lands.

1990-89)²⁸³. There are also some data in hectare terms which can be used to calculate the amount of land owned by the large absentee landlords

In total, some 2,700,000 hectares of arable land belonged to over 25,000 families before the land reform of 1962 (Schirazi, 1993:13)²⁸⁴. Some 2,000,000 hectares of this land belonged to 9,553 landlords who were mainly absentee landlords (Ibid). Some 350 families of this group owned some 250,000 hectares including the shah's family (Ibid)²⁸⁵. If the numbers given by Schirazi be considered then of the total of 6,000,000 hectares some one-third belonged to the absentee landlords. Another one-third, according to some, belonged to the peasant-operators, i.e., small-landowners (Momeni, 1980:29) but we discussed before that the peasants could not have owned 33 percent of cultivable land and many small plots were in fact owned by the absentee landlords. The remaining one-third may have belonged to the state, and religious institutions (vaqf), or may have been a combination of different types²⁸⁶. But, we discussed before that even a combination of the state and vaqf land could not have accounted for the ownership of one-third of the cultivable land

Considering all factors noted above, it can be said that 1) much of the private land (about 60 to 66 percent of private land out of 76 percent) before the land reform was owned by the absentee landlords. Khamisi (1968:48) provides some data which is

²⁸³ This research was originally done by Azkia and the results were first published in 1970

²⁸⁴ Schirazi (1993:13) refers to this group of lands as those unaffected by the land reform of 1962

²⁸⁵ See also Askari, Cummings and Toth (1977:270) for debates on the concentration of land in the hands of few landlords prior to the land reform

²⁸⁶ For further details on the categories of land see Ajami (1976b:190)

based on 1956 census and can be used to indicate that the above estimate is almost close to the real amount of land owned by the absentees. He argues that Kordistan had the highest concentration of absentees as 92.3 percent of its villages belonged to the absentees and Sistan-Baluchistan with 43.2 percent of had lowest concentration of absentees (Ibid); and, 2) since the state and vaqf or the combined lands (including small lands) were mostly rented out then most of the lands under these categories were operating under sharecropping. Khosravi (1976:27) also refers to the similarity of sharecropping relations among the above lands which means most lands were operating under regulations developed by absenteeism.

It should be noted that the above estimate of 60-66 percent of private land, owned by the absentee landlords, holds true only if the overall amount of private land is considered at 76 percent of total land of which we deducted the small lands of owner-operators up to 10 percent. If the estimate of 85 percent, presented before, is considered then the percentage of land under control of absentee landlords would be higher than 60-66 percent.

Landholding (iqta and tuyul-holding) and landowning (private land) have always been coincident with the element of absenteeism but a major change in the land tenure system despite the transformation of landholding to landowning in the 20th century was that merchants joined the landowning classes as the new comers.

3.6 Transformation of Merchants into Landlords:

Merchant capital in Iran before the 1960s was involved in the rural economy at

three major levels; 1) landownership; 2) money-lending²⁸⁷ and; 3) rural trading activities (pre-harvest purchase) (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:259, 379-92; Amid, 1990:45-47). The focus here will, however, be on the landowning part of the merchant capital and an emphasis will be placed on the transitional period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In this section, the socio-economic status of the merchants in Iran, their origins, activities, wealth and their level of involvement in agriculture will be discussed²⁸⁸. The debates on this class and its activities are relevant to understanding the point made by Abdollaev (1978:10 and 1982:243-44) who argues that the growth of domestic and international markets in the late 19th century and early 20th century contributed to the impoverishment of peasants. In other words, there was a correlation between the capability of scattered and remote villages of the country with poor transportation to engage in surplus production on the one hand, and the actual

²⁸⁷ Consul Abbott writes to Thomson in 1870 that the merchants provided loans to silk cultivators and in return they received one-third of the profit (Abbott to Thomson, 1971:226-27). Olson (1981:187) refers to the late 19th century involvement of the merchants in opium production and argues that the merchants provided loans on easy terms to the villagers in order to encourage them to grow opium. Lambton (1987:57) indicates the multifunctional character of merchant capital by showing that the peasants in the 19th century Qajar had to borrow money from money-lenders who were the landlords, the merchants, the corn-chandlers, the peddler or religious groups. The first four groups were in one way or another involved in activities related to merchant capital. The role of merchants as the only source of capital in the rural economy developed in the 20th century. Khamsi (1968:111-12) argues that 85 percent of the peasants received loans from private sources in the 1950s (shopkeepers, traders, etc.). See also Lambton (1987:219) about money-lending.

²⁸⁸ It should be noted that the old nobility and traditional merchants were involved in landownership prior to the transitional period of the second half of the 19th century. For example, Lambton (1987:140-93) refers to merchants such as Hajji Nur al-Din and Hajj Abdol Karim who owned a number of villages in the first half of the 19th century. DelVecchio Good (1981:269-88) and Royce (1981:289-300) refer to Moghaddam and Fotuhi families in Maragheh and Qavam family in Shiraz who were engaged in commercial and agricultural activities. These families whose origins go back to the early 19th century continued their role as elites who were involved in landownership and commerce until 1962 land reform.

production and accumulation of agricultural surplus that was marketed in the urban centres, on the other (discussed in Chapter Four)²⁸⁹. Interpreting Abdollaev's point, this was a process that led to the outflow of surplus and the consequent impoverishment of the peasants that continued into the 20th century (e.g. Amid, 1990:43-47; Lambton, 1969b:379-92; Adibi, 1955; Hadary, 1951)²⁹⁰. There are no real data which could be used to determine whether this was a relative or absolute impoverishment. However, reports confirm the fact that migration from rural areas increased because of the growing hardship among the peasants (Abdollaev, 1978; 1982:244; Sultanzade, 1931:147). Cash crop production such as opium production contributed to alleviation of the impoverishment in some areas and wages increased among labourers to 2-5 krans, i.e., an equal wage to that of a skilled craftsman in large towns (Gilbar, 1978:339). Considering the movement of peasants towards cities and abroad ²⁹¹and the continuity of poverty in the 20th century we can agree with Abdollaev's generalization about the impoverishment of the peasants.

Amid (1990:43-47) indicates that part of the problem lay in the structural relations between the two contexts (i.e., rural and urban) as the surplus left the rural

²⁸⁹ Nowshirvani (1981) provides some insights about the effects of the late 19th century changes on surplus production.

²⁹⁰ In Chapter Two, I referred to Gilbar (1978) who indicates that the peasants benefited from production of opium and cash crops in the late 19th century. It was also argued that this was not a general result due to the fact that Gilbar (1978:339) draws this result by referring to Kermanshah region. Therefore, Abdollaev's argument which refers to a general condition that the peasantry faced in the late 19th and early 20th century appears more viable.

²⁹¹ In Azarbaijan's (Russia) oil industry in 1893, for example, 11 percent of the workers were Iranians. This increased to 29.1 percent of the total workers in 1915 (Abdollaev, 1978:23).

economy in various forms²⁹². The question, now, is how these two economic contexts (i.e., rural and urban) became related so that production and marketing of agricultural surplus from such a fragmented rural economic context became possible?

Part of the answer lies in growing large landownership, discussed before, that linked these fragmented rural units. Another part of the answer lies in the nature of classes involved in landownership (i.e., absentee landlords as opposed to rural dominant classes) that facilitated the connection between the rural economy and the market. Therefore, although large landownership connected the fragmented rural areas it was the presence of absentee landlords which connected the rural economy to the market (i.e., the urban economy). To examine this situation the growing importance of merchant capital and its involvement in agriculture since the 19th century until 1962 land reform will be examined.

A focus on the involvement of merchant capital in agriculture will clarify the questions concerning the nature of a large landowning class. The large landowning class of absentee landlords was composed of merchants and others although it is still unclear to what extent the merchants and the others shared in the ownership of the land (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:259-82). This lack of clarity surrounding the landownership by various fractions of the absentees has led to some confusion. Millspough (1946:11-12), for example, separates the landlords, from other groups, as his first class and categorizes the merchant as a fraction of the middle class²⁹³. Some

²⁹² I will deal with the question of surplus outflow in later chapters

²⁹³ Treating the merchants of the Qajar period as middle class can also be found in other sources (e.g. Bausani, 1971:172). Bausani also does not refer to the implication of their role in agriculture

confusion arises when he mentions that most of the landlords lived in the cities but does not indicate the significance of their presence within the urban economy. This confusion may be cleared up after the percentage of the landlords who were from the merchant class is known. In the following chapters we will also see that knowing this percentage²⁹⁴ is one of the key factors in understanding the causes of loss of capital in the rural areas and the consequent impoverishment of the peasants. In other words, in order to understand the mechanism of the effects of a combination of merchant capital and land rent on the processes of underdevelopment in rural Iran one needs to identify the amount of land controlled by the urban groups in general and by the merchants, in particular.

I shall now focus on the functions of merchant capital in rural Iran which were unique prior to the land reform of 1962. Halliday in an eloquent way indicates that the merchants prior to 1962 land reform functioned the same as before by holding land for two reasons

Those merchants who invested their profits in land did not then transform these lands along commercial lines. They held the land as a form of wealth in itself as much as a means of realizing further profits²⁹⁵ (Halliday, 1979:108)²⁹⁶.

In order to trace the cause of this interest of the merchants in land a return to the transitional period of the late 19th and early 20th century is needed. Unlike its

²⁹⁴ It should be noted that not enough data exists to discuss this percentage for the early 20th century. The percentage, therefore, will be provided for the 1950s.

²⁹⁵ See also Amid (1990:9, 29) and Lambton (1969b:262)

²⁹⁶ Lambton (1969b:262-63) refers to the role of the merchants in the 1950s who had bought land and exploited the peasants more severely than old landlords.

function within the urban economy, that was, circulation of money and commodities (e.g. Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981; Abdollaev, 1978)²⁹⁷, the merchant's capital in this period acted as a source of appropriation of a share from agricultural products²⁹⁸ in the rural economy. For example, their involvement in opium production was so extensive that they monopolized the whole opium trade (e.g. Gilbar, 1978)²⁹⁹ and, the big merchants appropriated large profits from the opium boom (Ibid 339). While the merchant capital, as I will indicate, did not engage in ownership of the means of production within the context of the urban economy (in the sense that they failed to engage in the industrialization process), it became its major function within the rural economy (e.g. Sultanzade, 1931:102). These merchants, however, kept their traditional role in the urban economy as merchants while they were also part of the landowning classes.

The following review of the engagement of merchants in landownership will provide a better insight as to why land became subject to ownership of the merchants. This will be done by using two sets of factors as follows:

1) external factors in the 19th century including:

a) foreign dominance, and;

²⁹⁷ Abdollaev (1978) refers to a number of merchants who were involved in money-changing. Probably Amin-o-zarb is the most prominent merchant of the late 19th and early 20th century who actually was the biggest banker of the state and who governed the circulation of money (e.g. Motazed, 1988).

²⁹⁸ The involvement of the merchants changed the structure of surplus extraction. Prior to this time merchants were not included in exploiting sources (e.g., Khamisi, 1968:11).

²⁹⁹ See also Gilbar (1977) for the involvement of various fractions of the merchants in tobacco production and distribution.

- b) commercialization of agriculture under influence of international market, and;
- 2) an internal factor, i.e., the tendency of the merchants in the late 19th century to become involved in the political power structure.

In the following argument, each of the above factors will be discussed in more detail and in order to identify fractions of the 20th century landowning class, I will shed some light on the continuity of merchants' involvement in landownership up to the 1962 land reform by examining the external and internal factors noted above.

1-a) Merchant capital in Iran was traditionally strong³⁰⁰ (e.g. Motazed, 1988; Abbott in Amanat (ed.), 1983:76-77; Afshari, 1983:136), i.e., the engagement of merchants in trade was widespread even when the subsistence economy dominated. Engaging in commercial and trade relations was a structural economic function of the merchants (vis-a-vis the state) in Iran that was also prevalent in other Middle Eastern countries before the 19th century³⁰¹. During Safavids (1499-1736), Iran's export ranged between

³⁰⁰ Ashraf (1981:87) argues that due to the development of bazaars and international exchange coupled with the Islamic support of legitimate business, the merchants and businesses gained power and status during post-Islamic period, i.e., after 642 A.D. when Islam entered Iran. Ashraf (1974:16-17) also indicates that many cities during post-Islamic period had developed as internal market and external exchange developed. Geoffrey Duckett (cited by Curzon, 1966:13 vol. 2) a British subject who travelled to Iran in 1573 refers to Kashan as a town full of trade and mercantile activities. This city later in 1600 was reported to have been as important as York and Norwich (Ibid and Ashraf, 1974:17, also Issawi, 1971:8). See also Curzon (1966:530-31, vol. 2) for his general review of the importance of trade in history of Iran. Also, see Parham (1974:170) for debates on urbanization in the history of Iran and the significance of trade.

³⁰¹ See Amin (1977:36-51) for more details about the existence of trade activities and development of cities based on trade in the Muslim world. The dominance of merchants in the Muslim world from long time ago has been so vital that Amin (1977:16-22) explains social formations in that area by attributing a particular mode of production to it, i.e., tribute-paying. In antiquity, cities were much more important in that area than the cities of the west (Ibid:42). See also Ibrahim (1990).

1,000,000 to 2,000,000 pounds sterling (in 1670) which put Iran on a commercial level close to that of France and England (Issawi, 1971:12). This commercial strength was the indication of a growing economy which led to the attraction of foreign merchants Olearius (cited by Issawi, 1971:11) wrote; "There is not any nation in all Asia, nor indeed almost of Europe, who sends not its merchants to Isfahan, whereof some sell by Whole-sale, and others by Retail" ³⁰².

This tradition of mercantile economic activity although interrupted by wars and invasions of the 18th century continued into the 19th century where merchants resumed their key role in the economy³⁰³. In 1805 Jaubert, Napoleon's clerk, reported that in Iran everybody is a seller and a buyer (Motazed, 1988:250). As early as 1808 there were merchants such as Hajj Mirza Taghi Malek-o-tojjar whose wealth amounted to 30,000 tomans (Motazed, 1988:254). His brother in Isfahan had a credit of up to 150 million francs (Ibid). Other prominent merchants of Isfahan were Ibrahim, Hajj Mohammad Adhami, Hajj Mohammad Ali Naghi (Ibid). In Shiraz, Hajj Mohammad Ibrahim and Dokhti Nabi Khan are mentioned as outstanding merchants of this period (Ibid). Tabriz, the second largest commercial city, in the first half of the century had some five prominent merchants each of whose wealth amounted to 150,000 silver rubles (Berezin, 1971:106). Consul Abbott (Amanat (ed), 1983:19) in 1848 reports that forty small traders controlled distribution of imported goods in the northern

³⁰² See also Issawi (1971:12) who argues that the Iranian and Armenian merchants handled internal and external trade of the country during Safavids,

³⁰³ Abbott (in Amanat, 1983:76-77) also refers to the fact that 18th century wars had interrupted trade with India. See Berktaf (1991:248) for trading activities of Iranian merchants in post-fifteen century in Indian Ocean and in India

province of Mazandran. The same process was happening in 1849-50 in Isfahan and Yazd whose merchants were involved in the transaction of Indian goods (Ibid:77-79). Abbott (Amanat (ed), 1983:86-98) indicates that in 1850 a more or less similar situation was prevalent in Kirman, Tabriz, Hamadan and Shiraz. In 1859, de Gobineau (1971:38-39) indicates the prevalence of mercantile activities by saying that all Iranians, especially Isfahanis and Shirazis, were born brokers (dallals), i.e., those involved in buying and selling goods and moneylending. He also reports that the merchants held most of the capital in Iran (Ibid:36). And, Polak (1971:277-78)³⁰⁴ concludes that in the 1850s, the trade was in the hands of the Iranian merchants. It was this strength of mercantile activity that in the second half of the 19th century contributed to the development of huge capital revenues in the hands of some merchants.

In the second half of the 19th century, however, a redirection of merchant capital towards non-industrial activities (cash crop market and internal market as opposed to industrial development) occurred as a result of the political dominance of Russia and Britain. This was the consequence of two treaties between Iran and Russia in 1814 and 1828 and a treaty between Iran and Britain in 1841 (e.g. Motazed, 1988:279). These treaties had a direct affect upon the direction of Iran's economic development because of the trade concessions made to Russia and Britain, 27 and 21 respectively by 1914 (Ibid 296).

The dumping strategy followed by these two industrial and trading powers and

³⁰⁴ Polak wrote this report in 1865

their exemption from Iran taxation resulted in the destruction of the industrial base in Iran³⁰⁵. For example, 1,800 silk weaving mills of Yazd which were active up to mid-19th century declined in the late 19th century and were replaced by opium processing business (Curzon, 1966:242, vol. 2)³⁰⁶. In Kashan there were 800 silk looms in 1848 (Issawi, 1971:267). Issawi (Ibid) maintains that formerly there were 8000 silk looms in Kashan and European competition had injured this economy. The velvet industry of Kashan also was destroyed as British products entered Iran in the second half of the 19th century (Motazed, 1988:498). The European competition also had a damaging effect on industry in Isfahan (Issawi, 1971:267) and Issawi (1971:67) was able to conclude that in Iran there was 'no native industrial bourgeoisie'. Under these circumstances, there was very little room for the Iranian merchants, as potential industrial bourgeoisie, to develop modern industries.

The imports from these countries was, as a result, on the rise in the second half of the 19th century (Motazed, 1988:268-83) and Iran became little more than a market for the British and Russian products in this period. For example, exports from Russia to Iran between 1880 and 1909 increased seven fold (Motazed, 1988:269) and by 1914 "Russia took some 70 percent of Iran's exports and supplied over 50 percent of imports", and Britain's share was 12 percent of exports and over 25 percent of imports.

³⁰⁵ Between 1828 and 1900 foreign merchants were exempted from many custom duties while Iranian merchants paid taxes and duties. As a result, the foreign merchants sold their commodities 10 percent cheaper (Motazed, 1988:282, 422).

³⁰⁶ This was first published in 1892.

(Issawi, 1971:72)³⁰⁷

The merchants whose economic power was affected by the foreign powers (and by the state) redirected their economic power towards other areas, i.e., those areas not conflicting with the interests of the state and the foreign powers, including foreign merchants³⁰⁸. Abdollaev (1978:14) explains the situation in the early 20th century by referring to the dominance of feudal relations and also the dominance of foreign capital seeking raw agricultural products and pushing the bourgeois³⁰⁹ capital towards production of agricultural products. Part of this shift can be seen in the decrease of handmade products, which could have supplied the base for the growth of national industries, and their replacement by raw materials or rural manufactures such as carpets (e.g. Abdollaev, 1971:297-98). Handmade cotton, wool and silk products constituted some 27 percent of Iran's exports in 1857 but they had fallen to one percent in the early 20th century (Foran, 1993:115). The absence of handmade materials among the exports was offset by the export of raw materials, silk, cotton and wool accounting for 26 percent of exports in 1911-13 and of carpet by 12 percent in the same period (Ibid). Another example of the shift is that of rice, dried fruits, nuts and opium which constituted 4 percent of exports in 1857 but increased their share by

³⁰⁷ Russia accounted for two-thirds of the total trade and Britain for 20 percent (Issawi, 1971:72).

³⁰⁸ By the turn of the century foreign traders had privileges and the native merchants began to fight against them (Clawson, 1980:149). Issawi (1971) and Motazed (1988:296-306, 401-34) also provide information regarding the involvement of foreign merchants and companies in Iran in the 19th century. See Abdollaev (1978:15) for details on the effects of foreign capital on Iranian merchants.

³⁰⁹ Bourgeois capital was that part of capital that was accumulated by large merchants in the 19th century. Therefore it should not be mistaken with industrial bourgeoisie.

32 percent of the exports in 1911-13 (Ibid)

Due to the increasing influence of the Russians and the British in Iran the merchants were deterred from engaging in the development of native industries³¹⁰ and moved towards a) the internal market area and marketing of cash crops, and, b) towards landownership (e.g. Khosravi, 1976: 25; Foran, 1993: 120)³¹¹. Lambton (1987: 164) refers to the same political and economic constraints and maintains that the internal circulation of merchandise was carried out by Iranian, Armenian and Indian merchants and she (Ibid: 105) emphasizes that Muslims (Iranians) had the greater hand in internal trade. This was also noted by de Gobineau (1971: 36) in 1859, who refers to their role in distribution of Asian and European products. In some commodities such as opium (towards the late decades of the 19th century) the internal marketing and the export of opium was primarily in the hands of the native merchants (Gilbar, 1978: 341)³¹². Their role in the marketing of cash-crops may also be seen in the collection and export of raw cotton, tobacco and other cash crops (Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981: 730-31)³¹³.

It should also be noted that even those merchants involved in external trade

³¹⁰ de Gobineau (1971: 38) also refers to the fact that due to decline of silk, velvet and taffeta production in Kashan, Yazd and Rasht the size of the industrial population had decreased.

³¹¹ See also Ashraf and Hekmat (1981: 730-31, 737) for more details about the merchants involvement in other cash crops and landownership.

³¹² Their role in silk trade was in decline. In 1864-65 some 50 percent of Gilan silk trade was in the hands of European and Armenian trading houses (Gilbar, 1978: 353). As the silk worm destroyed this product, opium trade became dominant with monopoly involvement of Iranian merchants.

³¹³ Raw cotton export had increased from 1 percent of the total exports in 1850s to 19 percent of total exports in 1911-13 (Issawi, 1971: 136). Khorasan, Mazandran, Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Yazd, Kashan, Qum and Kirman were involved in production of cotton (Gilbar, 1978: 355).

could not transform their capital into industrial development and Ashraf (1981:94-5) refers to the involvement of the merchants in external transactions which increased their wealth which allowed them to engage in landownership (e.g. Ashraf, 1981:94-5)¹¹⁴ Foran (1993:120) cites this trend by referring to the 1870s as the turning point for the merchants who became involved in landownership, i.e., a process that accelerated in the later periods. Having discussed the effects of foreign dominance and the redirection of merchants towards non-industrial activities we will now review the role of cash-crops in attracting merchants.

1-b) The second half of the 19th century was a period in which production of cash crops for internal and external markets increased (Abdollaev, 1978)¹¹⁵. As a result, various groups became interested in landownership among which the merchants had the advantage of having capital to invest in land.

The precise number of merchant-landlords in this period (between late 19th and early 20th centuries) and their lands are not known but Ashraf and Hekmat (1981:227) argue that many of the merchants became landlords as they bought state or private lands (see also, Lambton, 1987:165-66, 219-221, Momeni, 1980:33, DelVecchio Good, 1981:280, Gilbar, 1978:340). Niktin (Quoted by Momeni, 1980:37) also observes that from the mid-19th century on landownership which was concentrated in the hands of

¹¹⁴ The implications of the position of the merchants and other details will be discussed later.

¹¹⁵ For example, exports of opium from Isfahan, Yazd, Fars, Khorasan, Kirman, Khuzistan increased from 1560 cases to 6,550 between 1868 to 1880 (Gilbar, 1978:325, table Two). See Also Nowshirvani (1981) for more details on commercialization of agriculture in Iran.

the state and tribal leaders was being transferred to the urban merchants and other urban groups³¹⁶. For example, in areas around Isfahan the merchants and the rich notables in the late 19th and in the early 20th century were among the groups who bought Khaliseh lands (Lambton, 1987:64). This was also observed by Ashraf (1981:94-5) who categorizes all types of landownership into four (tribal, state, waqf and private land) and maintains that private landownership which was not prevalent in the early Qajar period developed when the merchants purchased state lands at the end of Qajar period. Further evidence from Isfahan has been provided by Ravandi (1978:64) who refers to the 'Geography of Isfahan' written in the second half of the 19th century in which Mirza Hossein Khan, the author, argues that there were a lot of merchants in Isfahan who are now involved in landownership.

Gilbar (1978:340) also provides some evidence about the involvement of the merchants in landownership. He (Ibid) argues that

it was the big merchants who encouraged the transfer of agricultural production from wheat, barley and cotton to opium. By financing the costs of opium cultivation and by increasingly buying land they managed to acquire growing control over production in itself.

His prime example was the sale of state lands (Khaliseh) of Shulistan in Kazerun (province of Fars in the south) to a big merchant called Hajj Agha Mohammad Moeen-o-tojjar Bushehri (Gilbar, 1978:340).

Olson (1981:186-87) refers to profits gained through export of opium and its

³¹⁶ See also Olson (1981:173-87); DelVecchio Good (1981:269-88); Royce (1981:287-306).

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PM-1 3 1/2" x 4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
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PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

investment in land by Qavam al-Molk in southern province of Shiraz. Considering that opium was cultivated in many parts of Iran (Bahrami, 1951) and considering that Yazd, Isfahan and Shiraz merchants were actively involved (see Stack, 1882: vol. 1 and 2; Gilbar, 1978:340-41) the trend towards landownership among merchants must have been high. In a general account of his travel to the Province of Yazd in 1881, Stack (1882:292, vol. 1) concludes that "A great part of the Shirkuh villages thus belongs to merchants of Yazd", a statement that resulted from his observation of merchants' involvement in agricultural and particularly opium production³¹⁷. Also, it is not surprising that Gilbar (1978:336), who discusses the opium boom, refers to involvement of the merchants in landowning classes by categorising a fraction of landlords in the early 20th century as non-trader landlords, i.e., in contrast to trader-landlords whose development should be attributed to the opium boom³¹⁸. In the late 19th century the non-trader landlords were still larger than the trader-landlords, but the trader-landlords had access to merchant's capital. The trader-landlords, then, had a greater role in the transformation of agricultural production towards production of cash-crops.

There are also individual cases in the late 19th and early 20th century which are worth noting. For example, Sykes (1910:252-55) reported in 1910 from a village (Mahmud-abad) in eastern province of Khorasan which was owned by a rich merchant

³¹⁷ Stack (1882:3, vol. 2), half way between Yazd and Ashkizar on his way to Isfahan, also observes that a Yazd merchant was the owner of a garden while talked of opium trade

³¹⁸ Gilbar (1977:289) categorises tobacco merchants into four groups in 1890s: retailers, wholesalers and two other groups who invested their capital in cultivation and processing of tobacco

who lived in the city of Torbat-i-Haidari (see also Ravandi, 1978:185, vol. 3)³¹⁹

The involvement of merchants in landownership was, therefore, an indication and a result of the growth in the commercialization in agriculture (e.g. Gilbar, 1978)³²⁰. The redirection of merchant's capital from engaging in industry towards the commercialization of agriculture contributed to an increase in the price of land (e.g. Abdollaev, 1982:244, Momeni, 1980:37) and within 30 years (i.e. in the late 19th and early 20th centuries) the price of land had increased ten fold (Abdollaev, 1982:246). Abdollaev (1982:244) indicates that the process of commercialization of agriculture and the growing value of land resulted in the convergence of merchants and landlords (see also Najmabadi, 1987:44)³²¹. It is probably true to say that from the 1880s the process that had forced the merchants into landownership accelerated so that the landowning class and the merchant class became almost indistinguishable (e.g. DelVecchio Good, 1981:280)³²².

³¹⁹ It should also be noted that, as Abdollaev (1978) argues, the commercialization of agriculture also transformed the old landlords into large owners of capital. He argues that in the late 19th century many of the owners of the villages in a very short time became big owners of capital (Ibid). Atrep (cited by Abdollaev, 1978:7) argues that until 1880 there were a few millionaires and property-owners whereas in 1900 one could count them in hundreds.

³²⁰ For further details see Gilbar (1978) who indicates involvement of the merchants in opium production.

³²¹ Vali (1980:22-23) refers to this convergence as transitional characteristic of early 20th century when old officialdom was displaced by old nobility. At this point, i.e., 1906 and following years an alliance developed between big landlords, old nobility and the merchant capital (Ibid). Obviously part of this alliance originated from the fact that the merchants had become part of the landowning class (e.g. Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981:737).

³²² Abdollaev (1982:244) indicates that the members of the religious groups, officials, army officers and nobles also joined the merchants and the landlords in order to introduce the new changes to the rural Iran.

2) Aside from the pressure of external forces on merchant capital, the necessity for merchant capital to incorporate itself within the political power structure also inspired the merchants to seek landownership as a means of joining the political power blocs. It began after the state in the second half of the 19th century put pressure on the merchants. Gilbar (1977 and 1978) explains that until the late decades of the 19th century the merchants were free from state pressure and de Gobineau (1971:36) reported in 1859 that the merchants did not even pay taxes. In the late decades of the 19th century, however, the state's economic policies conflicted with the merchants' economic position, as in the case of tobacco concession granted to Major Gerald F Talbot, a British subject, and they became involved in a campaign against the state's policies (e.g. Gilbar, 1977:288). This concession would have transferred the right of production and marketing of tobacco from Iranians to the British for 50 years but it was defeated by the popular movement of clergy and merchants in the early 1890s (Gilbar, 1977). The climax of the conflict between the merchants and the state was reflected in the 1906 constitutional revolution (see Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981)³²³ and Gilbar (1978:338) refers to the government's decision to charge 20 percent tax on opium exports which further encouraged the merchants to become involved in political movements of the early 20th century. Hence, there was a tendency among the merchants to gain more political power in order to safeguard their interests.

In response to the merchants' quest for political power landowning could become an option which was one of the most important elements of socio-economic

³²³ It should be noted that the merchants were not the only force behind the constitutional movement

and political power aside from liquid funds Binder (1962:67) refers to this by arguing that landownership had been traditionally a source of defence, influence and wealth and Lambton also accounts for a tendency among the landowning classes who preferred extent of land over quality by saying:

This arises partly from the fact that political power and social prestige were in the past and are still, though to a lesser extent, derived from the possession of land... (Lambton, 1969b 262).

It was common for the politicians such as provincial governors to consolidate their political power by ownership of land (e.g. Lambton, 1987:221).

Lambton (1987:105) has indicated that in large cities in the second half of the 19th century provincial governors chose the head of the merchants (Malik-o-tojjar) to settle disputes among the merchants (Ibid:219) which probably included the allocation of taxes to different guilds. In the provincial governor's office the leading merchants ranked below the leading bureaucrats, the military, the landowning and religious groups and she argues that one of the methods by which the merchants could upgrade themselves was via landownership (Ibid).

To sum up, foreign dominance, the growth of cash-crop production and the tendency of merchants to become involved in politics, therefore indicate that the merchants had two strong incentives for the acquisition of land. In this way they were able to avoid the pressure of the external forces such as Russia and Britain and at the same time, were able to redirect their capital towards land which produced valuable cash crops. It also enabled them to upgrade their political status, hence, safeguard

their interests³²⁴. These were all powerful incentives for the merchants to become involved in landownership

Not all merchants were involved in landownership at the same extent and, as Gilbar (1978:340) notes, the big merchants played a greater role (by investing on land) than other factions of the merchants in the development of commercialized agriculture³²⁵.

The combination and the size of various groups of merchants in the late 19th century are not known although Gilbar (1977:289) does indicate that during tobacco movement of the 1890s four groups of merchants would have suffered from the tobacco concession to Talbot: retailers, wholesalers, merchants and entrepreneurs who had invested in the cultivation and processing of tobacco. In his 1978 study Gilbar refers to the non-trader landlords implying that there was a class of trader-landlords (Gilbar, 1978:339). Gilbar's classification of merchants in the second half of the 19th century is the most comprehensive one because he not only refers to categories of the merchants in terms of their position in the market (retailers etc.) but he also identifies the non-trader landlords as a group of merchants in terms of their relation to land, i.e., merchants with land and merchants without land. He also refers to the non-trader landlords in his four-fraction typology. Therefore, one can see three types of

³²⁴ See Zonis (1971:125) who argues the close relationship between wealth and political power during Qajar.

³²⁵ A report from 1870 indicates that in the northern province of Gilan this investment occurred in the form of *Musaliseh*, a method in which the merchants provided silkworm eggs and loans free of interest to the landlords for production of silk (Abbott to Thomson, 1971:227). In return, the profit was divided equally between the merchants, the landlord and the peasants. The importance of this incident was that not only Iranian merchants but also Russian merchants participated (*Ibid*).

classification in Gilbar's 1977 and 1978 studies. First, he distinguishes big merchants which means he had a category of small merchants. This can be drawn from his argument on tobacco merchants. Second, the above mentioned four categories involved in tobacco, the retailers, the wholesalers, merchants and entrepreneurs. Third, the trader-landlords and non-trader landlords which I prefer to call merchant-landlords and non-landlord-merchants³²⁶.

In an almost similar fashion to Gilbar, Abdollaev (1978:7) argues that "the small and middle merchants were the representatives of a force who created the trade relations between city and countryside"³²⁷ to which the big merchants were related through their cash-crop production and landownership in the late 19th century³²⁸.

The above argument provides a useful result which is worth noting. The second half of the century witnessed the formation of, economically, one of the most powerful fractions of the merchant class. In other words, the merchants with big capital, whom Abdollaev (1978:14-15) calls bourgeois and Ashraf (1978:313) calls dependent bourgeoisie³²⁹, appeared as strong capital-owners in the late 19th and in the

³²⁶ The difference between the trader-landlords and non-trader landlords is that the trader-landlords consisted of urban merchants who joined the landowning classes and their objective was to make profit by developing cash-crops whereas non-trader landlords consisted of traditional landlords and landholders who were not originally merchant.

³²⁷ Abdollaev's article was translated by Adibi into Persian and I have tried to translate it into English.

³²⁸ See Adibi (1978:10 footnote one) who refers to the Tomanians brothers.

³²⁹ Ashraf (1978) indicates that the bourgeoisie activities became dependent upon the state policies. In this sense dependency of the bourgeoisie should not be confused with the notion of dependency used by Frank (1975, 1977, 1981), Persaud (1987), Cockcroft (1972), Amin (1976, 1977). In this approach, the socio-economic development processes of the third world or satellite countries depends on the development of the metropolis.

early 20 century as a separate group of merchants from petty-traders. In this period, one could identify the big merchants (such as Amin-o-Zarb) with 25,000,000 toman's worth of capital who had agents in the trading cities of Europe (see Abdollaev, 1978:15-17). These big merchants developed as a separate source of economic power from other merchants and classes.

The big merchants involved in the import-export trade and were influential in society and among the members of government because of their capital and because of the absence of a banking system (Lambton, 1987:105, 219-20)³³⁰. Members of the Court and even the Shah joined them as partners in their mercantile activities (Ibid). The big merchants also reflected the multifunctional character of the merchant capital by engaging in agriculture, industries (although not successful), transportation and other services (Ibid:220). A similar approach is presented by Ashraf and Hekmat (1981:730-31) on the multifunctional merchant capital of the late 19th and early 20th century and they argue that the merchants were active in internal and external trade, cash crops, banking, road construction, transportation and communication, industry and mining, and providing funds for the state and also functioned as a prime source of local loans, although they originally were only merchants and their primary activity was trade. Lambton (1987:219-20), shows that there were, however, some differences and clashes between the big merchants, bazaar merchants (internal market), the shopkeepers and those involved in the craft guilds took place (also Ashraf, 1981). Despite these differences, size of capital was the main element that differentiated

³³⁰ See de Gobineau (1971:36) and Issawi (1971:67)

various groups of the merchants. Big merchants' capital resulted from their involvement in internal and external trade, agriculture, money-changing and probably industry. The middle merchants were more involved in internal distribution of commodities and could be found in craft industry in the bazaar located in the urban areas³³¹. The small merchants were basically shopkeepers who could be found both in urban and rural areas; they also provided some small loans³³².

The capital worth of each member of big merchants was about 50,000 to 100,000 tomans at the turn of the century (Abdollaev, 1978:10, 13-14). There was, however, disparity between various groups of merchants in terms of the capital. Among the few big merchants whose presence in the economy of Iran as merchants dated back to the 19th century were Hajj Amin-o-Zarb as the prime owner of capital with 25,000,000 tomans (about 5,000,000 pounds sterling)³³³, Hajj Mohammad Ismail Magazi Tabrizi (in Tehran), Hajj Mohammad Moeen-o-tojjar (in the south) whose properties in Ahvaz and areas near the Persian Gulf were worth one million tomans

³³¹ The middle merchants who had less capital engaged primarily in internal distribution. Among these groups one can find 114 stock-market businesses whose owners had some 931,000 tomans (266,000 pounds sterling) (Curzon, 1966:167, vol. 1). Two of them had 100,000 tomans each, three other had 50,000 tomans each and two of them had 30,000 tomans each (Ibid:167-68). In this sense, even some members of middle merchants in fact belonged to the big merchants because of the size of their capital, but their activity as money-changers put them into the middle merchant group.

³³² It should be noted that bazaar merchants were also a fraction of merchants who were involved in distribution of commodities to retailers but they could be retailers (e.g. Bonine, 1981). Bazaar merchants could also be categorized as big merchants because bazaar has been the center of commercial activities where the big merchants also developed their businesses.

³³³ A pound sterling was 10 Krans in the 1890s (Issawi, 1971:344) and every toman was 10 Krans.

(about 200,000 pounds sterling)³³⁴, Hajj Mohammad Taghi Shahrudi who was involved in large transactions with the Russians, Arbab Jamshid (in Tehran) who became an important banker, Hajj Malek-o-tojjar (in Azarbaijan and Tehran) and some others who were active in the world market (Abdollaev, 1978:8-10, see also Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981:734-36). Among the big merchants, Hajj Amin-o-zarb who arrived in the capital with only a bag of clothing developed his meagre capital to become one of the largest capital-owners in the country in the 1880s (Javaher-Kalam, 1992:46). He and other merchants with the same socio-economic status were not only active in marketing the agricultural products but were also active in non-agricultural products such as clothing (Abdollaev, 1978:8-10). Hajj Amin-o-zarb also engaged in banking, industrial and transporting projects (Javaher-Kalam, 1992:44-65; Abdollaev, 1978:8-11) and he also had agents in foreign countries.

Therefore, the conspicuous characteristic of the big merchants was the significant role of their capital in the internal and external markets and banking (e.g. Abdollaev, 1978:10, 13-14, Gilbar, 1977 and 1978; Issawi, 1971:67). They also extended their capital in marketing agricultural products. Pearce (cited by Gilbar, 1978:341) reported in 1894-95 that big merchants in Yazd, Isfahan and Shirazi had established an advanced marketing system for opium. "Each of them had 20 to 30 agents in the opium-growing areas and in most other towns of the country" (Ibid).

There is some controversy, however, over the political power of these

³³⁴ Based on the average rates for the 1900s provided by Issawi (1971:345) the average rate of pound sterling was about 50 Krans

merchants because some argue that in the absence of such a political dominance by a bourgeois class (i.e., the 19th century big merchants), the state and foreign influence redirected the merchant capital away from developing industries unlike merchant capital's role in Europe (e.g. Ashraf, 1978; Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981). In fact, the case of the late 19th and early 20th century Iran would not provide the grounds for the rise of a single source of political power; there were, in fact, various sources struggling for a position of power (e.g. Vali, 1980:21-23; Turner, 1984:172; see also Chapter Two). Accordingly, the merchants were not the only class struggling for political power.

It is true that those merchants who were interested in controlling the state's political and economic power and developing the industrial enterprises would expect resistance from the state, the foreign powers (Russia and Britain), the landlords and other groups such as foreign merchants. Ashraf and Hekmat (1981) examined this but they put more weight on the political power of state and they referred to the repressive power of the state that extracted surplus from the merchants (Ibid:726-28). Their prominent example was that of Hajj Amin-o-zarb who was forced to pay 800,000 tomans to government officials (Ibid). Javaher-Kalam (1992:46) and Abdollaev (1978), on the other hand, indicate that Amin-o-zarb had so much power that he consulted with and discussed his projects and other economic issues with the shah and sometimes he even criticized the shah and the government (Javaher-Kalam, 1992:46).

To sum up, whether or not the merchants were politically powerful it did not affect the merchant capital from being active but it is true that their capital could not

engage in industrial development primarily as a result of the influence of international capital (see Clawson, 1977, 1980, Abdollaev, 1978). There were attempts for industrialization but they failed because of the foreign influence (e.g. Sultanzade, 1931: 104-08). In order to offset this lack of economic and political dominance (vis-à-vis foreign capital) which demarcated their area of economic activity, the merchants engaged in activities wherein they seemed to suffer little resistance by external forces

In response to the influence of international capital the big merchants established some business firms (mostly in money-changing, cash crops and native textiles, etc.) in the 1880s and in the 1890s and early 20th century. The purpose of these firms was to engage in extensive transactions in the internal and external markets (Abdollaev, 1978:11). Among these firms the following were the most important ones in the trade sector (see Jamalzadeh, 1983:98-99; Abdollaev, 1978:11, Motazed, 1988:622-55; Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981:735-37)

1) the Amini Corporation established in 1882 by Machete Kazem Amini in Tehran

There is not enough information about this company but Abdollaev (1978:11)

categorizes it under companies that were involved in internal and external markets

2) the Isfahan Opium Company was established in the late 19th century to engage in processing, packing and export of opium from Isfahan. This company was established by Agha Mohammad Mehdi Arbab Isfahani with the cooperation of some other Isfahan merchants (Ibid).

3) the Trading Corporation of Iran with a capital of 350,000 tomans (111,465 Pounds

sterling)³³⁶ was established in 1886 in Bushehr, a port in the Persian Gulf, in which a number of Bushehr merchants participated (Ibid).

4) the Mansuri Corporation established in Yazd in 1892 by a number of Yazd merchants to develop industries and trade (Ibid). Its capital and details of activities are not known.

5) the Fars Corporation headed by Hajj Abdol Rahim Shirazi was established in 1896 in Shiraz with the initial capital of 50,000 tomans (10,000 pounds sterling) and was active in money-changing. Agha Sheikh Abol-Ghasem, Hajj Mohammad Saleh and Hajj Abbas Tork were other members of the corporation (Ibid).

6) the Etehad Corporation was established in 1897 in Tabriz and later extended to Tehran. This company was active in money-changing (Sarraf) sector, headed by Hajj Mehdi Koze-Kanani, his brothers and Hajj Seyed Morteza Sarraf (Ibid).

7) the Mas-oodieh Corporation was established in Isfahan headed by Hajj Mohammad Hossein Kazerooni. It was active in money-changing and foreign trade³³⁷.

8) the Islamiieh Corporation in Isfahan with the capital of 150,000 tomans (30,000 pounds sterling)³³⁸ which increased to 1,000,000 tomans (200,000 pounds sterling), this company was active in native clothing and textiles and was assisted by Hajj Mohammad Hossein Kazerooni, Hajj Mirza Mohammad Meshki, Hajj Mohammad

³³⁶ The rate of pound sterling in 1885 was 31.4 Krans or 3.14 tomans (Issawi, 1971:344).

³³⁷ Hajj Agha Mohammad Ghazvini, Agha Mohammad Sadegh Ghazvini, Hajj Mohammad Ali Tabrizi, Hajj Mohammad Mehdi Semsar and Hajj Mohammad Saleh Arab were other merchants who established this company (for further information see Jamalzadeh, 1983:98-99, Abdollahi, 1978:11, Motazed, 1988:622-55, Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981:735-37).

³³⁸ The rate of pounds sterling in 1898 was 50.9 Krans or 5.09 tomans (Issawi, 1971:344).

Iafar, Hajj Mirza Asadollah and Hajj Mohammad Kazem Mesghali (Ibid)³³⁸

9) In 1899 some 17 Tehranian merchants (first headed by Hajj Mohammad Tajer, Sarrafi) formed the Omoomi Corporation with the total capital of 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 tomans (192,307 to 384,614 pounds sterling)³³⁹, this company was active in external and internal trade and money-changing (Sarraf) (Ibid)

10) There were also some navigation companies established in the late 19th century by Shirazi and Bushehri merchants (Jamalzadeh, 1983 99) And another navigation company was established in 1917 by Shushtar merchants (Ibid)

11) The merchants also cooperated to open a national bank with a capital of 30,000,000 tomans but the bank failed due to interference of the British and Russian banks in Iran (Jamalzadeh, 1983 100)³⁴⁰

The growth of the merchant capital and its involvement in these firms and in service industry was an attempt by the so-called national bourgeoisie³⁴¹ to bring the circulation of merchant capital under its control which was not a success as many firms went bankrupt (e.g. Abdollaev, 1978 11-12; Jamalzadeh, 1983 98-100, Motazed, 1988:630). This was coupled by an attempt by the bourgeoisie to resist the dominance of foreign capital (Ashraf, 1978, Abdollaev, 1978 11-12) The prime examples of this

³³⁸ See also Bayat (1983 71-72)

³³⁹ The rate of pound sterling for that year was 52 Krans (Issawi, 1971 344) or 5.2 tomans

³⁴⁰ For more details see Jamalzadeh (1983 98-99), Abdollaev (1978 11), Motazed (1988 624-55) Ashraf and Hekmat (1981 735-37)

³⁴¹ It should be noted that Bourgeoisie is used here to refer to the big merchants such as Amin-o-zarb who had the economic capacity (and made an attempt) to develop industries but failed to do it. See Issawi (1971 35, 67) for more explanation of the nature of Iranian bourgeoisie in the second half of the 19th and in the early 20th century

resistance were their involvement in the 1890s tobacco movement, as explained before, and in 1906 constitutional revolution (e.g. Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981).

It was noted earlier that the merchants became involved in landownership as a consequence of the impact of foreign dominance and there is enough evidence to suggest that the big merchants were more active in this area than other fractions of merchants. Some of them realized the commercial significance of the agricultural products such as silk products, cotton and dried fruits in the mid-19th century and these merchants then engaged in the creation of units that produced these agricultural products (Abdollaev, 1978:12-13). There are a number of examples of merchants who followed this path. For example, the Tomanians brothers, merchants, had a capital of 3,000,000 tomans (588,235 pounds sterling) and were heavily involved in cultivation in the late 19th and early 20th century (Abdollaev, 1978:12-13). Arbab Jamshid was another example who was involved in the weaving and knitting industry and the stock-market who became an international merchant (Ibid). He invested in agriculture and bought large plots of land in Tehran, Khorasan and Fars. Lambton (1987:64-5) and Gilbar (1978:340) both cite the case of Moeen-o-tojjar the shah's private banker who bought a major part of Shulistan (near Kazerun in the southern province of Fars) "in order to ease the government's financial difficulties".

Gilbar (1978:340) in a general review of agricultural production between 1800 and 1906 focussed on the role of the merchants in production of cash crops and he concluded that the big merchants controlled production of items such as opium by buying up the land and financing its cultivation. There are also reports of Hajj Sayyah

(cited by Bagheri, 1992:40) from the late 19th century which refer to a general greed among various rich groups, including the merchants, for accumulation of land. Stack (1882:82, vol. 1; and 254, vol. 2), who visited Iran in 1881 also provides some general information about the opium production in Yazd, Isfahan, and Shiraz and he cites a number of examples of merchant families with extensive landholdings, e.g., the Qavam family and the Mushir family in Shiraz and the Ilkhani family in Firuzabad.

In 1905 two other rich merchants, i.e., Amin-o-zarb and Ra'is al-tojjar of Mashhad bought most of the crown lands of Sistan (East) for 250,000 tomans (41,667 pounds sterling)³⁴² (Lambton, 1987:65). Amin-o-zarb was also very active in the agricultural affairs of Gilan in the north. He had several plots of land, for example, in Lasht-e-nesha which had been allocated to cultivation of rice (Jamalzadeh, 1983:85).

This pattern of land acquisition was followed by the merchant class until the land reform in 1962 (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:259-82) and Sultanzade (1931:192) has provided a comprehensive discussion of the merchants' involvement in land acquisition in the period (1920-1930) leading up to the land reform measures. He claims that "In Iran the bourgeois-compradore were influential. Its circulation of capital in relation to foreign trade not only amounts to hundreds of million, but he owns large agricultural lands"³⁴³ (see also Sultanzade, 1931:82).

In the period under Reza Khan (1921-41) the pattern continued and the merchants and contractors, bureaucrats, and military officers bought up the land of the

³⁴² The rate of pound sterling at that time was about 6 tomans or 60 krans (Isawi, 1971:345)

³⁴³ My translation

old landed proprietors and the tribal khans (Lambton, 1969b:259). Lambton (1969b:260-61) claims that the new comers who bought these lands had made their money from trade and cites the case in the province of Kirman in the south where the amount of land held by the old landlords was decreasing in comparison to the amount of land held by merchants and *nouveaux riches* (Lambton, 1969b:261).

This phenomenon was also taking place in other provinces such as Khuzistan, Systan, Lorestan, Kurdistan and Tehran (see Lambton, 1969b:246-47, 260-61, 281; Lambton, 1969a:50)³⁴⁴.

Although it is difficult to determine the percentage of land controlled by the merchants during and after the transitional period, but there is reliable information that a lot of the land was controlled by the absentee landlords and by those who owned capital, the merchants (see Gupta, 1947:43)³⁴⁵. Nakhaie (1986:136, table 4.1) has estimated that the large merchants represented 1.38 percent of the population in 1937, i.e., 219,294 large merchants and that they represented 0.57 percent of the rural population³⁴⁶. Using Nakhaie's estimates and the relative proportion of 22 urban and 78 rural population the total number of big merchants appears to have been 219,294 of

³⁴⁴ Black (1948:425) also refers to involvement of merchants in buying up land.

³⁴⁵ According to estimates some 76 percent including tribal (Ajami, 1976b:190; Turner, 1984:180) villages were controlled privately of which 55 percent was controlled by large landlords. The characteristic of landowning classes since its restructuring in the late 19th century, Vali (1980:23) covers 1891 to 1925, "was that they were usually absentee". Lambton (1969b:271) draws the same conclusion for the 1950s. In this sense not only the above large landlords were absentee but also part of the remaining 21 percent of villages was also controlled by the absentees constructing an estimated total of 66 percent, as it was explained before. See Lambton (1969b:275-82) for more details on land tenure and absenteeism.

³⁴⁶ See Bharier (1971:26) for further data on population.

which 61,888, i.e., 28.2 percent were active in rural economy³⁴⁷. It is our contention that all these estimates were too high and, in fact, a sizable proportion of the 28.2 percent, in fact, was local shopkeepers and peddlers. That is, the large merchants engaged in landownership was a much smaller group.

Lambton (1969b:259-61, 277) supports Nakhaie's view of the landowning process and notes the merchants' involvement in turning some peasant proprietors' lands into large plots through market relations and the debt structure. This was a process that contributed to the formation characteristic of the 20th century landlords as she (Ibid:271) writes in the 1950s; "The common characteristic of the large landed proprietors as a class is that they are for the most part absentees" although not all of them were merchants. Tribal owners and bureaucratic officials also participated as absentee landlords with the merchants (e.g. Lambton, 1971b:9-10). It is my contention after a thorough examination of all the studies that some 66 percent of the land was owned by absentee landlords and one can argue that at least 50 percent of the absentees were merchants and the old elites who were also involved in mercantile and agricultural activities. This is the position which will be used in future chapters to illustrate how the dominance of the merchant and absentee landlordism affected the underdevelopment of the rural economy.

The history of landholding in Iran deserves a thorough study because of the combination of state intervention in land (not present in feudal system) and the formation of landholding classes (not present in an Asiatic system) makes it specific to

³⁴⁷ This proportion was calculated based on data provided by Bharier (1971:25)

Iran. The various forms of land and their associate rights were important because the suyurghal land, some iqta land and even some tuyul land could be treated as private land because of the presence of a landholding class. Over the years and centuries there were varying amounts of land under state control but the most important characteristic up to and including the 19th century was the co-existence of landholding and landowning, although landholding was the dominant form until the latter part of the 19th century. Another characteristic of the land tenure system in this long history in Iran was that the major beneficiaries of land, whether landholders or landowners, were absentees. Thus, an explanation for rural underdevelopment and the exploitation of the peasantry in Iran must take into account the dominance of these non-state and non-rural absentee dominant classes in agriculture as opposed to an analysis based on an Asiatic powerful state, i.e., an absolutist state.

Equally important, in any discussion of the agrarian structure of Iran is the shift from landholding to landowning which was a consequence of the political and economic circumstances in the second half of the 19th century. Among these were the impact of foreign domination on the political and economic structures of Iran, notably that of the Russian and the British which resulted in pressure on the state to divest themselves of land and the acquisition of these lands by the merchants who as absentees then invested in agricultural cash-crops rather than investing in industrial enterprises.

In the following chapter we will follow the impact on Iranian rural society of this growth in agricultural absentee landlordism as we study the various modes of

extraction of the surplus by the landlords through the sharecropping system.

Chapter Four

Sharecropping and Extraction of Surplus Product

In previous chapters the class structure in pre-capitalist Iran and the development of private land and absentee landownership were examined with an emphasis on the development of merchant-landlordism. The current chapter will examine how landholding/landownership, absenteeism and class structure were related to agricultural production; and, how local class relations functioned and how the extraction of surplus product took place. Accordingly, the organization of agricultural production in pre-capitalist Iran, its roots, its history and its functions will be reviewed. As an object of study this discussion will introduce 'boneh', the unit within which sharecropping took place in Iran³⁴⁸. The reason for studying boneh is that it may provide some insight about the major facets of the arguments presented in this study. In other words, in order to understand surplus extraction through absenteeism, rural-urban class relations and agricultural economy, one needs to know the setting, i.e., boneh, wherein these activities have taken place through time.

The poverty of the peasantry in the Qajar period was studied by Lambton (1987:57) and she concluded that the poverty was not due to either sharecropping or the tax system but to the extractions by the various classes of the peasants' products. A number of other scholars have reached the same conclusion, among them Momeni

³⁴⁸ In the South of Fars, in the South and in Khorasan in the East these units are called Sahra with slight changes in the hierarchy of boneh members (see Khoaravi, 1976:84). In the mountainous areas and in the tribal regions they are called Kheesh or Dar-kar (Ibid; See also Hooglund, 1981).

(1980:58-67), Ajami (1976*b*), Hadary (1951), Adibi (1955), Hayden (1949) and Amid (1990:44-47). Ajami (1976*b*:189) was most explicit and he indicated that the poverty was directly related to the nature of relations between landlords and peasants in the sharecropping process and to the unequal distribution of income which was a result of ownership of the land and the extraction of their unequal shares by the landlords. It is of interest to note that Hooglund (1981:191-201) argues that although the bonehs have existed for centuries it was not until the 1960s that they came under scholarly scrutiny. This fact provides an opportunity to examine Iranian pre-capitalist formations from this vantage point, i.e., bonehs, or something that was overlooked by the pre-1960 scholars.

4.1 Sharecropping and Bonehs in Pre-capitalist Iran:

Sharecropping (Muzare-eh) has long been dominant in the Middle East and in the countries of Asia as a traditional method of agricultural production and the division of crop between landlords and peasants was the dominant mode of organizing agricultural production as far back as the 7th century (e.g. Lambton, 1969*b*:25-26, 71; Keshavarz, 1984:185; Amid, 1990:9)³⁴⁹. Sharecropping in Iran operated under a

³⁴⁹ Byres (1983:30-31) indicates that the sharecropping dated back to the pre-Islamic period and survived into the 20th century (see also Yeganeh, 1985:72). Hooglund (1982:195) indicates, though, that there is some controversy regarding the bonehs' origin and that some believe that bonehs existed even in ancient times.

Variations of sharecropping have existed in Iran for a long time since Sassanids (before 642 A.D.) (e.g. Hooman, 1962:194). During the Islamic Period (642 A.D.) there was some resistance against it but then it was approved by the Islamic scholars and the new rulers. It was then called Mozare-eh which is a contract between two parties each of which invested one or more elements of production and then they divided the product accordingly (Ibid). In modern times it may be found in the civil code, i.e., item 518 to 532 of civil law (Ibid:193-94). See also Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1984:185, 529) for further details about the dominance of sharecropping in the 8th, 9th and 17th centuries. Petroshevski (Keshavarz, 1966:96-104) in another book refers to the dominance of sharecropping (Mozare-eh) during the 13th and 14th centuries. Demin (1971:222) maintains that

religious concept, i.e., Mozare-eh which referred to an agreement between the landowner and the peasants and the state supervised these agreements (Lambton, 1969b:71)³⁵⁰. With the development of sharecropping and its units, i.e., the bonehs, the nasaq-holding peasants (i.e., peasants with the right to cultivate) were organized into the bonehs. In this system, the division of crop was the main source of revenue for the peasants as well as for the owners or holders of land and water and this type of agricultural organization of production remained the most significant feature of rural Iran until the 1962 land reform.

There are reasons for the continuation and even the expansion of sharecropping in Iran. The link between the landlords who lived in the cities and the rural peasants who produced the agricultural products was through the sharecropping relations which allocated the land to the peasants in return for a share in the product. Since the landlords were mostly absentees this link with the peasants was through their agents or bailiffs³⁵¹.

There are also economic and technical reasons that contributed to the expansion and reproduction of the sharecropping system in Iran which we will review below drawing primarily on the work of Safi-nejad (1989).

The primary speculation about the reasons for the expansion of this type of

sharecropping first occurred during the Safavids. There is considerable evidence of the dominance of sharecropping in more recent times. Abdollaev (1982:242) refers to five-factor division in the late 19th century.

³⁵⁰ For more details on mozare-eh see Lambton (1969b:306).

³⁵¹ See Lambton (1969b:271); Sultanzade (1931:140), and, Amid (1990:9).

tenure system leads one to the economic factor of efficiency under the existing circumstances³⁵². Safi-nejad (1989:13-14) maintains that sharecropping in the form of *bonheh* emerged as a result of the dependency of the tax system on the land's output. Where sharecropping was dominant, provided that the water supply was good, the sharecropping peasants were able to pay the dues (Ibid). In more arid lands such as in Iran the collective production that the sharecropping offered was more efficient because it enabled the peasants to increase their collective productivity which would help them to pay their taxes (Ibid).

In addition, the scarcity of water supply prevented the expansion of the individual types of production (Safi-nejad, 1989:13-14; Khosravi, 1976:93). The more divided the units of production were the longer it took to circulate water properly within the units whereas, in the case of the large units the irrigation was done in a specific time and in a large area. As Safi-nejad (1989, 1980, 1978) indicates the land in many cases was divided into working units based on availability of water. In addition, collective cultivation accelerated the production process which was not possible in small units due to the lack of appropriate machinery³⁵³ and consequent reliance on manual and animal labour (e.g. Research Group, 1965:190-252)³⁵⁴.

Sharecropping also offered a collective method for organizing irrigation and

³⁵² See also Hayami (1981) for more details on sharecropping and the question of efficiency

³⁵³ See Lahsaiezadeh (1990:84-90) and Safi-nejad (1989:13-14) for more debate on the reasons for the development of *bonheh*.

³⁵⁴ Even as late as 1960, in Gilan more 88 percent of agricultural units used animals and nine percent only human labour (Research Group, 1965b:197). In Mazandran the percentage was about 66 percent animals and 2.5 percent human labour (Ibid:211).

eliminating the time-consuming procedures which ultimately contributed not only to an upgrading of the peasants' ability to meet their dues to the ruling classes but also to gain a more sufficient share for their family (see Lahsaeizadeh, 1990:84-90; Safi-nejad, 1989:14). Finally, sharecropping offered an advantageous system to the peasants where they divided the crop instead of paying a fixed rent (Lambton, 1987:57). This meant that if there were a crop failure the peasants did not have to undergo the fixed rent (Ibid)³⁵⁵.

'Boneh' in Iran, can be looked at as a totality that, although it existed within the rural economy, reflected the interrelationship of three socio-economic elements that were not necessarily internal to the rural economy. These elements consisted of: agricultural production, power relations (the state or the landlords) and rural-urban class relations. In other words, boneh was not a mere production unit; it reflected the profound complexity of social and economic formations (see also Lahsaeizadeh, 1990:84-90). Part of this complexity can be observed by looking into the social and economic processes that contributed to the attachment of the peasants to the agricultural production, hence, reproduction of sharecropping.

We have already indicated that towards the end of the pre-capitalist period (i.e., prior to the land reform of 1962) landholding was transformed into landownership with the intense involvement of urban groups (Chapter Three). Hypothetically, this should have motivated the peasants to withdraw from agricultural production or, to come to terms with the landlords on a wage-labouring basis. The following reasons, however,

³⁵⁵ See also Hayami (1981) for more argument about the question of sharecropping and its efficiency.

forced the peasants to continue working in the rural economy as sharecroppers

Until the 1950s the country's economy relied on agricultural production but the peasantry had experienced out-migration to the cities and outside the country as early as 1900 (e.g. Abdoliaev, 1978:18-24; 1982:244). Bharier (1971:29) also argues that 39 percent of population movement occurred between rural and urban areas between 1900 and 1956. In most of the rural to urban immigration cases in the last 100 years, the peasantry had joined the urban poor (Amjad, 1993:35)³⁵⁶ This meant that the peasants' chance to find any substitute for their income in sectors other than agriculture was low. The Research Group (1968:167) in the early 1960s studied the village of Farak³⁵⁷ near Kashmar in Khorasan and found that of the total 13,299 Kashmar population some 2,269 inhabitants or 17 percent of the population was employed in 894 looms. The Group emphasized that despite the pressure that the peasants felt for migration resulting from a lack of land and income induced by the landlords' policies they could not leave the village due to the lack of job opportunities in the urban areas (Ibid).

In the absence of an alternative in the urban economy the rural factor (working in bonehs) which included absentee landlordism as the connecting element between urban and rural economies played a significant role in attaching the peasants to land. Amid (1990:9) who indicates that landownership was an urban element as the number

³⁵⁶ For more details on the migration of Iranian peasants and its implications, see Mohtadi (1986) and Kazemi (1980).

³⁵⁷ When the Research Group studied Farak in 1964 land reform in that area had not been implemented yet (Research Group, 1968:174). Therefore, the results of their study may be used to enrich the information about the pre-land-reform period

of absentee landlords increased also argues that "Rent collection may be their only function in agriculture"

The dominance of rent in kind was the most significant feature of the sharecropping agreements in Iran (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1989, 1978; Lambton, 1969b:307). The landowners who rented their land formed two categories; a) the owners-renters; and, b) the surrogate landowners. The first category consisted of the landowners and petty landowners who came to terms with the peasants directly. The second category were the owners who were not directly involved, such as the administrators of *vaqf* land, state land (*Khaliseh*) and the crown land (*Divani*) (see Safi-nejad, 1989:14). Within these categories, as noted before, the common interest was to rent the land to the *bonehs* against the share from the crop. Before reviewing the structure of *boneh* formation some points need to be made about the extent of sharecropping in Iran.

According to official estimates, some 54 percent of land in 1960 was operating under sharecropping agreements (Demin, 1971:221-22; Nakhaie, 1986:218) and these various tenure systems may be categorized under five categories: sharecropping, rent, owner-operator, combined, and holdings without land (Table 3);

Table 3. Various Types of Tenure Before the 1960s

type of tenure	Number of holdings		Area (hectares)	
	'000	percent	'000	percent
Sharecropping	814	34.2	6,222	54.8
rent	235	10.0	844	7.4
owner-operator	624	26.2	2,976	26.2
combined	203	8.4	1,315	11.6
holdings without land	508	21.2	----	----
Total	2,384	100.0	11,357	100.0

Source: Ajami (1976b:191; table 1), Najmabadi (1987:47, table 4)

The focus in this study is on lands under sharecropping tenure. In various parts of the country the percentage under the sharecropping tenure system varied. For example, in Azarbaijan some 72.86 percent of land and in Kurdistan some 76 percent of land was based on sharecropping agreements whereas in Khorasan only 38.3 percent of land operated based on sharecropping agreements (Demin, 1971:222). As Demin (Ibid) argues, however, these figures only covered the landlords' lands and there were other categories which were operating under sharecropping agreements. For example, in Khorasan large plots of land were under the control of the shrine of Imam Reza (e.g. Khosravi, 1976:27 footnote 1; Lambton, 1969b:234-35). These lands, as in the case of lands in Farak and Do-Hesaran which were jointly owned by the private landlords and Shrine of Imam Reza, operated under sharecropping agreements (Research Group, 1968:166, ff.1 and 179). This suggests that the total land governed by sharecropping was higher than 54.8 percent of the total land. This is suggested by Najmabadi (1987:48) who indicates that over 62 percent of the agricultural land in Iran

in 1960 operated based on sharecropping arrangements³⁵⁸.

It is our contention that the land under sharecropping must have been higher because, as indicated in Chapter Three, 60-66 percent of land was owned by the absentee landlords which operated under sharecropping. Also, the owner-operator lands was about 10 percent of the total land (Chapter Three) and the above 26.2 percent (table 3) includes the small-landowners who were rather absentees than owner-operators (Chapter Three)³⁵⁹ meaning they also put their land under sharecropping agreement. In addition, in vaqf and state lands the landlord-peasant relations was dominant (e.g. Khosravi, 1976:28) which means these lands were also cultivated under sharecropping system (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1989:23)³⁶⁰. In other words, aside from the above 10 percent land owned by the peasant-owners and another 7.4 percent of land which was rented out, the rest of land must have fallen under some type of sharecropping. This can be supported by some estimates that indicate 81 percent of the cultivated land was under sharecropping (Lahsaiezadeh, 1990:59)³⁶¹.

³⁵⁸ Tofigh (1976:67, table 25) considers 64 percent of land under the category of 'other' which is believed was sharecropping land.

³⁵⁹ See Lahsaiezadeh (1990:41) who divides landownership into feudal, absentee small-landownership and owner-operator lands. As it is obvious, he categorizes small-landownership and owner-operator lands under two different categories which Table Three does not consider it.

³⁶⁰ See, for example, Safi-nejad (1978:6) who organizes 227 documents regarding agreements between state lands and the peasants. He indicates that 66.5 percent of these documents were related to sharecropping rents (Ibid:9 table 6, 72-75).

³⁶¹ I consider Lahsaiezadeh's figure only as an estimate because although it seems accurate but he refers to Okazaki's (1968:5) figure as his source of estimate which was about 71.6 percent tenant-farming and 28.4 percent owner-farming. Apparently, Lahsaiezadeh's higher estimate than that of Okazaki's was because he also did not believe that owner-operator lands formed 26.2 or 28.4 percent of total land. He only considers six percent of land as land under cultivation by the owner-operators (Lahsaiezadeh, 1990:70).

Since sharecropping was the dominant form of land tenure it will now be our task to show how land was incorporated into the production process. Under sharecropping arrangements, landlords rented their land to the sharecropping units (bonehs). It should be first noted that the landlords' lands were rented in divided parcels to a number of bonehs in every village. These parcels may have been of equal size within individual villages but at the larger level, land was not divided on an equal base. In 1960 some 17 percent of sharecropping or agricultural units operated on 60 percent of land whereas 40 percent of the units operated on only 5 percent of the lands (Ashraf, 1982:13). This unequal division of the means of production could also be shown in terms of the number of units and the size of land under the control of each unit. In 1960, of 1,877,000 units of production some 1,223,000 units (65 percent) each comprised plots of 5 hectares and less (Ghahreman, 1982b:180). These units operated only on 18.7 percent (2,125,000 hectares) of the total land (11,356,000 hectares) (Ibid). In some instances 16 percent of the agricultural units (302,000 out of 1,877,000 units with 10 to 50 hectares each) operated on 46.3 percent of the total land (i.e., 5,264,000 hectares out of 11,356,000 hectares) (Ibid)³⁶². While it is not known how many peasants were engaged in sharecropping in these various land sub-divisions Azimi (1982:86) notes that more than 60.1 percent of the working force were engaged in units with less than 5 hectares land.

Now we shall shed some light on the way forces and the relations of production were juxtaposed in the bonehs. A village's productive capacities including

³⁶² The total agricultural land of 11,356,000 hectares includes fallow land (e.g. Okazaki, 1968 4-5)

land, water, oxen, seed and labour formed the basic elements of these productive units (e.g. Lambton, 1969b; Ajami, 1976b). The first and the second factor of production, i.e. land and water were basically provided by the landlord who could be an absentee landlord, the state, the small absentee landlord or the vaqf administrator. The lands (and water) of a village were distributed among several bonehs each including several nasaq-dars, i.e., peasants with the land-use rights (Safi-nejad, 1989:21; Khosravi, 1976:78). Nasaq was acquired in two ways; 1) some of the peasants inherited the right of cultivation from their fathers; and, 2) some other peasants had to start from the lowest strata in the boneh, i.e., from becoming barzegar first (Safi-nejad, 1989:118-25). Membership in bonehs required nasaq rights, i.e., land-use rights, continuous residency in the village, skills in agricultural production, and an approval from the landlord (Safi-nejad, 1989:21). Membership lasted for a year and it could be renewed and the total number of the members differed in each village but it usually consisted of four to six peasants (Ibid:23, 25; see also Khosravi, 1976:78)³⁶³. Where the water output was good the bonehs included up to 16 peasants (Safi-nejad, 1989:54-55). Membership was not permanent and it differed from place to place. In Farak (Khorasan), for example, the nasaq rights were not stable and they changed all the time (Research Group, 1968:166) and the landlords could dismiss the peasants with the land-use rights at will which created a situation of vulnerability for the peasants and intense competition among them (Ibid). This meant that with the insecurity of land-use rights

³⁶³ Hooglund (1982:22) argues that nasaq could be earned through involvement of the peasant in agriculture for two consecutive years. Nasaq-rights could be denied by the landlord (Ibid; Lambton, 1969b:295).

mobility within the group members was complex and was based on personal and free services for the landlords or the dominant rural classes (e.g. Research Group, 1968:166). In other places such as central Iran, however, mobility within the bonehs was more prevalent and the changes were made by the head of the boneh who was the person in charge of irrigation, i.e., Abyar (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1968: 21). The bonehs in the private landlords' lands had a bailiff communicating between the absentee landlords and the boneh members (e.g. Khosravi, 1976:78-9; Amid, 1990:9). The hierarchy of the boneh was as follows: the landlord at the top, his agent or bailiff (Mobashir), the head of boneh (Sar-abyar)³⁶⁴, two Sar-abyar's assistants, and finally the peasants (Khosravi, 1976:79)³⁶⁵. In the regions where Sahra, a unit similar to boneh, was the dominant unit of production the Yogh-salars replaced the Sar-abyars and a new position was added to the hierarchy, i.e., Salars who were superior to Ray-yats (Barzegaran or agricultural labourers) (see Khosravi, 1976:85-87).

The lands in a village were allocated in equal portions to 10 or 12 bonehs every year and different bonehs worked on different lands every year (Safi-nejad, 1989:22-24). According to documents, for example, in a village called Ma-moreen some 12 bonehs with 4-5 members worked and cultivated some 300 hectares per year in 1884 (Safi-nejad, 1989:33). In Taleb-abad as a more recent example, prior to 1960s, the average size of bonehs' lands were 37 hectares which produced summer cash crops and fall crops such as cereals, particularly wheat and barley (Ibid:74) and

³⁶⁴ Abyar and Sar-abyar had the same status in boneh.

³⁶⁵ These peasants were actual cultivators who sometimes were called barzegar or ray-yat. Safi-nejad (1989:130-31) categorises the third strata of the boneh members as barzegaran (plural form of barzegar)

sometimes had eight members (Ibid:52, ff. 4, 102-07). The size of land varied in different parts of the country. In Farak (near Kashmar, Khorasan), the average size of land in each unit of production ranged from 9 hectares to 14 hectares and each unit operated with eight families of the peasants who had nasaq-rights (Research Group, 1968:165). In Kash-koo-ye located in the southern province of Kirman, before the 1962 land reform the production units were called Haraseh and each operated on some 13-14 hectares of which some eight hectares were considered for fall crops and some 5-6 hectares were considered for spring crops (Safi-nejad, 1976:169).

After land and water, the third factor of production, i.e., labour force was provided by the peasants who had land-use rights (nasaq) and also by the hired-agricultural labourers, i.e., khoshneshins (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1989). The boneh members were organized on a hierarchical way that not only affected their labour input but also their share of the product. For example, in Kenareh-gard near Ray (Tehran) some bonehs had two members and they had to hire two barzegars, or, more properly khoshneshins (agricultural labourer). In these bonehs, heavy jobs such as ploughing and threshing were laid on the agricultural labourers and the top jobs such as management were rendered by the village headman (Safi-nejad, 1989:30-33). In the case of salaries the more skilled and advantaged members of the boneh received more from the product than the agricultural labourers, i.e., khoshneshins (Chapter Two)³⁶⁶. The assault on the agricultural labourers' income came from their status in the boneh, we will discuss the nasaq-holders later. Since the labourers (khoshneshins) had few

³⁶⁶ See Mahdavi (1982:52) for the difference between various groups of peasants in terms of income.

skills and no nasaq-rights they were forced to make wage-labouring terms with the bonehs, hence, their only benefit came directly from their labour input whereas the other members of the bonehs received both a wage and a share of the products. In fact, nasaq entitled a peasant to a share that was higher than the labourer's wage and in Taleb-abad, for example, all nasaq-holders received a higher percentage share than did the barzegars (Table 4):

Table 4. Income of Boneh Members Before the 1962 Land Reform

Title	Product %				net annual income (rials)
	Wheat and Barley	Cotton and summer crop	alfalfa	straw	
Abyar	6.96	7.5	5.5	4.7	19,000-45,000
Dam-abyar	5.96	7.5	5.5	4.7	17,500-43,500
Barzegar	5.81	7.5	5.5	4.7	17,000-43,000

Abyar: the person in charge of irrigation who was also head of the boneh.

Dam-abyar: abyar assistant.

Barzegar: agricultural labourer who sometimes enjoyed some rights but lacked the same qualifications as the other members had such as skills.

Source: Safi-nejad (1989:116).

In the mid-1960s the annual average income of khoshneshins was about 30-45 US dollars (Hooglund, 1973:237); in Zeidan-loo, the daily income of the khoshneshins was 40-50 rials (Research Group, 1968:193); and, in Do-hesaran it was 5-20 rials (Ibid:235). Since they only worked in high season, sometimes for three months, their annual agricultural income was not more than 40-45 US dollars, i.e., 3,000-3,750 rials (e.g. Research Group, 1968:193). There were wide varieties, of course, and in Taleb-

abad, a reaper (usually a *khoshneshin*) received 400-500 rials for reaping one hectare land between 1960 and 1962 (Safi-nejad, 1989:150, table 33). The reaper who reaped 2,000 square meters in one day, finished one hectare land in five days (Ibid:145), hence, the reaper received 80-100 rials per day which was higher than wages in either Zeidan-loo or Do-hesaran. This wage, however, was only for work in the high season and under no conditions could not be higher than the *nasaq-dars'* income (Table 4).

The fourth and fifth factors, i.e., oxen and seed were provided by the landlord, the *boneh* members or by the oxen-owner and Safi-nejad (1989) has distinguished two types of *bonehs* based on who provides the oxen and the seed. If the oxen-owner provided these factors then the *boneh* was an oxen-owner *boneh* and if they were supplied by the landlord it was a landlord *boneh* and the division of crop proceeds differed by type of *boneh*.

Finally, it should be noted that despite the initial speculations on the pre-capitalist socio-economic formations in Iran that questioned the existence of classes due to lack of private property (e.g. Ashraf, 1967:9; Melotti, 1972:54-55; Taylor, 1979)³⁶⁷ the *bonehs* reflected intense class relations (see also Chapter Three).

Although there existed various forms of *bonehs* corresponding to the types of owners of land, the classes were almost the same within the rural economy (Chapter Three). Briefly, they can be categorized, based on their relationship to the means of production, as follows:

³⁶⁷ Taylor (1979) does not mention Iran specifically, but his discussion of Asiatic Mode applies to Iran and has inspired my work by causing me to focus on the existence of classes during both landholding and landowning periods.

- 1) the landlords who consisted of the state or its agents, the absentee landlords or their bailiffs, the small-landowners and vaqf administrators;
- 2) other dominant classes including the village headman, the bailiff, the village watchman and the gav-bands (oxen-owners);
- 3) the peasant nasaq-dars who consisted of the peasants whose relationship to the land was determined based on their rights to use the land and they enjoyed certain privileges. This category includes abyars, dam-abyars and the barzegaran;
- 4) the khoshneshins, i.e., the agricultural labourers. There were peasants who owned no land and had no nasaq rights to land;
- 5) non-agricultural labourers who included the other fractions of the rural work force such as blacksmiths, carpenters and so on (see Safi-nejad, 1989:108-210).

To sum up, the most compatible forms of agricultural organizations to the existing socio-economic formations were the bonehs, because, not only did they organize production but they also systematically linked the urban and rural economies through absentee landlords. In other words, the bonehs incorporated the agricultural relations of production within themselves in order to facilitate the production, the extraction and the transfer of agricultural product from the rural economy. In the following section we continue the debate on bonehs and above factors as we examine the division of crop between the peasants and the landlords in order to support the above claim.

4.2 Modes of Extraction of Surplus Product in Sharecropping System; The Division of Crop Between Landlords and Peasants

The extraction of surplus and exploitation of the sharecroppers prior to the 1962 land reform was one of the consequences of: a) the juxtaposition of absentee landlordism and sharecropping within the agricultural relations of production; and also, b) the dominance of urban classes over the agricultural production process whether in the old landholding system or in the landowning system of the post-transitional period of the late 19th century and controlled by merchant capital. The purpose here is to develop an argument about the methods by which surplus product was extracted and the sharecroppers were exploited through sharecropping practices³⁶⁸. These methods were related to a set of rules surrounding the practice of sharecropping. These rules, which we will review, consisted of the division of crop based on type of irrigation, division of crop based on oxen-owner bonehs and landlord bonehs, and finally, based on the position of the peasants in the boneh.

As noted earlier sharecropping in Iran has historically been based on the five factors: land, water, seed, oxen, and labour (Lambton, 1969b:306; Vali, 1980:32). Theoretically, the peasants and the landlords provided one or more factors of production and received their share from the product accordingly. To this it should be added that not all the peasants were eligible for participation in the production process and *nasaq*, land-use rights determined the position of those from the peasant side, 60

³⁶⁸ There were other ways through which the peasant lost his control over his products such as not being able to participate in the market and selling his products at a lower price (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:379-92). The focus here, however, is on the question of the realization of surplus by the dominant groups and not on what was left for the peasant to consume or to sell in the market.

percent of the peasants, who could participate in the production process and receive a share (e.g. Hooglund, 1982, 1981; Lambton, 1969*b*; Vali, 1980)³⁶⁹.

There are some controversial arguments as to whether or not the five factors (land, labour, water, seed, oxen) were really the base for the division of the crop (e.g. Momeni, 1980:53-57). On the one hand, Momeni (*Ibid*), for example, indicates that he is not convinced with the conventional conclusion³⁷⁰ that each of the above factors was allocated an equal share from the crop. On the other hand, Alvandi (1982:401-417) in disagreement with Momeni shows that, historically, the combination of five factors has made agricultural production possible and the same process has resulted in a rational allocation of the shares from the product to the five means of production. Alvandi (1982:408, table 3) focusses on the contribution of seed (i.e., a factor that Momeni does not seem to consider as important as other factors) to the production process and indicates that in some cases the cost of seed formed up to 73.3 percent of household production expenditure³⁷¹. She also indicates that the cost of seed for bringing one hectare of land under cultivation of wheat varied between 28 percent to 89 percent of the total production cost in selected areas of the country (*Ibid*:409, table 4). A better indicator of the contribution of seed, Alvandi (1982:410, table 5) argues was the cost

³⁶⁹ The peasants, therefore, were excluded from the benefits of agricultural production at two levels, 1) at the level of landowning, most of the peasants did not own land and only used their *nasaq* (60 percent of the peasants) to benefit from the production; and, 2) at the level of *nasaq*-holding, some 40 percent of the peasants did not have *nasaq* (Hooglund, 1982:22).

³⁷⁰ This conclusion can be found in almost all the literature on rural Iran.

³⁷¹ Alvandi's results are from seven districts, i.e., Ghasr-e Sheerin, Hamadan, Sanandaj, Golpaigan, Suri, Garmsar and Birjand. These areas were located in the West, Centre, North and East

of the seed in gross value of wheat and barley production which varied between one-fourth to one-sixth of the gross value of production. Having said this, she suggests that based on this contribution, seed was allocated one-fifth of the total product.

In the following argument, we will show that the practice of sharecropping based on the five-factor method was the usual basis for dividing the crop, i.e. contrary to Momeni's (1980:53) arguments, it was not superficial³⁷². There was, however, an unequal division of the crop which resulted from the exploitative relations between the owners of the major means of production, i.e., land and water, on one side, and labour (by the peasants), on the other. My argument, in other words, is that class and power relations affected the amount of product allocated to each factor. Only in this sense does Momeni's point (1980:54-47) about exploitation of agricultural labour appear to play a stronger role in the exploitation process than the points made by Alvandi (1982) who maintains the five-factor method allocated a share to each factor which had historically been considered to be a sufficient/fair share.

It seems true, nevertheless, that Momeni confuses the necessary conditions of production, i.e., the provision of five factors by various classes, with the practice of division of crop between the peasants and the landlords. Sharecropping covered both the production of crop and the division of crop between the classes involved in the production process.

It is helpful to know, as Alvandi (1982:401-417) explains, that the combination

³⁷² It was not superficial because contrary to Momeni who dismisses the significance of five-factor method entirely, the five-factor was, at least in part, the basis of the division of the crop.

of the five factors was the only way that made production possible³⁷³. However, it should be noted that land and water were essential means of production. Seed as a factor of production may have played a significant role in the production process when it was combined with other means of production (i.e., in the bonehs). However, seed as an independent factor (i.e., independent from land and water) did not have the same value as land and water. That is the reason that classes of peasantry were formed on the basis of their relationship to land and water (e.g. nasaq-holders enjoyed land-use rights while khoshneshins did not have such rights). In this sense, it may be that Momeni (1980:54) is correct that seed, as an independent factor, did not have the same value as other elements. The problem, nevertheless, with Momeni's reasoning is that he discredits the composite value of the four other means of production and only glorifies labour (Ibid:55). Maybe this is due to his emphasis on the pre-arranged relations (i.e., the peasants had no control) in which the peasant arrived as a sharecropper (Ibid:48). According to Momeni (Ibid) these relations were manipulated so that the peasant only received a tiny amount from the production process, enough only to survive. Again, this is nothing more than exploitative relations between various classes, the owners and non-owners of the means of production and it does not imply that the five-factor method was not the basis of division by reasoning that the product could not be divided among five equal shares.

It should also be argued that seed could become a source of accumulation

³⁷³ This is so because the harsh circumstances of production which required collective and cooperative production units rather than individually-run units, and the reciprocal dependency of the peasants and the landowners/landholders created a situation where the five-factor production method became the most appropriate method of production.

depending on who provided it. Even Momeni (1980:54) refers to this by saying that seed could be provided by a third person, hence, entailing a right to the owner of seed. He confirms this by arguing that the peasants, at the harvest time, paid something extra to the original amount of seed (Ibid). Safi-nejad (1989:300) suggests this view and indicates that in Chaleh-Tar-khan when seed was provided by the oxen-owner he received 10 percent of the product as the share of seed. In this case it seems the value of seed, which should have been 20 percent, was underestimated. However, the oxen-owner in this village was the head of the boneh and as we will explain later he received a higher share in the end. Lambton (1969b:308-09) also refers to the factor of seed and indicates that depending on who provided the seed it could result in more favourable shares from the product. In the case of state land, seed became even more important than a simple factor of production. There were four categories of state land (transferable, confiscated, seed and registered land) in the early 20th century (Hooman, 1962:218-19). The origins of seed or Bazri land goes back to an earlier period. During the famine years of the 19th century the state had provided seed for the owners of these lands expecting them to pay the state back (Ibid). Apparently some of these landowners did not meet this expectation for various reasons and the state became the owner of these lands and they were called seed or Bazri lands (Ibid). This is an indication of the fact that the value of seed could be transformed into the land value. And, in the case of Bazri lands, seed became a source of accumulation reflecting its potential value.

Having discussed these facets of sharecropping, in this section the argument is

concerned with both the practice of crop division and the relations of production that affected crop division between the peasants and the landlords. A brief review of both the methods of crop division and the effects of the relations of production will be considered together. It will be handled this way because the process of production under which the division of crop took place has the same analytical significance as does the relations of production that forced the peasants to give up extra product in order to remain in the production process. This approach eliminates the one-sided assumption of Momeni's and Alvandi's approaches which either place unlimited emphasis on relations of production (i.e., exploitation of agricultural labour force) or eliminate the effect of class relations on the process of crop division.

Since no national rules existed to regulate the division of crop there was no standard method of division of crop across the country (Lambton, 1969b:306-29; Hooman, 1962:295). In addition to the five factors as the basis for crop division, the type of cultivation, irrigation (ibid) and seasonal production (Safi-nejad, 1989:134-144)³⁷⁴ also helped to determine the method of division.

There were two types of cultivation prior to 1962 land reform: 1) irrigated (*abi*); and, 2) rain-fed (*daymi*) (Hooman, 1962:295; Lambton, 1969b:306), in addition, irrigation could be based on the following sources of water: a) *qanat* or underground canals³⁷⁵; b) wells; or, c) rivers and streams (Hooman, 1962:295; Hooglund, 1982:7;

³⁷⁴ Seasonal products were different, for example, wheat and barley were fall products whereas grains, cotton and summer crops were considered spring crops (see Safi-nejad, 1989:134-44)

³⁷⁵ Banani (1961:121) calls this system 'subterranean canals'

Ata-ee, 1964:129 table 16)³⁷⁶. Generally speaking, the more capital was used in the production process the larger was the share allocated to the person who invested the capital in the production process (e.g. Alvandi, 1982:401-417). In the case of irrigation, there was a connection between the ecological factor (i.e., water) and the economic factor (i.e., investment in irrigation works which increased the value of water). In terms of capital-consuming methods one can categorize three main types of cultivation.

1-a) in an irrigated cultivation with underground water (subterranean canals)³⁷⁷, the qanat system required maintenance labour plus initial cost³⁷⁸. We need to locate where the capital was spent. Irrigation by qanats entailed two stages of cost allocation; a) the construction and the maintenance of qanats; and, b) the water itself as a means of production. It was the former that transformed the latter ecological factor into an economic factor, i.e., economic value.

The initial cost of construction of a qanat varied mainly because of its length

³⁷⁶ Ata-ee (1964:83-185) provides a detailed analysis of factors involved in agricultural productivity in Isfahan and Yazd provinces. He (Ibid:129) indicates that Qanat provided some 429,192 million cubic meter, wells and springs 136,041million cubic meter, and streams 960,628 million cubic meter water in the province of Isfahan. Despite the fact that one of the few big rivers (Zayandeh-rood) in Iran irrigates agriculture in Isfahan, qanats accounted for almost one half of the water provided by this river. This indicates the dependency of agriculture on qanats even where rivers exist. Roaf (1989:59-60) indicates the significance of qanats in central Iran by referring to the qanats in Yazd, which determined the patterns of settlement.

³⁷⁷ This type of irrigation was peculiar to Iran (Banani, 1961:121).

³⁷⁸ Interestingly enough, Lambton (1969b:275), finds a connection between the prevalence of peasant proprietorship and qanats. In Kirman due to cost of building and maintaining qanats peasant proprietorship did not develop because land depended totally on water.

from the source of water to the village. A typical qanat had a mother vertical shaft located near a mountain and several other vertical shafts that reached to the village's cultivable area (e.g., Beaumont, 1989:13-31; Lambton 1989a:5-12). The vertical shafts were connected by an underground tunnel (Lambton 1989a:5-12). The vertical shafts ranged between 25, 150, 350 and 1000 feet at the highest (Ibid). The underground tunnel could be as long as 20 miles or even more (Ibid)³⁷⁹.

In addition to its initial cost the maintenance cost of a qanat also had to be considered in the value of qanat system. Hooman (1962:170) writes:

Most of qanats due to collapse of underground walls or flood require extensive amount of annual expenses, as a result, most disputes between landlords and tenants or sharecroppers pertains to the maintenance of qanats. It often happens that the owner of qanat avoids the repairs and the agricultural lands become barren³⁸⁰.

The heavy cost of qanats can be understood by comparing the wages paid to the qanat workers and the one-day cost of food in a boneh. The qanat workers who were involved in digging and/or dredging a range of qanats in 1961 (1340 H.)³⁸¹ in the south of Tehran received 60 to 100 rials a day (Safi-nejad, 1980:15, Table 7)³⁸² whereas the total one-day food cost of the Sahra (similar to boneh) members before the 1962 land reform was about 20 rials (Safi-nejad, 1989:148). In the same area, the

³⁷⁹ For more and new information on individual cases of qanats see Ehlers (1989), English (1989), Hartl (1989); Kielstra (1989) and Lambton (1989b).

³⁸⁰ My translation.

³⁸¹ Iranian calender.

³⁸² Fisher (1928:304) argues that in the 1920s the master workman of Qanat received one dollar per day as his wage and his assistants less than half a dollar.

total expenses spent on maintenance work before the 1962 land reform averaged 200,000 rials, 2,667 US dollars³⁸³ annually of which 120,000, i.e., 1,600 US dollars was allocated exclusively to the repairs of two qanats (Safi-nejad, 1980:57). This is while the per capita income of nasaq-dars in Ghermez-tapeh in 1964 was about 77 US dollars, excluding their earning from animal husbandry when it reached 82 US dollars including their earnings from animal husbandry (Research Group, 1968:250-51). English (1966:95) reports from one of the most qanat-dominated irrigation areas in Iran, i.e., Kirman, that harvest-watchman (Dasht-ban) who was from a more prosperous rural class than nasaq-dars received 67 US dollars as his annual wage. The above costs can also be compared to the price of one kilogram of wheat which was four rials in 1954 and seven rials in 1964 (e.g. Research Group, 1968:182, 201, 231).

Therefore, irrigation based on qanat water was one of the most expensive types and coupled with the fact that it was: "the most common form of irrigation" (Hooglund, 1982:7)³⁸⁴ irrigation by qanat meant that the capital-owners, often the landlords, (Esvik, 1976:66) rationalized their higher share from the product³⁸⁵.

³⁸³ The rate of one dollar fluctuated between 75 and 76 rials between 1960 and 1962 (e.g. Research group, 1968:250-51).

³⁸⁴ It should be noted that, as Lambton (1969b:217) writes in the 1950s, qanats "...are found in most parts of the plateau, but specially in the neighbourhood of Tehran, Qumm, Isfahan, Yazd, and Kirman". According to some reports, more than 75 percent of water used in agriculture in Iran came from underground channels (Amid, 1990:5). Lambton (1989a:8) cites Golbot, a French water engineer, who argued that half of the land was irrigated by qanats in 1962. The total number of qanats were estimated at 30,000 to 50,000 (Ibid). And, the total discharge of water per second by qanats was estimated at 600-700 cubic meters (Ibid). Honari (1989:61) argues that the total length of qanats' underground tunnels in Iran has been estimated at 170,000 kilometres.

³⁸⁵ Bonine (1989:45) argues that "...only large landlords and merchants, governors and other wealthy or influential persons could afford to invest in a Qanat".

Lambton (1969b:221) notes this by detailing the capital value of qanats and its varying value in various parts of the country. For example, in 1945, in Ashkzar in the province of Yazd, one Jur-eh (11 minutes and thirty seconds) water from qanat was selling at 1,000 rials, i.e., 5.17 pounds sterling (about 10 US dollars)³⁸⁶ per annum and its capital value was 20,000 rials, i.e., 117.13 pounds sterling (about 234 US dollars) (Lambton, 1969b:221). In the 1950s³⁸⁷ in Ma-sum-abad, west of Birjand (south of eastern province of Khorasan), the capital value of one Fen-jan (the amount of water that irrigated 431 square yards of land) was 2,500 rials, i.e., 14.14 pounds sterling (Ibid) which was about 28 U.S. dollars, i.e., one-half of the per capita income of the sharecroppers³⁸⁸. Another example is from Nayriz (southern province of Fars) where the capital value of 20 minutes water (i.e., one fayn)³⁸⁹ from qanat was about 1,000 rials or some 5.17 pounds sterling (about 10 U.S. dollars) and its annual rent was about 50 to 70 rials (Lambton, 1969b:221). The above capital value of qanat can better be understood by its renting value discussed below.

The rent of qanat varied from year to year and from area to area, for example in Ashkizar, near Yazd, a qanat was rented in 1945" ...on the terms that the owner of

³⁸⁶ I included the value of Iranian currency based on US dollars. I consider the value of US dollar to have been one-half of the British pound sterling.

³⁸⁷ Lambton's book was first published in 1953.

³⁸⁸ According to Safi-nejad (1980:172) one Fen-jan equalled 5 to 10 minutes of water. In the western strip of the desert, one hour irrigation equalled 10 fen-jans (Safi-nejad, 1980:145).

³⁸⁹ Safi-nejad (1980) provides some new information about qanats and Fayn in Neyriz which is different from the 1950s in terms of ownership of qanat. Nevertheless, his information about Fayn is still valid. Safi-nejad (1980:230-32) indicates that a Fayn is the amount of water a shareholder of a qanat receives within 20 minutes.

the qanat provided the seed and took three-fifths of the crop" (Lambton, 1969b:221)³⁹⁰. In 1949 every hour of water was sold at 50-80 rials (Ibid). The rentable value of one hour's water could be as much as 50,000 rials (294 pounds sterling) in the 1950s (Ibid). We will later see this in comparison to the value of labour force (i.e., income).

The effects of these expenses was reflected in crop division (e.g. Ata-ee, 1964:138-39). In cases where the land was irrigated by qanat, the highest share was allocated to the owner of the qanat (Lambton, 1969b:309). In the province of Kirman the share of the peasants from the product was considerably low due to this very fact, i.e., qanat expenses (Ibid:312). Ata-ee (1964:138) argues that although the division was based on five-factor method in Yazd the share of water was higher than the conventional one-fifth. In other words, water in qanat-irrigated lands became expensive.

1-b, i.e., wells; and, 1-c, i.e., rivers and streams) The next types of capital-consuming irrigation systems could be found in those cultivations that were irrigated by wells, surface water and/or canals³⁹¹. Wells in the 1950s were still working with animal force but a number of machine-driven wells had been developed (Lambton, 1969b:227-

³⁹⁰ Lambton (1969b:221) quotes Frazer who documented that in 1833 a Qanat was rented near Tehran at 1,000 tomans (10,000 rials per annum). Its capital value was about 100,000 rials for 10 years (Ibid). This further indicated the value of water that was provide by qanat.

³⁹¹ Although cultivation with water from wells has been mentioned by Hooglund (1982:7) comparing to qanat and stream this method (well) was not as common.

28)³⁹² and irrigation by river was only available in part of Khuzistan, Isfahan, Azarbaijan, Khorasan and Tehran (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:211-16). According to Amid (1990:5) 75 percent of the total irrigation water was supplied by qanats and the rest must have been provided by wells and surface water (canals and rivers) (also Gupta, 1947:49). Since irrigation by well and surface water will not be covered here, we do not need to go into details. It can be said, however, that irrigation by well at least in Qara Bulagh and Nayriz, as Lambton (1969b:311) reports, was in favour of the peasants. If the peasants provided all the expenses and watered the land by well then the peasants received nine-tenths (90 percent) of the product (Ibid). In the same areas if water was provided by qanat and the landlord took over the expenses the landlord received three-quarters (75 percent) of the product (Ibid). Therefore, regardless of who provided the expenses, there was a share difference of 15 percent which it seems was due to the cost of the well which was provided by the peasants in the case of well-irrigated cultivation. In Bandar Abbas, in the Persian Gulf, the landlord provided land and one half of seed and the rest was provided by the peasants (Hooman, 1962:307) and in this case three peasants received three-fifths of the crop and the landlord two-fifths (Ibid). Ata-ee (1964:139-40) indicates that in Na-een, Yazd and Ardistan depending on who provided the expenses of irrigation by well or qanat more share was allocated to the provider and when the peasants provided labour, fertilizer, seed and extra labour for threshing they received one-half of the crop

³⁹² The finished value of one cubic meter of water from a machine driven well was 0.862 rial in 1960 (Ata-ee, 1965b: 147, table 20). which was higher than the value of the same amount of water which was supplied by qanat, i.e., 0.214 rial or from river, i.e., 0.045-0.144 rial (Ibid)

In the case of rivers and surface water, although irrigation works required some costs, the landlords did not usually pay for it and if they did costs were not high. For example, in Khuzistan the wages varied between 20 rials in low season and 40 rials in high season for five hours of work per day in 1949 (Lambton, 1969b:216).

Individuals and villages could have water rights but river water could not be controlled the same as qanat and wells (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:187, 210-215; see also Spooner, 1974:46) and in some cases the villagers paid some dues to the government (Lambton, 1969b:215). In Miandoab the rate of water was only one rial per 100 square meter in 1945, therefore, the cost of river irrigation was not as high as other methods (Ibid; see also Ata-ee, 1965b: 147, table 20), for example, when landlords owned water channels that brought water to the village (see Lambton, 1969b:210-16). In the case of rivers, we can say, the only factor was the channel cost. The important point is that irrigation on the land was similar regardless of the source of the water supply (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1989:118-130) and it seems true to claim that if the landlord provided river water, since it did not require as much investment as in the case of qanat and well, he was only allocated a little extra share of the product, at least theoretically. To support this we can refer to the five-factor method. We noted that water was allocated one share of the product regardless of how it was supplied. We also argued that in the case of qanat it was the construction costs that permitted the landlords to acquire a higher share while in the case of river water this was not the case and they only could receive 20 percent, one-fifth share for the supply of water. In Torogh near Mash-had where water was supplied by river (Lambton, 1969b:211) half of the summer crop was taken

by the peasants (Ibid:316) whereas in Far-yab the peasant provided oxen, labour and seed plus fertilizer and received two-thirds of the crop (Ata-ee, 1964:140).

To sum up, in comparison the qanat-irrigated cultivation operated against the peasants' interests because the landlords had the capital to spend on the maintenance of qanats, hence, in return they received more shares (e.g. Alvandi, 1982:401-17; Momeni, 1980:54), sometimes more than what they would have received based on the five-factor method. Generally speaking, in the case of irrigated crops the division was more in favour of the landlords as, for example, in some districts of Khorasan (East) the landlord sometimes received seven-tenths of the crop (Hooman, 1962:296). Since much of the land in Khorasan were irrigated by qanat water³⁹³, this meant that a high share was allocated to the landlords.

2) The second type of cultivation was the rain-fed cultivation. Rain-fed cultivation was practiced in the Northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandran, North-western province of Azarbaijan, Western provinces of Kordistan and Kermanshah, also partly in Khorasan, Fars and Khuzistan (Amid, 1990:5).

Unlike the irrigated cultivation and the effects of its costs on the division of the crop, especially in the case of qanat, there were no irrigation works and no capital was allocated to irrigate the rain-fed land. As a result, because water was not transformed from an ecological factor into an economic factor, it did not affect the division of the

³⁹³ As Amid (1990:5) argues, only part of Khorasan used rain-fed cultivation and considering the land of this province, i.e. almost as large as Japan, and that southern parts were dominated by qanat irrigation (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:218) one comes to the conclusion that Khorasan used the qanat system on a large scale.

rain-fed crop. For example, in Arak (central Iran) only one-fifth of the product was handed over to the landlord and four-fifths to the peasants (Hooman, 1962:296). In Azarbaijan the division of rain-fed crop was based on one-fourth to the landlord and three-fourth to the peasants (Ibid).

Taking all methods of irrigation into consideration, we can conclude that although the basic criteria for the division of the crop in Iran and in the sharecropping system (i.e. boneh system) rested on the five main factors, other elements, however, contributed to the formation and practice of various forms of division of crop.

The division of the crop among the peasants, in the 1950s, regardless of the above factors and in a general approach, ranged from one-fourth in Taleb-abad to two-thirds in Iran of eleven regions (Table 5).

Table 5. Division of Crop In Selected Areas in the 1950s

Area	Share of the landlord	Share of the peasant
Arak (central)	one-third	two-third
Farahan	one-half	one-half
Isfahan	three-fifth	two-fifth
Torbat-heydari-yeh	three-fifth	two-fifth
Kashmar	two-third	one-third
Maragheh	one-third	two-third
Khoy	one-third	two-third
Rezaeeye	one-third	two-third
Systan (South-East) ³⁹⁴	two-third	one-third
Taleb-abad a ³⁹⁵	60%	40%
Taleb-abad b ³⁹⁶	three-fourth	one-fourth
Torogh (Khorasan) ³⁹⁷	one-half	one-half
on average ³⁹⁸	50%	50%

a: spring crop (cereal, cotton etc.)

b: fall crop (wheat, barley)

Source: constructed based on the information given by Hooman (1962:296),
Safi-nejad (1989:134) and Lambton³⁹⁹ (1969:306-29).

The data which we are dealing with (Table 5), however, have to be interpreted because of the complexity of sharecropping and methods of division of crop which

³⁹⁴ In Systan (i.e., south-east) the crop was divided by three shares based on seed, land and labour, but the seed was often given by the landlord and therefore he received two-thirds of the crop (Hooman, 1962:235).

³⁹⁵ Taleb-abad's figures are related to the spring crops and have been chosen from Safi-nejad (1989:134).

³⁹⁶ Safi-nejad (1989:135).

³⁹⁷ The same methods were followed in Khiaban, Shadkan, Abkuh in which the lessee and in Vakil-abad in which the owner received one-half of the product (see Lambton, 1969:307).

³⁹⁸ Banani (1961:123) argues that around the end of Reza Khan's period the landlord received 50 percent of the crop as rent which he evaluated as being a very large income. Considering that the number of beneficiaries from the share of tenants were numerous even if Banani's number is true, the tenant could not possibly make ends meet.

³⁹⁹ It should be noted that Lambton provides general methods of division that were applicable to the 1950s and other periods.

varied from region to region and from crop to crop (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:306-29).

Unless these complexities are described drawing accurate conclusions concerning the modes of extraction of surplus and exploitation of the peasants will be unlikely. In order to deal with this we will examine three issues not yet covered, viz: 1) the relationship between land, water and the labour force; 2) the variety of methods of crop division; and, 3) the role of the oxen-owners. These points will target the relevance of crop division to relations of production.

1) it was explained earlier that the labour force in each village was organized into working groups, the bonehs and that nasaq-holders were the main members of the bonehs' labour force and the khoshneshins were employed by the bonehs when needed (e.g. Azkia, 1990; Safi-nejad, 1989). In these bonehs the land and water was divided between these bonehs as follows: a) the land of a village was first divided by six dangs (equal proportions) and then, depending on the availability of water these dangs were considered for cultivation. In other words, the operation of all six dangs depended upon the availability of water (e.g. Research Group, 1968:165, 177)⁴⁰⁰, and, b) then, the peasants and the landlords or their agents divided the total irrigable land between the bonehs (usually 12)⁴⁰¹ based on traditional draw methods (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1989:24-26). For example, in Kenareh-gard, near Tehran, there were six bonehs and

⁴⁰⁰ For example, Village of Dj-Hesaran in 1964 cultivated 48 hectares compared to 35 hectares in the previous year owing to an increase in the accessibility of water provided by dug wells (Research Group, 1968:177).

⁴⁰¹ Usually the irrigation period was considered at 12 days and the number of bonehs were determined accordingly (Safi-nejad, 1989:22).

each had four members and 16 hectares of land (Safi-nejad, 1989:30-33). The important point is that land and water determined the number of bonehs. For example, Research Group (1968:165) indicates that in Farak, in Khorasan, there were 36 working units called Gav-bandi (similar to boneh) before they were reduced to nine in 1964 due to water shortage. Considering that each unit recruited eight nasaq-dars it was a drastic drop in the number of participants.

The above relationship between land, water and labour suggests that the availability of land and water (usually owned by the same landlord)⁴⁰² determined the number of peasants recruited for production units, i.e., the bonehs. This meant that the labour factor depended upon the land and water factor. The dependency of labour input on land and water input gave secondary value to the labour factor and this was evident where the number of peasants engaged in the production process were collectively considered as one factor. One conclusion was that, at harvest time, labour's share from the product had to be divided between a number of peasants and was not allocated to individual peasants since the labour force, regardless of the number of peasants involved, had been considered only as one factor in operation. In other words, the labour force was not accounted for in accordance with the number of the peasants engaged in the cultivation and they received collectively only one-fifth of the product. Azkia (1990:100) illustrates this by an instance where a boneh prior to the 1962 land reform divided the crop between itself and the landlord. Then after the

⁴⁰² Hooman (1962:297-312) provides a much more detailed data about the division of crop in 12 provinces and almost in all of them the landlord owned land and water simultaneously

landlords' share was allocated the remaining was divided among all the boneh members (Ibid).

2) as Lambton (1969b:306-29), Hooman (1962: 297-312) and Momeni (1980:54-56) indicate there was a variety of methods of crop division across the country prior to the land reform, that is, there were no national regulations for the crop division between landlords and peasants. In irrigated lands where the product was wheat and barley and the landlord contributed land and water to the production process, the peasants provided oxen, seed and labour and received one-third to one-half of the product (Momeni, 1980:55). In Arak⁴⁰³ (central Iran), for example, one share went to the landlord and two to the peasants who provided oxen, seed and labour (Lambton, 1969b:308). In a rain-fed land if the landlord only provided land then the share of peasants could be increased to three-fifths or three-fourths and, at most, four-fifths (Momeni, 1980:55).

This lack of national standards to regulate crop division in the sharecropping process led us earlier to examine a division based on water irrigation methods. The result, however, was that there was little similarity in the practice of sharecropping among the various regions (e.g. Momeni, 1980:46-7; Lambton, 1969b:306-29; Hooman, 1962:297-312). Only the abstract notion of a five-factor method seemed to provide some basis of similarity between regions in which sharecropping was

⁴⁰³ The figures provided in earlier arguments for Arak's case were applicable to the rain-fed cultivation and should not be confused with the figures here which are applicable to the irrigated cultivation.

practiced. Despite the differences in practice, the same pattern of division of crop is to be found in other parts of the country such as Sepid-Dasht, Markazi, Khonsar, Homeh, Selseleh etc., regardless of the type of product (e.g., Golabian, 1977:216). In these areas the contribution of factors put forward by the involved parties determined the share from the product (Ibid). These areas, however, were not representative of the whole country because in these areas the oxen were contributed to the production process by the peasants. In many other areas the oxen were provided by the landlords or by the oxen-owners (Hooglund, 1982:20-21)⁴⁰⁴. The oxen-owning status gradually gave the oxen-owners a better position in the rural economy (Ibid). It appears that sometimes the peasants received higher shares than the landlords (Table 5), but the fact that they were oxen-owners as well as peasant-nasaq-dars explains why they received that extra share. My intention in using this argument is to suggest that perhaps the oxen-owners can be used to identify some other rule which may apply when oxen are involved (e.g. Mahdavi, 1982:52-53).

3) The position of oxen-owners in the production process may also help us to understand the distribution of crop proceeds. Safi-nejad (1989:137, table 31, and 157) indicates that a third party, i.e. the oxen-owners (gav-band), in the 1950s came to play its role in the production process as a dominant class. Their importance originated from the fact that production depended upon animal power and they were the main

⁴⁰⁴ Near Tehran the oxen-owner who was not a nasaq-dar rented his oxen and received one-fifth of the product (Azkia, 1990:95).

source for its provision. For example, in Khuzistan some 85 percent of units of production used animals as their main source of power in 1960 (Research Group, 1964:191). Although they were not new to the village social structure as private landownership developed in the 20th century they were encouraged to become landowners instead of remaining solely oxen-owners.

This trend was coupled with the increasing use of modern technology that had started in the 1930s and 1940s (e.g. Fallah, 1982:95-134). Before going further some light needs to be shed on the technological change in agriculture. There were some imports of agricultural machinery in the 1920s which amounted to 1,204,000 Krans and formed 2.8 percent of total machinery imports valued at 42,000,000 krans and 0.1 percent of total imports, 807,000,000 krans (Sultanzade, 1931:110). This means that technology was beginning to be used in agriculture in the 1920s and 30s but Gupta's 1947 evaluation of agricultural technology indicates how backward technology remained.

The implements are the wooden plough drawn by oxen, donkeys, horses or camel, the small sickle, the wooden fork, with five prongs, the spade and the pick....Wheat and Barley, the two staple crops are cut by hand with the sickle. Thrashing is done by means of a board pulled by animals, or by having animals tread on the grain (Gupta, 1947:51).

As far as the argument on the oxen-owners is concerned the condition of technology indicated the reliance of agricultural production on oxen and hence oxen-owners' power. But the imports of technology continued. By 1948 there were 240 tractors in the country and until 1958 an average of 200 per year were imported and in 1958 the

number increased to 1500 (Fallah, 1982:105)⁴⁰⁵. By 1942 the use of tractors and modern machinery began to threaten the position of the oxen-owners (Safi-nejad, 1989:181)⁴⁰⁶ because up to this point as the owners of oxen they had traditionally played a determining role in the crop production process. This was so because they were independent of both the landlords and the peasants and, in fact, had especially good relations with the landlords; in some villages they actually shared half of the responsibility of the landlord in the village by providing credit and seed. They were in fact the second landlords of the village (Safi-nejad, 1989:157).

Safi-nejad (1989), Hooman (1962) and Hooglund (1982) have provided us with data on the division of the crop from selected areas (before the land reform) in which the oxen-owners were treated as independent agents (Table 6). By doing so they have introduced a third party into the two-part situation (Table 5). These selected areas are all located near Shahr-ray, province of Tehran and the oxen-owners received part of the crop (wheat and barley) as the third party. In his work, Safi-nejad (1989) categorizes the bonehs into the landlord bonehs (Arbabi) and oxen-owner bonehs (gav-bandi). If the landlord only provided the land and water and the oxen-owner (gov-band) took charge of the boneh's expenses then the boneh was a gov-bandi boneh (Ibid). In other words, the oxen-owner was elevated to the position of head of the boneh.

The Safi-nejad, Hooman and Hooglund data now provide us with an

⁴⁰⁵ For more information see Hadary (1951:183)

⁴⁰⁶ Nevertheless, it should be noted that in 1960 animal power was used on 75 percent of landholdings (Aresvik, 1976:45).

opportunity to examine the crop division when three parties are involved (Table 6), viz., the landlords, the oxen-owners and the members of the boneh whereas previously we examined it solely in terms of two parties, the landlords and the peasants (Table 5). This more detailed picture of sharecropping indicates that the oxen-owners should not be lumped together with the peasants as they were earlier (Table 5), i.e., when they form an independent class.

Table 6. Division of Crop when the Oxen-owners are a Separate Category

name of village	landlord %	oxen-owner %	boneh members %	No. of boneh members
Varamin ⁴⁰⁷	50	25	25	--
Rey ⁴⁰⁸	40	30	20	--
Ghal-eh-nou	40	30	30	5
Firuz-abad	40	35	25	5
Taleb-abad	67	-	33	6
Vali-abad	75	-	25	5
Chaleh-Tarkhan	45	25	30	5
Nazar-abad	50	25	25	6
Hosseini-abad	80	-	29	13
Goldasteh	40	40	20	6
Firuz-bahram	40	40	20	6

Source: Safi-nejad (1989:137); Hooman (1962:297), see also Hooglund (1982:20-21)⁴⁰⁹.

⁴⁰⁷ Before the crop was divided between the three parties one-tenth was probably put aside for blacksmith (Ahangar) and carpenter (Najjar). These figures were provided in Hooman (1962:297) and they did not include the number of boneh members.

⁴⁰⁸ Varamin and Rey cases indicated that the landlord contributed land and water, the oxen-owner contributed seed and oxen and the peasants (Barzegaran and Zare-een) contributed labour and work with oxen. The product was wheat and barley and 10 percent was put aside probably for servicemen and Kadkhoda (e.g. Hooman, 1962:297).

⁴⁰⁹ Hooglund (1982:20-21) argues that gav-bands were able to appropriate as much as 40 percent of the total harvest before the division between the landlords and the peasants and were able to accumulate surplus product.

In some instances the data revealed that the oxen-owners did not receive a share of the crop division (Table 6) but in these instances the bonehs were primarily 'landlord bonehs' and were the dominant type of bonehs (see Safi-nejad, 1989:136-37). This meant the landlord had the responsibility to provide the boneh with seed and other expenses and the oxen-owner was not in charge of the boneh. The oxen-owner's share, hence, was not an independent category and was calculated in combination with the share of the boneh-members. He received what he was assigned based on his contribution to the production process as the provider of technology (one factor) not as the provider of seed and expenses⁴¹⁰. Or, the technology was provided by the landlords and there was no oxen-owner. In those villages where the oxen-owner received a fixed share (Table 6) he was in charge of the boneh and provided seed and expenses for the boneh (see Safi-nejad, 1989). In these villages the wealth must have been less concentrated as it was divided between the oxen-owners (gov-bands) and the landlords. In the same villages the peasants of a boneh with five to six peasant-members received 20 to 30 percent of the crop for their labour (Table 6), in other words, the collective labour of the boneh members was evaluated between 20 to 30 percent of the crop.

The following breakdown of the crop among various groups in Taleb-abad provides a better picture of the situation in 1960 but it is, by no means, a picture of the whole country. From the total product of 30,000 kilograms of wheat the following

⁴¹⁰ This is one of the characteristics of Gav-bandi bonehs which made them distinct from the landlord bonehs.

groups received their share as follows (Golabian, 1977:217):

1.	1.2	%	-Blacksmith, carpenter, village-watchman,
and other servicemen
2.	10	%	-Seed
3.	21.075	%	-Oxen
4.	42.15	%	-Landlord as the provider of land and water
5.	25.575	%	-The peasants

The conclusion of the division for each peasant (if the bonch had five peasant-members) was that they each received 5.115 percent or 1,534.5 kilograms of wheat (Golabian, 1977:217) and each household had five members, then the per capita share of each member of the household was about 250-300 kilograms. This amount was above the minimum acceptable amount for living, according to Golabian (Ibid:219) who considers the average annual bread consumption of each family to be 871 kilograms (per capita in a family of five was 174.2 kilograms) (Ibid:211). However, if the price of wheat (three to four rials per kilogram in 1954 and seven rials in 1964) which the Research Group (1968:184) provides is considered it would mean that each family received 4,603.5-6,138 rials or 61.38-81.84 dollars which was much lower than 25,000 rials (300 dollars) average family income and per capita income of 60 dollars estimated by the Plan Organization and the Ministry of Agriculture (Hooman, 1962:114)⁴¹¹. In the late 1940s Hayden (1949:143) concluded that the peasants' average agricultural income was meagre, i.e., 100 dollars⁴¹² which is even higher than the above figures.

⁴¹¹ See also Richards (1975:6) for more data on income groups in the 1950s. See also Sadegh-nobari (1972:143).

⁴¹² Ata-ee (1962:182) also indicates that the agricultural income of the peasants in Khuzistan had decreased by 32.8 percent between 1926 and 1960 (also Research Group, 1964:191, footnote)

In that sense and contrary to the conclusion of Golabian, it was not an acceptable income when it was converted into money. And sharecropping, under the existing circumstances, was not beneficial to the peasants who only received a share for their labour. This was a direct consequence of the class relations in the production process and is even more evident where the landlords and the oxen-owners as owners of the major means of production appropriated some 80 percent of the product (Hooglund, 1982:13, 21; Safi-nejad, 1989:137)⁴¹³.

In Khaliseh lands where the state had a greater interest these relations were coupled with state power and its enforcement by the state's agents, hence, further worsened the conditions and position of the peasants. In Bampur, Baluchestan, for example, out of 1,485 kilograms of products of one plough-land some 594 kilograms (40 percent) was reaped by the state, some other agents took their share and only 297 kilograms (20 percent) remained for three peasants (Lambton, 1969b:372-3)⁴¹⁴. If the average family of the peasants is considered to have been five then the per capita income of three peasant families was 19.8 kilograms⁴¹⁵ which was far below the average given by Hooman (1962) and even lower than the average required for annual

⁴¹³ Hooglund (1982:13-21) provides two different figures for the share of the landlords from up to 80 percent of the crop after share of the gav-bands had been deducted and for the gav-bands up to 40 percent of the crop before the crop was divided between the landlords and the peasants. Gav-bands did not always receive 40 percent and the above division was mostly the case where they had monopoly control over the provision of oxen. In addition, in some cases the landlords or the peasants provided oxen.

⁴¹⁴ This point is also noted by Golabian (1977:219).

⁴¹⁵ One kilogram of wheat was three to four rials in 1954 which means, in money terms, 19.8 kilograms was worth about 80 rials. In 1964, one kilogram wheat was seven rials making the monetary value of per capita income of the peasant about 140 rials (See Research Group, 1968 for more details).

consumption⁴¹⁶ of a household cited by Golabian (1977:211), i.e., 871 kilograms.

Comparing those incomes with the amount that the Research Group (1968:230) considered to be the average budget required, i.e. 800 dollars (60,000 rials), for the household unit to make an average living, it would mean that with the 1954 prices the peasants must have been in dire straits.

Research Group does not provide the consumption expenses for the same year but we can use other sources to show if 800 dollars represented the required budget. First, up to 1960 the rial's purchasing power continued to decline; in 1926 one rial purchased the same amount of commodity as did 32.4 rials in 1960 (Ata-ee, 1962:122-26) meaning that in the 1950s the peasants needed more rials to have the same purchasing power. Second, the minimum-required 15 items for each family consisted of bread, sugar, tea, cooking oil, cheese, meat, rice, flour, eggs, coal, firewood, fuel, matches, socks and shoes (Hodayun, 1964:131-37). The annual household spending on these 15 items in 1959 amounted to 132,600 rials in Tehran and 78,400 in smaller cities (Ibid). Assuming that the prices were lower in the rural areas and as Looney (1982:61, table 5.1) indicates that rural per capita consumption was half compared to urban areas, it is safe to say that in rural areas the average required budget of 60,000 rials (800 dollars) for a rural family was less than that required in Tehran or the smaller cities. In the early stages of land reform, say 1963, the monthly consumption costs of a rural family was 6,686 rials at constant prices (Ghahreman, 1982b:186, table 10).

⁴¹⁶ The average annual gross consumption of wheat for the early 1970s was estimated at 150 kilograms per person (Aresvik, 1976:71) which does not seem to have been different from the average consumption in earlier years. Based on this assumption the average income based on crop was almost 130 kilograms short of meeting the basic needs of the individual peasants

Having said that it should also be noted that the Research Group (1968:230-31) evaluates this criterion (i.e., 800 dollars) by reviewing the production value of 17 hectares of land cultivated by a gav-bandi (similar to bonch) in Farak, in 1954. A combination of wheat, barley, caraway seed, cotton, opium, melon and vegetables was produced and its total value amounted to 201,900 rials (i.e., 2,692 dollars). This could support at least two families but this did not go to the peasants' pockets due to their lack of control over the means of production (e.g. Research Group, 1968:230-34). There were 32 gav-bandi and the total productivity of the village was high due to an abundance of water which means the production value was high (Ibid:232), i.e., about 6,460,800 rials (86,144 dollars)⁴¹⁷. We can also review the production cost, although there are no data for the same year, and see if 800 dollars was a valid criterion in relation to production costs. In Farak in 1964, the production cost (i.e., expenditure on ploughing, seed, fertilizer and non-member labour) was 458,600 rials (6,114 US dollars) while the production value, i.e., total gross earning, amounted to 2,767,900 rials (US 36,905 dollars) (Research Group, 1968:168-69). There was a decline in the value of production between 1954 and 1964 which was due to a shortage of water which resulted in less cultivation. Given that the production cost was 16.5 percent of the production value, the same as in 1954, then the cost of production was not too high.

The most important element contributing to the impoverishment of the peasantry was the unequal distribution of the produce between the peasants and the

⁴¹⁷ I calculated this by multiplying the production value of one unit by 32 units of production

landlords. In 1954, in Farak the landlords received their share valued at 145,459 rials out of the gav-bandi's total agricultural earnings of 201,900 rials, i.e., 72 percent and in 1964 the landlords reaped 62.5 percent in each case leaving only a small proportion for the peasants, 28 percent and 37.5 percent (Research Group, 1968:168-69; 232)⁴¹⁸.

But, Safi-nejad's (1976:167-68) example of this exploitation is one of the classics: in the southern city of Baft the water was very scarce and the units of production were formed based on the share from the water (Ibid). If there was a shortage of water the units, i.e., Haraseh (similar to bonehs) had only one full day of water, for one dang land, two-pair oxen, and four peasant members (Ibid)⁴¹⁹. The major product of these villages was wheat and barley. The division of the crop was rendered first by allocating 28 percent of the product as follows: 10 percent to the bailiff (Mobashir), five percent to the farm-guard⁴²⁰ (Dasht-ban), three percent to the person in charge of keeping the wild pigs away, five percent to the thresher, and five percent to the plougher (Safi-nejad, 1976:168). The remaining 72 percent was divided into three parts of which two-thirds (48 percent) was taken by the landlord for contributing land, water, seed, fertilizer and his supervision (Ibid). The remaining 24 percent (of 72 percent) was shared among four peasant members of the boneh to which 50 percent of the bailiff's share (5 percent of total) was added and, in total, the

⁴¹⁸ The percentages are based on data provided by the Research Group (1968:168-69). In 1964, the total agricultural earnings in this village amounted to 2,767,900 rials and the landlords received 1,730,000 rials.

⁴¹⁹ The detailed work of Safi-nejad (1980) is even a more eloquent source indicating how complicated and diverse the methods of dividing water sources were due to scarcity of water.

⁴²⁰ He also was called village watchman.

share of the peasants was only 29 percent of the product (Ibid). When this was divided among the four members each received only 7.25 percent of the product for their labour (Ibid). Now, we will examine this sharing process based on the factors provided by each class, i.e., the oxen-owners, the landlords and the peasants.

Safi-nejad (Ibid) reports that the peasants in Kashkoo-yeh (between Baft and Jeeroft in the Southern province of Kirman) were the owners of oxen, hence, we have to take that into consideration. It seems that in this instance, as the above calculation indicates, the landlord did not consider the oxen as an independent factor which was provided by the peasants therefore the crop was only divided between four rather than the standard five factors. Of the remaining 72 percent, the four peasants according to the five factor division should have received 14.4 percent for their labour and 14.4 percent for their oxen, i.e., 28.8 percent. Adding five percent of the bailiff's share to their total share should have been 33.8 percent rather than 29 percent. One can argue that even 33.8 percent was not fair because, according to the five factor method, the labour and the oxen should have received two-fifth of the crop, i.e., 40 percent. This type of undervaluation of peasants' contribution to the production process was not uncommon due to the dominance of the landlords and the dependency of the peasants on working as shareholders. Considering that in many cases the household members of the peasant also worked in the production units (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1976:170)⁴²¹ the level of exploitation of labour force was much higher than it appears on the surface.

⁴²¹ This indicates that not only was the labour force undervalued within the production process, but also the labour force of the family members of the peasant was calculated as one factor since the unit of labour force was considered to be the peasant family and not the individual members of his family

In addition to the unequal distribution of shares noted above, the peasantry had to suffer the outflow of capital from their rural economy. Because the landlords failed or were reluctant to invest their capital in the rural economy, except for investing in qanats, the peasants were deprived of the benefits which such investment would have brought to their village⁴²². This meant that the peasants were deprived of even the marginal effects⁴²³ of the concentration of capital in the hands of landlords.

4.3 The Effects of Various Dues on Peasants' Share of the Crop

In addition to what was extracted from the peasantry as a result of sharecropping arrangements and other elements that affected the cost of production, the peasantry was also exploited through the effects of the debt structure. In addition, the peasants were also called upon to provide some services for the landlord (Abdollaev, 1982:243; Lambton, 1969b:330-36; Hooglund, 1982:15). We will now discuss the effects of debt structure, payments to non-agricultural labourers, extraction under various forms other than sharecropping and extraction through the labour service.

1) The peasants were always in need of money (see also Momeni, 1980:52) because of chronic low incomes. The peasant would borrow cash and promise the money-lender a share from his product. The best description of the role of money-lenders is

⁴²² See Amid (1990:9) for his argument on lack of investments in rural economy.

⁴²³ Marginal effects of capital accumulation is here referred to, for example, investment. If the landlords invested in the rural economy it would have benefited the peasants although not directly. In other words, the peasants, would benefit from the marginal effects of the landlords' investment as the investment would contribute to the village economy

reflected in a 1962 speech by Arsanjani, the Minister of Agriculture. He noted that in the North the peasants sold their rice product at the harvest time for 8 rials per kilogram (one tenth of a dollar) and in the winter they bought one kilogram of rice back for 44 rials (almost half a dollar) (Momeni, 1980:52). The same 44 rials, he maintained, was used in the following year to buy rice again (from the peasants) for the price of 8 rials per kilogram (Ibid) meaning there was no change in prices for the producers. There were other reports that a peasant in Kirman (south), for example, borrowed 20 tomans and promised 60 kilograms of his product, wheat, to be handed over to the money-lender instead of his dues (Ibid). The same peasant could only purchase 12 kilograms of wheat from the village shopkeeper for the same amount of money, 20 tomans (Ibid).

The same argument is presented by Hooglund (1982:19) who tries to find some connection between the rural shopkeepers and the urban market. He (Ibid) argues that as the peasants exhausted their supplies by mid-winter they turned to shopkeepers for credit in the form of kind. He goes on:

Such loans in kind were converted into monetary terms. For example, if a peasant received on credit 10 *manns* (65.4 pounds) of wheat valued at 22 *rials* per *mann*, his debt was re-koned at 220 *rials*. At harvest time, however, the abundant supply of grain would cause wheat prices to slum back to around 18 *rials* per *mann*; thus the peasant would need to repay 12.25 *manns* for the original 10 which he borrowed (Hooglund, 1982:19)⁴²⁴.

Hooglund (1982:19) also indicates that in addition to what peasants lost due to undervaluation of their grains they had to pay interest on their loans;

⁴²⁴ Richards (1975:6) argues that, in one surveys, in 1954 the peasants paid 240-800 percent interest

Minimum interest rates averaged 3-5 percent per month. Thus a loan contracted in February could accrue up to 20 percent interest by June when harvesting began. More frequently, however, monthly charges were 7 percent or higher.

Cash loans were often given on even more severe terms and sometimes interest rates reached 100 percent (Hooglund, 1982:19). Research Group provides two examples from the rich provinces of Gilan and Mazandran which indicate the importance of sources of loans and the severity of interest rates. In Gilan 58 percent of agricultural units in 1960 received loans of which 18 percent received loans from governmental sources and the rest received from various sources as follows; 17.8 percent from landlords, two percent from oxen-owners and 80.2 percent from local shopkeepers and pedlars and the interest rate was 50 percent (Research Group, 1965:198). The non-governmental sources provided loans six times higher than governmental sources (Ibid). In Mazandran, 53.5 percent of the peasants received loans of which 12.7 percent from governmental sources and the rest from following sources; 5.1 percent from landlords, 2.2 percent from oxen-owner and 94 percent from pedlars (Ibid:212). Research Group does not provide interest rates but it confirms it was a heavy rate (Ibid). The situation in other parts of the country with a shortage of rain, hence, limited cultivable land, was worse. It is likely that Hooglund's 100 percent also applied to these areas.

In addition to money-lending, the pre-harvest buying of the product (*salaf-khari*) was also prevalent (Lambton, 1969b:383)⁴²⁵. The origins of these activities is

⁴²⁵ Ghahreman (1982a:143, table 6) indicates that some traditional sources of loans although diverse in later periods persisted to exist

also rooted in the peasants need for cash (e.g. Momeni, 1980:53). This type of activity was detrimental to the peasants' income because the products were always undervalued. For example, each kharvar (300 kilograms) of wheat was bought for 2,000 rials (26 U.S. dollars) in the winter and was evaluated at 2,900 rials (39 U.S. dollars) at harvest time, i.e, sometimes some few weeks after the transaction (Hooglund, 1982:19). Aside from what the peasants lost in various phases of production to the money-lenders they also had to pay something to non-agricultural labourers, as discussed below.

2) Some percentage of the product was allocated to the non-agricultural rural classes who provided service to the bonehs (or to the boneh members) such as blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers, bath-keepers and oxen-grazers (Safi-nejad, 1989:204-10)⁴²⁶. These non-agricultural rural classes were among the external groups in relation to the bonehs to whom some shares were allocated (Ibid, Hooman, 1962:294). Their shares varied in different regions, but sometimes it was six kilograms of the product from each member of the boneh or it was set in a way that the boneh paid 300 kilograms to them in return for their services (Hooman, 1962:294). Safi-nejad (1989:204) argues that for each pair of oxen the blacksmith, for example, received 40 mann (120 kilograms) of wheat and barley and the same amount of straw. He (Ibid) writes,

⁴²⁶ Kadkhoda and Dasht-ban (watchman) are sometimes considered as members of a fourth group, servicemen (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:337-44) and their share varied from district to district. Kadkhoda sometimes, for example in Kirman, received between 5 to 10 percent of the total harvest (Ibid:341). The share allocated to Dasht-ban was about 7 percent (Ibid:344). In the province of Sistan and Baluchestan and in Kirman the share of Kadkhoda was also about 10 percent of the harvest (Hooman, 1962:305, 312). Sometimes his share had to be divided between him and Mobashir (bailiff) (Ibid).

Taleb-abad bonehs were three-pair bonehs, thus each boneh gave 120 mann (360 kilograms) wheat and barley and the same amount straw to Ahangar (blacksmith), if this village had eight bonehs then the annual income of the blacksmith was about 10 kharvar (3,000 kilograms) wheat and barley and the same amount of straw⁴²⁷.

It is difficult to provide a precise percentage for the share of each class but in some villages of the southern province of Kirman, blacksmiths, (Ahangaran), carpenters (Najjaran) and bathkeepers (Hammami-*la*) received about 7 percent of the product (Lambton, 1969b:346) and in some villages they only received 1.2 percent of the total product (Golabian, 1977:217). After division of crop and what was reaped from the peasants under money-lending or payment to various groups, as discussed below, the peasants still had to do free services in the village.

3) the most common type of unpaid labour was the transfer of the landlord's grain to granaries (Lambton, 1969b:330). In Azarbaijan the peasants transported the landlord's share to the village storage and they also transported the surplus grain to the governmental granaries (Hooman, 1962:313). Since the traditional means of transportation was by mule, they may well have spent up to a week providing these free services.

4) bigari (free labour) was another form of unpaid labour which had been practiced since the 15th century Safavids and had been originally levied by the Safavids on the

⁴²⁷ The share of servicemen differed from area to area. To give more data on their share more examples can be provided from Lambton (1969b). In Torogh (province of Khorasan), for example, blacksmith (Ahangar) and carpenter (Najjar) received 40 Kharvar (1,200 kilograms) from the product (Lambton, 1969b:346).

landholders (Lambton, 1969b:330). The Qajars also levied such services on the landholders which was performed by the peasants (Ibid). Gradually, as a landowning class was established in the early 20th century it was levied directly on the peasants by the landlords (e.g. Lambton, 1969b:330-36). This type of annual free labour for the landlord or headman (Kadkhoda) could be from five to seven days and could be provided by the peasants or their animals, e.g., donkeys (Ibid). The actual number of days of free service varied (Hooman, 1962:313) and in Torogh (in the province of Khorasan) two days of free labour was extracted from the peasants from those who had oxen and one day from those without oxen (Lambton, 1969b:338). In Torbat-e-Heydari-yeh, kadkhoda received only one day of free labour from the peasants (Ibid:339) but in Sanandaj area (Kordistan) the peasants provided seven days of free labour and their asses four day: (Lambton, 1969b:331). This free labour was used by the local officials and the landlords for the construction of buildings, roads, and irrigation systems or was used as agricultural labour (Ibid);

5) finally, the peasant was also required to pay some cash or provide a gift in kind to the landlord in order to obtain his permission to get married (Hooman, 1962:313).

The most exploitative form of labour service occurred in the Western parts of the country and in the province of Azarbaijan where the landlords collected cash and kind per plough-land or per share of water in lieu of labour service (Lambton, 1969b:333). In some areas this took the form of cash between 50-100 rials (which ranged between less than one dollar and a bit more than one dollar) also 15-18 kilograms of butter

(Ibid). This rate in some areas increased to 1,000 rials or 5.17 pounds sterling (Ibid). In Gilan, until 1945 the landlords received between 800 to 3,000 rials per hectare as equal value of tolls and payments in kind from the peasants (Ata-ee, 1963:126). This type of practice was abolished by a law in 1950 that also limited the share of the landlord to, at most, 40 percent of the crop (for land and water) and obliged the landlords to allocate 15 percent of their share to development purposes of the village (Hooman, 1962:314).

To sum up, it can be concluded that aside from what was extracted through money-lending, pre-harvest practices and various types of labour service, some 50 to 60 percent of the rural products were appropriated by the outside forces (outside in relation to the bonehs) who did not perform any agricultural labour⁴²⁸. These outside forces were not necessarily non-rural agents. For example, the blacksmiths and other non-agricultural labourers and oxen-owners were, for the most part, rural forces. Therefore, not all the above 50 to 60 percent of the crop, it can be argued, left the rural economy. However, once the amount of crop appropriated through money-lending and pre-harvest arrangements is taken into account, although it is difficult to calculate its precise amount due to lack of data, then one can still estimate that at least 50 to 60 percent of the product was appropriated by the non-rural forces. The

⁴²⁸ The amount of payment to the landlords and other agents some maintain to have ranged between 20 and 80 percent in the period before the land reform, under various pretexts such as landowning share, rent, gifts and so on (e.g. Golabian, 1977:20). This range does not, however, represent the actual outflow of surplus; 1) because the gap between the lowest possible and the highest possible is too wide to rely on, and, 2) because it does not specify the relations between rural economy and outside world.

question is what does this 50 to 60 percent outflow of surplus mean?

In addition to the results that was planned to provide by the arguments in this chapter, the practice of sharecropping can also be used to illustrate the consequences of urban-rural relations for the peasants which is a major concern of this study. This leads us to examine the implications of our findings in this chapter. We argued earlier that some 76 to 85 percent of land in Iran was private by the time of the 1962 land reform and we also argued that some 60 to 66 percent of private land was owned by the absentee landlords. Now that we know some 50 to 60 percent of crop was appropriated by the non-rural agents we can conclude that the centre of rural exploitation prior to the 1962 land reform rests on the question of urban-rural relations especially that 50 percent of absentees were merchants⁴²⁹. In fact, considering that the population of rural Iran constituted nearly 70 percent⁴³⁰ of the whole population, the deprivation of the rural economy was the only way the urban-rooted landowning classes (i.e., the absentee landlords and merchant-landlords) could accumulate capital. In other words, the urban economy established its growth on the 50-60 percent of the extracted agricultural products. In some cases the outflow of surplus was even higher. For example, English (1966:69) who carried out research on villages in Kirman reports that prior to the 1962 land reform wheat and barley were harvested and were directly sent to the city and only 20-30 percent remained in the village. In other words, about

⁴²⁹ See Chapter Three for details on the percentage of merchants involved in landownership

⁴³⁰ The above percentage applies to the 1950s (e.g. Moghaddam, 1972:160) whereas in the early 20th century it constituted some 80 to 85 percent of Iran's population. For more details see Ardeshtiri (1992:149-61) who follows the demographic changes in Province of Fars from 1956 on

70 to 80 percent of the crop was transformed into a commodity for the market.

If the total production of wheat and barley, for example, in the 1940s was about 3,000,000 tons (Kazemian, 1968:11) and if the population of the rural areas was about 12,000,000⁴³¹ and if the total product was to be divided among the rural population then per capita production of wheat and barley was about 250 kilograms per person or 1,250 kilograms per household. Using English's figure one can assume that more than half of the product was lost to the urban economy and even the remainder was not divided equally. Hence, per capita income fell drastically below the one-half of production due to the effects of rural-urban relations⁴³².

To conclude one might ask what can one learn from the argument on the division of crop and modes of extraction of surplus? To provide an answer to this question a brief review of the above argument indicates that rural Iran prior to the 1962 land reform was dominated by sharecropping practice and this practice formed the basic element of the pre-capitalist mode of production in Iran. Sharecropping, thus, reflected all elements of this mode including the effects of class relations constructed through urban-rural relations governed by absentee landlordism. Having said that it should be noted that sharecropping reflected the modes of extraction of surplus product and it was also the basis for the agrarian structures within which the

⁴³¹ Momeni (1980:24) indicates that based on an agricultural census the total population of rural area was about 16,000,000 in 1956. For the 1940s it must have been about 12,000,000-14,000,000.

⁴³² Since a debate on production and marketing of agricultural products needs a thorough review of data and also more calculation of various products we will return to the issue of outflow of surplus and per capita production and per capita agricultural income in more details in Chapter Five.

peasant subjugation to dominant classes took place. One can also learn that, as Taylor (1979:187-93) argues, the pre-capitalist agrarian relations were reinforced by merchant capital as the existing sharecropping practice was not only perpetuated but was also manipulated towards production of surplus for market by the formation of absentees including the merchant-landlords.

The foregoing discussion on the modes of the extraction of product from the peasants indicates how the absentee-landlords and the merchant-landlords, part of the landowning class, contributed to the exploitation and underdevelopment of the rural economy, a major objective of this study. In the chapter which follows we draw attention to the commercialized agriculture and the marketing of extracted product by the merchants and landlords.

Chapter Five

Commercialization of Agriculture and Dimensions of Sectoral Engagement in Economic Production

In the previous chapter the role of absentee landlordism, the role of the bonehs, the sharecropping practices, subsequent extraction of surplus product from the rural areas and impoverishment of the peasants have been studied. This chapter will focus on the commercialization of agricultural products. This will show that the extracted products were commercialised in the market, i.e., part of broader market mechanisms. We will review the overall production of agricultural products and cash crops and their contribution to the national economy as part of this commercialization and we will discuss the impact of this commercialization on the peasantry. In addition to their large scale production of wheat and barley the bonehs (and other production units) also produced a wide range of other agricultural products. In addition, in the rural areas the production of handicraft products was common. Using these data we will review the overall extraction of surplus by the absentees and the merchants from each agricultural product.

Before going further it should be noted that the agricultural surplus product in the pre-1960s Iran can be defined as that which was extracted from the rural economy via absentee landlords and merchants and transferred to the urban market to be exported or for the internal market. Whether there was an export-import balance in some periods does not refute our assumption that there was a surplus product which was extracted by the landlords and merchants through exploitative urban-rural

relations.

Prior to the 1960s it seems that low-productivity in agriculture was always synonymous with a lack of surplus product⁴³³. In his critical review of Marxist approaches to production for the market in pre-capitalist formations Vali (1980:10-18) evaluates the consequences of equating pre-capitalist formations with self-sufficient formations where due to lack of production for market, market transactions are considered absent⁴³⁴. In other words, pre-capitalist formations, Iran included, have been considered unable to engage in surplus production, i.e., a condition ostensibly deemed necessary for the presence of market relations⁴³⁵. If this is proved to be true then the low-productivity thesis and the inefficiency of agriculture in the pre-1960s period and the inefficiency of sharecropping as the dominant mode of production in the history of Iran should also be acceptable premises. The history of agricultural production in Iran, however, indicates that, 1) the dominant mode of production has been able to produce surplus product and that exchange and market relations in the form of petty markets or large market activities existed; and, 2) As a result of the

⁴³³ Although Doroudian (1976:157) as an example of this type of approach does not refer to surplus he cites the pre-land-reform agriculture in Iran as a stagnant sector which was sluggish in production. The underlying assumption in this type of analysis is the lack of an economic link between agriculture and market which occurs through circulation of surplus. It appears true that, a part of the product that reached the market was always overlooked. In other words, there was little interest in questioning how agricultural products reached the market from a low-productive and self-sufficient sector.

It might be argued, as Vali (1980:10-18) indicates, that surplus realization through deprivation of subordinated classes occurs in the capitalist mode. Taylor (1979:187-98) indicates that production of surplus in a non-capitalist mode is also possible as the non-capitalist mode engages in class relations.

⁴³⁴ Avery (1965:96) for example argues that one of the effects of Russian influence in Iran by 1885 was to accelerate commercialised cropping of an economy which was *self-sufficient*.

⁴³⁵ Nowshirvani (1981:561) adopts the same position by arguing that surplus was consumed locally in the first half of the 19th century.

extraction of product and the dominance of exploitative relations most peasants had a low standard of living. The dominant classes of peasantry were able to extract part of the product from the rural economy (e.g. Ajami, 1976*b*; Hooglund, 1982; Lambton, 1969*b*). Olson (1981:175) refers to the control of all surplus in the south in the early 19th century by the dominant classes (including the government), i.e., a process that continued until 1962 land reform, as we argued in the previous chapter. It seems we are dealing with two different possibilities and two different surpluses. In the following we will introduce some arguments, supported by the relevant data, that indicate the level of agricultural production in the rural economy of Iran prior to the 1960s. The purpose of these data is to identify the production of surplus and to classify it based on one of the two categories of surplus product as follows:

1) surplus realized through efficient application of means of production. In this type, which is typical of capitalist production, the direction of production is for profit and the means of production including the labour force are exploited efficiently. In this type a general development of the productive forces including, capital, technology etc. may occur; and,

2) surplus realised through deprivation of the agricultural labour force from access to the means of production and the subjugation of the labour force to the dominant classes. This type of production, initially, is not necessarily directed towards the market because of the dominance of subsistence patterns (e.g. Foran, 1993:118-19; Nowshirvani, 1981). However, when an external force, such as merchants, penetrates the rural economy it manipulates the production process through their control over the

means of production⁴³⁶ and diverts a considerable amount of surplus towards the market (e.g. Taylor, 1979:187-92). The Iranian merchants played a double role as landowners and the traders of cash-crops in the late 19th century and, as a result, they increased their wealth. Foran (1993:118) indicates for instance that the beneficiaries of the opium boom in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century were not necessarily the direct producers. When opium in this period became the leading export item the opium cultivators in general benefited from the boom (e.g. Foran, 1993:118).

... it seems nevertheless clear that the bulk of profits accrued to merchants, while subsistence farmers were increasingly drawn into a cash economy that exposed them to indebtedness in the hands of moneylenders, landlords, and tax collectors (Foran, 1993:118)⁴³⁷.

Returning to the definition of surplus, it should be said that in this system where the dominant classes are not resident members of the rural social structure not all the means of production functioned within the same system to provide necessary conditions for the realization of surplus. Rather, the merchants who now controlled part of the land were, in fact, outside forces which penetrated the rural economy through buying land and connecting the rural economy to the urban economy. The important point in this process was that they did not change modes of production (e.g.

⁴³⁶ Their control over capital was a historical fact. In the case of 19th century Iran their control over land was a new phenomenon that resulted in their control over the means of production and exchange. Berger (1992:35) also provides some insight about the relations that can develop between internal classes of a mode of production and external forces which are related to it, such as the relations between the merchants and the artisans. In his case, the artisans were the exploited class.

⁴³⁷ Subsistence farmers in this sense means peasants with low living standards and it does not refer to the lack of production for market.

Sultanzade, 1931:83), i.e., sharecropping still regulated the landlord-peasant relations through rent-in-kind agreements.

Having defined surplus, we now discuss the overall conditions of the economy at the turn of the century, the time that marks an increasing tendency towards the commercialization of agriculture.

5.1 The Economic Conditions at the Turn of the 20th Century:

It has been argued that the structure of the economy in 1900 was based on agriculture (Bharier, 1971:7; Aresvik, 1976:17). There was, however, an important difference between the market-oriented production in 1900 and earlier periods. The market-oriented production was reinforced in the second half of the 19th century as trade activities developed. Iran suffered from an imbalance in the world trade activities and became an importer of European goods (Amanat, 1983:xiv-xxi). The trade deficit between 1900 and 1910 was 2.5 million kran⁴³⁸ (Razaghi, 1989:6) unlike the economic situation of Iran 100 years earlier (i.e., 1758-60) when Iran had surplus trade (Ibid:11). These economic conditions in Iran in the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century contributed to the depreciation of Iran's currency⁴³⁹ and the economy's need to encourage exports. This was also due to the demand for raw materials and products such as opium and cash-crops in the international market which was encouraging their production (Seyf, 1984:234, 237; Issawi, 1991:599). As a

⁴³⁸ Kran and rial have equal value but I use them as they are used in the sources I draw on.

⁴³⁹ One British pound sterling, for example, was 25 to 27 kran in the mid-1870s and became 55 to 55.5 kran in 1901 (Issawi, 1971:344).

result, the cultivation of cash crops led by opium cultivation was stimulated (Najmabadi, 1987:44; Nowshirvani, 1981)⁴⁴⁰. This in turn, gave rise to further changes in the agricultural economy of Iran in the second half of the 19th century (Amanat, 1983:xvii-xviii)⁴⁴¹.

Iran, in terms of the economic and social condition of its population, however, was better off at the turn of the century than in the previous years of the late 19th century (Bharier, 1971:6). Some believe that the state increased taxes on the farmers and it showed that the farmers had a greater ability to pay the taxes than previously (Ibid:6-7). It was estimated that the overall growth rate of the economy was one percent per annum (Ibid:7). Gilbar (1978:314-55) relates this growth to the introduction of opium cultivation which contributed to the formation of a commercialized agriculture⁴⁴². It should be noted that, this commercialization did not, however, contribute to a full-fledged transformation of the dominant relations of agricultural production (especially since sharecropping continued to be based on rent-in-kind) and commercialization continued slowly until the 1962 land reform changed the agrarian structures. As Foran (1993:228) argues

Export and commercialized agriculture likewise continued to exist, but there is little sign that these forms deepened significantly beyond the levels of Qajar times.

⁴⁴⁰ Tobacco, rice, cotton, dried fruits and spices were among other export items (Najmabadi, 1987:44). For more information see also Gilbar (1978:314-55), Amanat (1983:xvii-xviii), Bagheri (1992:177-78).

⁴⁴¹ Among these changes the drop in production of cereals was most noticeable (e.g. Amanat, 1983:xviii).

⁴⁴² See also, Nowshirvani (1981), Foran (1993:118-19).

Continuing until the land reform of 1962, this slow transformation of agrarian relations was coupled with the ban on the production of opium in 1955 (Khosravi, 1976:8).

In terms of landownership, two major economic factors contributed to the change in the patterns of landownership at the turn of the 20th century; 1) the growth of cash crops which had started in the second half of the 19th century and of which opium, rice, cotton and tobacco were the most important crops (Amanat, 1983:xviii); and, 2) the growth of trade relations and the integration of the economy into the international merchant capital through the marketing of the cash crops (e.g. Ibid). These two factors, aside from the changes at the political level, contributed to further attract merchants to invest in land as absentee landlords (e.g., Sultanzade, 1931:83)⁴⁴³.

Having noted the major traits of social and economic changes of the late 19th and early 20th century Iran we shall now focus on the economic activities at the sectoral and national levels by examining export and import activities.

5.2 Export-import activities in the 20th century:

For decades Iran's export activities were mostly based on agricultural products (Table 7). During 1908-11 the share of exports in total trade was between 46.69 to 43.65 percent and that of imports ranged between 53.3 to 56.3 percent (Jamalzadeh, 1983:8)⁴⁴⁴.

⁴⁴³ Olson (1981:186) provides an example from Persian Gulf trade in the late 19th century and the investment of merchants such as Qavam al-Molk in land.

⁴⁴⁴ The first edition of Jamalzadeh's book was published in 1917.

Table 7. Export of Selected Items in 1908-1911

product	year 1908-09	(value in Krans) a 1910-11	difference in Krans
Cotton	42,377,531	70,380,416	+28,002,885
Fruits	46,710,864	62,507,038	+15,796,174
Silk rug	39,498,837	45,138,356	+ 5,639,519
S&G b	37,459,459	33,085,051	- 4,374,408
Rice	28,754,072	29,210,417	+ 459,345
Silk	11,403,088	16,396,635	+ 4,993,547
Skins	6,399,322	15,125,003	+ 8,725,681
Opium	14,481,472	13,169,954	- 1,311,518
Gum	10,103,538	11,958,674	+ 1,665,136
Wool	10,386,815	10,483,355	+ 96,540

a: 61 Krans was worth of one unit of British currency (£) in 1915 (Jamalzadeh, 1983:177). Issawi (1971:345) indicates that one pound sterling in 1908-11 was worth of between 51 to 54 krans in various cities of Iran. Based on this rates the export of cotton, for example, in 1910-11 was worth of 1,380,008 to 1,303,341 pounds sterling.

b: Silver and Gold stocks.

Source: Jamalzadeh (1983:16, table 8)⁴⁴⁵.

During the same period, Iran's imports consisted mostly of textiles, sugar, gold and silver, tea, silk-woven textiles, copper and nickel, flour, oil products, skins, matches, velveteen etc. (Jamalzadeh, 1983:12).

Until the late 1920s Iran was still considered to be a producer of agricultural products and raw materials and in return it needed manufactured goods from Europe (e.g. Fateh, 1926:60). Beginning in the 1920s alongside the changes in the development of a centralized and the modern state of Reza Khan the state's ambitions focused on the development of infrastructure and of industries which continued into

⁴⁴⁵ The above list only includes those items whose total export value reached 1,000,000 tomans (Jamalzadeh, 1983:17). MacLean (1971:136-42) provides more details about import-export activities of Iran in the early 20th century.

the 1930s and the 1940s. The export-import activities in the 1940s were, hence, in favour of industries and detrimental to agriculture as the state spent more capital on its industrialization plans. According to one report, exports in 1942 constituted one-half of the imports (Momeni, 1980:169;) far below what it used to be in 1908-11, as indicated above.

The reliance on agriculture nevertheless continued. In the 1940s, for example, agriculture provided food for an estimated 80 percent of the population including 12 million peasants and two million tribesmen (Upton, 1961:88; Foran, 1993:228-29). The production in a normal year was enough to feed the population and some surplus (i.e., the difference between the produced agricultural items and their consumption at the national level which was not marketed internally) left was exported (Upton, 1961:88; Gupta, 1947:107). The export items included "...rice, dried fruits, nuts, wool, skins, hides, and sausage casings" (Upton, 1961:88). The imports in the 1940s consisted of the items that were not produced enough internally as follows: "...two thirds of the requirement for sugar, slightly over half of that for tea, and about half of the requirements for cotton and woolen cloth" (Ibid)⁴⁴⁶.

Until the 1950s the dependence of the economy on agriculture did not show any drastic changes (e.g. International Labour Review, 1949:550). In the 1950s barley, cotton (seed and lint), linseed, sesame, tobacco, dates, raisin, pistachio, nuts, and gum were listed as exported items (Hooman, 1962:24). Exports had decreased, however, to

⁴⁴⁶ It should be noted, however, that before the 1962 land reform, raw cotton was Iran's major agricultural export product as 40 percent of its production was exported (Halliday, 1979:108).

one-sixth of the imports in 1959 compared to one-half in 1942 in absolute terms (Momeni, 1980:169). The volume of non-oil exports was 260,000 tons in 1931, 128,000 tons in 1941, 287,000 tons in 1951 and 551,000 tons in 1961 (Bharier, 1971:111-12, table 4). The value of non-oil exports in 1931 amounted to 711,760,000 rials, 826,650,000 rials in 1941 and 4,380,870,000 rials in 1951 and 9,906,750,000 rials in 1961 (calculations based on information provided by Tofigh, 1976:67, table 26). Considering that the volume of exports up to 1951 did not increase drastically the value of exports, then, at constant prices was, probably the same as before until 1951. Between 1951 and 1961 the price of wheat increased by 100 percent on the internal market and Ata-ee (1965a:133) notes that the price of one kilogram of rice rose from 11.4 rials in 1951 to 20.32 rials in 1960. Bharier (1971:94) notes that the inflation rate in the late 1950s was 45 percent, this probably meant that at least part of the increase in the volume of exports between 1951 and 1961 was to offset the decrease in the value of rial.

One can conclude that the agricultural economy in the 1950s, compared to oil exports which formed 55 percent and 85 percent of the total value of exports in 1951 and 1961 (Tofigh, 1976:67, table 26), may not have been the monopoly source of export items as it did in the earlier periods, but the fact remained that the internal market was still operating mainly based on the circulation of agricultural products. In this sense there was still a reliance on agricultural products for the internal market although it contributed to the exports too. In order to indicate this reliance of the economy on agriculture in a historical context, in the following argument we will

review the performance of selected products individually using available data.

5.3 An Overview of the Agricultural Production

Although the following argument will target the economic performance of the agricultural sector of Iran in selected years, some comparisons will be presented concerned with the economic output of some important items such as silk and opium in various periods. The purpose of these comparisons will be to provide a better picture of the productivity of the agricultural sector in Iran, particularly, in the 19th and the 20th centuries. This debate aims at illustrating the presence of agricultural surplus in the market. By surplus we mean the extracted product from the rural economy by the dominant classes under the sharecropping system which was either marketed internally or was exported. The peasants did not have access to this surplus. Except in cases of wheat and barley the calculation of surplus outflow is difficult but we will provide examples from some villages in order to provide a better picture of this surplus outflow from the rural economy.

5.3.1 Cereals:

Since the Safavids (1499-1736) the major subsistence crop, as the documents show, has been wheat (Foran, 1993:117). In 1858 wheat and barley combined constituted Iran's second largest agricultural export, at about 10 percent of total exports (Ibid:118; Gilbar, 1978:315). Foran (1993:118) explains that between 1869 and 1894 the exports of wheat increased eight fold which matched the seven fold decline in its

export value. According to Turner (1980:87) the price of one bushel of wheat dropped from \$1.5 (U.S.) in 1871 to 23 cents a bushel in 1894⁴⁷ and, as a consequence, there was not much export of wheat and barley in later periods.

In the early 1920s, the value of exported cereals to Turkey, India, the Caucasus and some European countries totalled 4,000,000 Krans (85,106 pound sterling)⁴⁸ and this did not include wheat and barley (e.g. Karshenas, 1990:72-73; Fateh, 1926:16; Sultanzade, 1931:55-56).

There were only very minor changes in the relative production of major crops in the mid 1920s and the early 1930s (Table 8) and wheat continued to be the major crop (Table 9). Foran (1993:228) notes the increase in cereal production and shows that between 1925 and 1939 the annual production of wheat increased by 67 percent and barley by 36 percent.

⁴⁷ Due to a shift towards production of cash crops and the consequent decline of wheat and barley production, Iran's imports of wheat and barley exceeded its exports in the late 19th century and early 20th century (Gilbar, 1978:315).

⁴⁸ If the rates given by Issawi (1971:343-5) be considered the rates of pound sterling increased roughly by 6 Krans between 1900 and 1913 from 50 to 56. Fateh (1926:71) gives a different rate for the value of a pound sterling in 1923-4, i.e., 46.85 Krans. I have followed the same pattern that Issawi provided and I estimated that the rate of the pound sterling for the year 1922 should have increased by another 6 krans. Based on this estimate the Pound should have been worth 62 Krans in 1922. The decrease in the value of pound sterling should be explained by considering the fact that as of about 1918 The new government of Russia changed its policy in Iran (see e.g. Fateh, 1926:72 the treaty of 1921) and this was coupled with the rise of a new era in Iran that diminished the influence of Britain there. This was accompanied with the after-effects of war on European countries which should account for the decrease in the value of the pound sterling in the Iranian market. Fateh (1926:74) also indicates that there had been some great fluctuations in the value of the pound sterling in Iran. For example, while it was about 54 Krans in 1913-14 it went up to 69 Krans in 1915 and went down to 43 Krans in 1916 and was 19 Krans in 1920 and fluctuated afterwards until 1923-4. In another place he shows that the rate of 47 Krans for a pound sterling was not fixed and sometime reached 57 Krans (Fateh, 1927:77).

Table 8. Production of Major Cereals in Selected Years (Annual Average)

crop	1925-29 tons	%	1930-34 tons	%
wheat	1,120,000	56.8	1,400,000	57.2
barley	580,000	29.5	630,000	25.7
rice	270,000	13.7	420,000	17.1
total	1,970,000	100	2,450,000	100

Source: selected from Aresvik (1976:43)

Table 9. Share of Selected Crops in Total Production Between 1934 and 1938

crop	area under cultivation ha.	%	productivity (metric tons)	%
wheat	1,719,020	66	2,020,684	62.4
barley	637,108	24.4	793,160	24.5
rice	252,500	9.6	423,297	13.1
total	2,608,628	100	3,237,141	100

ha.: hectares

Source: constructed based on data provided by (Tannous, 1944:36, table 1)⁴⁴⁹.

Cereals in Iran continued to be the major agricultural products produced until the 1960s. Before the 1960s, among the cereals wheat and barley still constituted the main crops cultivated on some 50 to 75 percent of the cultivable land in Iran (e.g. Golabian, 1977:96; Amid, 1990:7)⁴⁵⁰.

⁴⁴⁹ Aresvik (1976:43, table 3.1) also provides some data for the pre-war annual production which are more or less similar to the ones provided by Tannous but I used Tannous because I considered it important to diversify my sources. Moreover, Aresvik figures are from Bharier (1971) and they are more or less based on estimates whereas Tannous provides first hand data.

⁴⁵⁰ Amid (1990:7) indicates that based on some reliable sources the percentage was 76 percent of the total land under cultivation of wheat and barley.

The 1960 agricultural census indicates that some 5,579,000 hectares of land was under cereal cultivation (Ghahreman, 1982b:181). Of this, some 4,012,000 hectares were under cultivation of wheat and 1,193,000 were under cultivation of barley (Ibid). Having reviewed the situation of cereal production I shall now determine how much wheat and barley, as two products which can be used to provide examples for extraction of surplus, was appropriated and how it affected the per capita distribution of these products.

We now have a better picture of the agricultural economy of Iran using the production of wheat and barley as our basis. Based on estimates some 75 to 80 percent (to give a maximum range)⁴⁵¹ of the land was used for the production of wheat and barley prior to 1960s (e.g. Amid, 1990:7)⁴⁵². Since only eight percent of the total land was cultivable it means some 13,184,400 hectares were available of which some 4,394,600 hectares were left fallow and of the remaining some 6,591,999⁴⁵³ to

⁴⁵¹ Earlier it was argued that the land under cultivation of wheat and barley ranged between 50 and 75, however, we consider here a maximum range of 75 to 80 percent of total cultivated land as land under cultivation of wheat and barley in order to facilitate the calculation of maximum income of the peasants

⁴⁵² Hooman (1962 170) makes a connection between lack of water sources and the absence of diversity in agricultural production and reliance on the production of major crops, i.e., wheat and barley.

⁴⁵³ Beheshti, an Iranian scholar indicates that some 4 percent of land was under cultivation which was approved by Plan and Budget Organization of the government (Hooman, 1962 379). Considering that the total land was 164,800,000 hectares according to Beheshti's estimate some 6,592,000 were then under cultivation. Since 75 to 80 percent of land was under cultivation of wheat and barley then according to this figure some 4,944,000 was under cultivation of wheat and barley which is less than the figure provided above

7,031,466⁴⁵⁴ hectares

were under cultivation of wheat and barley. Because of the variety of output, one has to consider the average productivity range between 500 to 900 kilograms per hectare (see Askari and Cummings, 1976:65, table 2.3 which puts productivity of wheat at 900 kilograms). Based on our assumptions, the total productivity of wheat and barley must have ranged between 3,059,200 tons and 3,503,147 tons as the minimum range or between 5,459,200 tons and 6,303,147 tons as the maximum range amount although we use the maximum range cautiously. There are independent sources which indicate the above range, especially the minimum range, is not unreal. According to Kazemian (1968:11) wheat and barley production reached the level of 2,900,400 tons in 1947-48) and Ghahreman (1982b:182) and Plan and Budget Organization (1977:92, table 2) provide the total of 3,733,000 tons for productivity of wheat and barley in 1960 (see also Ajami, 1976:139). Even if the total land under cultivation is considered to have been 6,000,000 hectares given that 60 percent was allocated to wheat production and 14.6 percent to barley then with Askari and Cummings' (1976:65) figures the total productivity for 1950 was about 4,148,412 tons. Considering that some estimate the total land under cultivation to have been higher, in that case the total productivity may have reached our maximum range.

It should be noted that the above calculation is more applicable to the 1950s because; 1) more land had been brought under cultivation and the eight percent of land

⁴⁵⁴ The figure considered by Khosravi (1976:11) as the total land under cultivation was about 7,000,000 hectares. Based on Khosravi's estimate some 5,250,000 hectares of land (75 percent) were under cultivation of wheat and barley.

became available in this period⁴⁵⁵; 2) the productivity increased due to the use of tractors and agricultural machinery⁴⁵⁶; and, 3) the labour force increased as a result of an increase in rural population from 7.79 million in 1900 (Bharier, 1971:27) to 13.04 million in 1956⁴⁵⁷.

The above calculation can be used to measure the per capita production of wheat for 1956 (the first and reasonably reliable national census). At that time the population of Iran was 18,954,704 of which 68.6 percent, i.e., 13,040,836 lived in the rural areas (Khosravi, 1976:11; Zanjani, 1992:141)⁴⁵⁸. Using the range of 3,503,147 and 6,303,147 tons, in average the per capita production of wheat and barley in the rural areas must have ranged between 268.6 to 483 kilograms⁴⁵⁹. There are some data

⁴⁵⁵ The number of villages increased from 15,000 in 1900 (Aresvik, 1976:13) to 51,300 in 1956 (Najmabadi, 1987:45). Since the village was the unit for organizing the labour force necessary for production unless it contributed to the development of the land it would not come into being. Katouzian (1981:298) calls it 'unit of peasant life and labour'.

⁴⁵⁶ The policy of the mechanization of agriculture began in 1950 (Fallah, 1982:105). Therefore, the contribution of agricultural machinery to productivity began in the 1950s. Momeni (1980:156) reports that in 1959 imports of agricultural machinery was the most important single item amounting to 5,516,149,450 Rls. (i.e., \$73,548,659.3). The total imports amounted to 40,630,135,000 Rls. (Ibid:169).

⁴⁵⁷ Bharier (1971:34) calculates the agricultural workers based on male population. According to this, the proportion of agricultural workers dropped from 90 percent (3.431 million) in 1900 to 56 percent (3.303 million) in 1956. These numbers, however, are misleading because they do not show the proportion of non-male labour force and also they do not explain why the number of males involved in agriculture remained the same between 1900 and 1956 while the total rural population had increased to 14.06 million. Also, he indicates that by 1956 nomads had joined the sedentary rural population (Bharier, 1971:31), but, their impact on labour force is not accounted for.

⁴⁵⁸ See also Khazaneh and Sadat (1973:20-21).

⁴⁵⁹ The per person agricultural production in North America during pre-war period was 1.80 metric tons and in Asia was 0.24 metric tons (Novack and Lekachman, 1964:110, table two). In the post-war period it increased to 2.57 metric tons in North America but decreased to 0.22 Metric tons for Asia (Ibid). Considering that most of the Agricultural land in Iran in that period was under cultivation of wheat and barley it is safe to conclude that the above calculation represents the productivity of agriculture before the 1960s.

provided for earlier years which may be used to validate the above figures. Based on the Plan and Budget Organization's (1977:89) figures for 1933 and the total population of 11,500,000 the per capita production of wheat and barley in rural areas, i.e., 80 percent of the total population, was 220 kilograms. Considering a twofold increase in wheat production between 1933 and the late 1950s (e.g. Plan and Budget Organization, 1977:91-92) and 1.5 times increase in population our estimate of per capita production for 1956 seems accurate.

The per capita production, however, does not provide a clear picture of the outflow of agricultural surplus unless it is compared to the per capita distribution of the agricultural produce. At the end of the production season dues, expenses and other debts laid on the peasants by the landlords and other dominant classes came to play a role in drastically decreasing the peasants' share from the total product.

Based on the above calculation it is possible to determine the amount of product that left the rural economy and also the amount that was marketed within the rural economy. The first factor is population; although the per capita production of wheat and barley ranged between 268-483 kilograms the distribution did not take place in the same fashion. Only one individual from the peasant family, often the male head, received a share for his labour's contribution and had to share it with his family. Therefore, the division was not based on the total rural population but based on the peasant families who were entitled to one share. The second factor concerns the relations in which the peasant produced the product. In most of the cases in the pre-land reform period the share of the peasants decreased due to their weak position in

the production process. When these conditions are taken into account a total product of 3.5 to 6.3 million tons would be reduced at least by half, i.e., 1.7 to 3.15 million tons and left to be distributed among peasant sharecroppers. In the worst situation, as the International Labour Review (1949:552)⁴⁶⁰ reported, up to three-fifths of the total product was siphoned off by the dominant classes. This would mean that the per capita distribution was reduced to only 130 to 241 kilograms, considerably less than the 268-483 kilograms per capita production noted above.

If only the nasaq-dar population (60 percent of total rural population or 7,824,501) is considered as the basis of calculation the per capita production (with the range of 3,503,147-6,303,147 tons) would be between 447.7 and 805.5 kilograms. If 60 percent of the crop was appropriated by the landlords and other dues then between 1,401,129 and 2,521,259 tons was distributed among the direct producers which means the per capita distribution was 179-322 kilograms. We can validate this using some examples although in our examples the landlords received 66 percent or an even higher share, hence, the per capita distribution is lower than the figures above. It should be noted that the following calculations only include the nasaq-holding population and if the khoshneshin population were to be included the per capita figures would be even less.

In 1954, Research Group (1968:230-34) indicated that in Farak the division of grain was based on one-third for the peasants and two-thirds for the landlord. The production of wheat in one unit was 8,000 kilograms and the total number of units

⁴⁶⁰ Not different for the 1950s as it will be discussed

was 18 which means the total productivity was 144,000 kilograms and the per capita production was 400 kilograms (for more details see Research Group, 1968:230-34). The Group indicated that the gav-bandi members received one-third of the grain which means they received 48,000 kilograms of wheat. That is, the per capita distribution of wheat was 133.3 kilograms among 360 family members of 72 nasaq-dars. The total barley production was 21,600 kilograms, i.e., the per capita barley production was 60 kilograms. Since one-third, i.e., 7,200 kilograms of barley product was given to the peasants their per capita distribution was 20 kilograms (for more details see Research Group, 1968:230-34). The total per capita income of the peasant families from wheat and barley was 153.3 kilograms, i.e., one-third of the total production.

Production of wheat and barley in Farak in 1964 was about 1,800 and 2,160 kilograms per hectare respectively which was a very high output compared to Askari and Cummings' figures and we use the total value of products to avoid miscalculations. The total production of wheat was worth 1,209,600 rials or 178,800 kilograms (see Research group, 1968:169). For barley the production was higher but the price was lower meaning the total production was worth 259,200 rials. There were 72 nasaq-holding families which had a population of 360 (Ibid). The per capita production of wheat was 480 kilograms and that of barley was 180 kilograms but using Research Group's figures it becomes evident that only 21 percent of the product was left to be distributed between the nasaq-holders. This meant that the per capita distribution of wheat was 100.8 kilograms and that of barley was 37.8 kilograms, i.e., a total of 138.6 kilograms of wheat and barley.

In Do-hesaran in 1954, there were six gav-bandis (similar to boneh) and the total production of wheat and barley was 19,200 and 4,800 kilograms (See Research Group, 1968:236). The per capita production of wheat and barley among 48 family members of 12 nasaq-dars was 400 and 100 kilograms. Since the landlord reaped three-fourth of the crop, the per capita distribution of wheat and barley among these families was 100 and 25 kilograms, i.e., a total of 125 kilograms (see Research group, 1968:235-36). Due to lack of enough data we only relied on part of production in this village that took place among 12 families.

There are more detailed data for 1964. Using Research Group's (1968 182) calculations in Do-hesaran it becomes evident that in 1964 the total wheat and barley production was 32,400 and 12,000 kilograms. There were 300 nasaq-holder family members. The per capita production of wheat and barley was, thus, 108 and 40 kilograms but only 42.8 percent was distributed among the peasants which means the per capita distribution of wheat and barley dropped to 46.2 and 17.1 kilograms, i.e., a total of 63.3 kilograms.

As noted before, this was not the per capita distribution among all rural families as we only included nasaq-holders, i.e., the direct producers. This means, the per capita distribution was lower among the rest of the rural population. It should be noted that the extracted surplus was mainly marketed internally as the exports of both wheat and barley were very low. In 1937-38 the total exported wheat and barley amounted to 387,000 tons (Gupta, 1947:53) and in the post-war period it decreased to lower degrees, i.e., zero wheat and 626 tons barley in 1960 (Plan and Budget

Organization, 1977 92-3, table 3 and 4)

5.3.2 Rice:

Rice, has been an export item since the turn of the century (e.g. Jamalzadeh, 1983 16)⁴⁶¹ Between 1925 and 1939 the annual production of rice increased by 44 percent (Foran, 1993 228) Ghahreman (1982b 182) indicates that in 1960 the total production reached 709,000 tons which means there was a steady growth.

Plan and Budget Organization (1977 94, table 5) indicates that between 1946 and 1955 the exports of rice varied between 13,776 and 62,185 tons and decreased in the following years probably due to an increase demand in the internal market Hence, rice contributed to the economy as it was an export item as well as a local consumer item and as rice exports decreased in the 1950s it became more an item for the internal market

There are no reliable data to indicate the per capita production and distribution of rice at the national level Ata-ee (1963 64-148) provides some data for major rice producing provinces, i.e., Gilan, Zanzan and Khuzistan in the late 1950s He argues that in Gilan from each hectare the rent was 660 kilograms, i.e., one-third of the total rice produced in one hectare (Ibid 125) Based on Ata-ee's (1963 129-30, table 14)

⁴⁶¹ It was also an export item even before the 20th century (Issawi, 1991 599) The production of rice rose from 71,000 tons in 1865 to 188,000 tons in 1913 (Gilbar, 1978 319) This was partly due to a decrease in the production of wheat and barley in the second half of the 19th century which increased the market demand for a food product such as rice Also it was due to the value of rice in the market that would compensate for the loss of the silk market (Ibid) Following an increase in the production of rice, the export of rice to Russia, as the main importer of rice increased For example, " exports to Russia from Rasht, which had averaged about 25,000 (pounds sterling) in the 1870s rose to 234,000 (pounds sterling) in 1892/93" (Issawi, 1971 243, see also Gilbar, 1978 320-21)

report, the production value of rice formed 77.25 percent of total value produced in Gilan. The total rice production was 388,798 tons of which one third was reaped as rent and 256,607 tons was distributed among the peasants. The total population of Gilan was 884,804 (Ibid 138, table 15) but its agricultural population was 70 percent, i.e., 619,363 of the total population of Gilan. Accordingly, the per capita production was 628 kilograms. The per capita distribution was between two-thirds to one half of the per capita production, i.e., between 414 and 314 kilograms. That was the reason that per capita income in Gilan was higher than anywhere else, i.e., 26,163.43 rials (Ata-ee, 1963:140), i.e. 314 U.S. dollars⁴⁰.

5.3.3 Silk:

Iran had been a major supplier of silk in the world market since the Safavids and remained so until it was replaced by opium production in the 19th century. Foran (1993:35) argues that based on the most quoted source, Olearius, the total annual production of silk in the early 17th century was about 2,000 tons (4,415,011 pounds) which is roughly correspondent to that production cited by Chardin. Chardin in the 17th century estimated that the silk crop was about 4,000,000 pounds (Fateh, 1926:24)⁴¹.

The production and export of silk increased by 1670 when Chardin (who

⁴⁰ In the province of Zanjan each peasant received 11.89 kilograms (Ata-ee, 1965a:142-43).

⁴¹ Chardin's estimate for 1670 was 6,072,000 pounds (Issawi, 1971:12; Foran, 1993:67) and Jamalzadeh (1983:24) quotes Chardin's estimate for 1672: production of silk at 1,900,000 kilograms (4,194,260 pounds).

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travelled to Iran in the 17th century) estimated the production at 6,072,000 pounds and its value at 2,000,000 to 2,500,000 pounds sterling (Issawi, 1971:12). The total value of England's exports in 1688 was 5,000,000 pounds sterling and for France in 1715 it was 4,800,000 pounds sterling (Issawi, 1971:12) indicating, comparatively, the strength of the Iranian economy in the world economic system as far back as the 16th through late 17th century. After a decline of silk production and export in the 18th century silk regained its former position in the 19th century as an export item to Europe and production increased to a value of 1,400,000 pounds sterling by 1864 (Foran, 1993:118)⁴⁶⁴ or about 2,000,000⁴⁶⁵ pounds. After this time its production and export as a leading item declined due to silk worm disease and loss of international market

In the 1940s the production of silk reached about 1,500,000 pounds per year (Tannous, 1944:38) but it contributed little to the economy because of the decline in the production and value of silk products in the world market. It declined to such an extent that Karshenas (1990:57, table 2.4) and Fardi (1976:359, table 73) were able to provide lists of non-oil exported goods for 1958 and 1960 in which silk was not even listed as an exported item.

To provide the percentage of outflow of silk from rural economy we have to rely on reports of the 19th century. The level of outflow of silk product was two thirds of the crop by the landlords and merchants (Abbott to Thomson, 1971:227)

⁴⁶⁴ According to Foran (1993:118) taking silk, opium and wheat together " a rough estimate of the total agricultural GDP around 1860 may be 19-20 million pounds sterling"

⁴⁶⁵ This meant that compared to the 18th century there was an eight-fold increase in the production of silk (see Fatch, 1926:24 for the details)

This means that the peasants, as was the case with wheat barley and rice, received only one-third of the production profits for their efforts.

5.3.4 Opium:

The cultivation of opium began only in the Safavid period (1499-1736), but large scale production began in the mid-19th century (Bahrami, 1952:75) and became an export item. The productivity of opium in 1886 was about 400,000 Mann⁴⁶⁶ (1,200,000 kilograms) of which some 720,000 kilograms (60 percent) were exported (Bahrami, 1952:87; Jamalzadeh, 1983:30). Amanat (1983:xviii) maintains that not only did opium production replace silk production which was in decline but also as the single largest item of export it accounted for 26 percent⁴⁶⁷ of the total value of exports in the 1880s compared to 38 percent for silk exports of 1850s.

By the 1920s, opium formed 10-15 percent of visible exports in Iran (Foran, 1993:229). Its export value in 1928-29 was 65,000,000 kran (16 percent of total non-oil exports) but dropped to 26,000,000 rials in 1936-37, i.e., 5.3 percent of total non-oil exports (e.g. Gupta, 1947:117-18). Its production dropped to 489 and 480 tons in 1945 and 1946 (Plan and Budget Organization, 1977:103) but its price increased to 600 rials per kilograms. The production of opium was finally prohibited in 1955 and it lost its commercial value afterwards (see Khosravi, 1976:8). Its production however, did not entirely stop.

⁴⁶⁶ Each mann is equal to three kilograms.

⁴⁶⁷ It was 25 percent in the early 1880s according to Foran (1993:118).

To review the internal market and the outflow of opium it should be noted that up to the 1900s the internal consumption continued to take 40 percent of the opium production (e.g. Bharier, 1971:11, 132) and this does not seem to have changed until the 1940s (e.g. Gupta, 1947:59). By the 1920s about 50 percent of the population still consumed opium (Bharier, 1971:132). In the absence of recent data we have to rely on Olson's (1981:175) figures which indicate up to four-fifths of the crop was appropriated by the dominant classes. This included landlords and merchants. In 1954, before the ban on opium production, in Farak the landlord received three-fourths of the opium product (Research Group, 1968:232). The total value produced by opium in 18 gav-bandis was 356,400 rials and the per capita production among 360 peasants and their family members was 1.65 kilograms valued at 990 rials but the per capita distribution was only 0.4125 kilograms valued at 247.5 rials (see Research Group, 1968:231-32). Since sharecropping rules did not change over centuries the distribution during the opium boom period was probably the same as before and the outflow of opium product by the merchants and the landlords amounted to 75 percent of the total product. That is, only 25 percent remained for the peasants.

5.3.5 Other Important Crops:

Having reviewed the major cash crops it should be noted that tobacco, cotton, sugar beet, tea and fresh and dried fruits were other agricultural products from which the dominant classes extracted surplus. For example, the annual production of tobacco in 1960 was 16,000 tons (Razaghi, 1989:295). We will review the extraction rate of

tobacco in the province of Lorestan because reliable data are available. In the province of Lorestan in 1957 the production of tobacco amounted to 1,653 tons which was worth 22,488,460 rials (Ata-ee, 1965*b*:102-03, table 3-B) of which only one-third was the share of the peasants. This means a total of 14,992,306 rials, or 67 percent, was reaped by the dominant classes.

In the case of cotton, according to Razaghi (1989:287), production of raw cotton was 328,000 tons in 1960 and continued its export value into the 1980s. In 1960, cotton exports accounted for 23.6 percent of total non-oil exports in Iran (Fardi, 1976:359, table 73) and according to Halliday (1979:108) by 1962 raw cotton exports accounted for 40 percent of non-oil exports. For calculation of the rate of the extraction of surplus we again use production in Farak. In Farak, in 1954 about 6,000 kilograms of cotton was produced by one unit of production, i.e. a gav-bandī which created 35.6 percent of total production value equal to value produced by 12,200 kilograms of wheat, barley and caraway-seed (Research Group, 1968:231-32). In this village there were 18 gav-bandis which produced a total of 108,000 kilograms of cotton and three-fourths of the crop was reaped by the landlord, i.e., 81,000 kilograms worth of 972,000 rials (Ibid:232). The per capita production among 360 nasaq-holding peasants and their family members was 300 kilograms but per capita distribution became 75 kilograms (see Research Group, 1968:231 for more details).

In the case of sugar beet, in 1955, the total production of sugar beet reached 521,000 tons and in 1960 it increased to 706,804 tons (Plan and Budget Organization, 1977:95-96, table 6). In Shokat-abad, in 1954, each of the 12 gav-bandī produced

1,500 kilogram sugar-beet, i.e., a total of 18,000 kilograms with the total value of 12,000 rials which formed 3 percent of total production value produced in this village (see Research Group, 1968.246) The landlord received one-half of the product and the rest was divided between 185 peasants and their families. This meant that while the per capita production of sugar beet was 97.3 kilograms its per capita distribution was only 48.6 kilograms (see Research Group, 1968.246)

The production of dried tea in 1960 reached 15,000 tons (Ghahreman, 1982b.182, table 7) The rate of outflow of tea by the landlords was not high because 60 percent of lands under cultivation of tea were owned by the direct producers and the rent for the rest was 100-160 kilograms of dried tea per hectare (Ata-ee, 1963:127). My estimate is that between 15-18 percent of the crop was the rent which could increase to 50 percent based on Ata-ee's (1963.127) figures given that the per hectare production was about 660 kilograms of dried tea

Fruits were also produced in large amounts during the 1930s and the early 1940s and some of the production was exported For example, 14,697 metric tons of raisins and 27,307 metric tons of dates between 1934-38 were exported abroad, the amount of export of raisins increased to 18,053 metric tons in 1939-43 whereas that of dates declined to 14,969 metric tons in the same period (Tannous, 1944 36 table 1) In 1960, the export of dried and fresh fruits accounted for 17.2 percent of total value of non-oil exports in US dollars (Fardi, 1976.359)

Production of many fruits took place under sharecropping and this means that sometimes up to 50 to 60 percent of the product was reaped by the landlords In

Farak, in 1954, melons and vegetables accounted for 13.1 percent value produced in one unit of production, i.e., gav-bandi (Research Group, 1968:231). Three-fourths of the product was reaped by the landlord and only 25 percent of the summer crop remained to be divided between the peasants (Ibid). Thus, while the per capita value produced was 73.6 rials among 360 peasants and their family members the per capita distribution was only 18.4 rials. In Neek-pey (Zanjan), in 1964 the production of summer crops accounted for 42.9 percent of value produced (see Research Group, 1968:269-70) and the per capita production value of the summer crops was 4,000 rials but 40 percent of it was given to landlords or spent on production costs. As a result, the per capita distribution of value produced by the summer crops was 2,400 rials. The per capita income of nasaq-holding families in this village was 75 dollars, i.e., 5,621 rials (Research Group, 1968:270).

5.3.6 Wool and Livestock and Other Agricultural Products:

Wool also has been a traditional agricultural product in Iran. In the 1920s, it was produced in the provinces of Khorasan, Fars, Luristan, Azarbaijan, Kirmanshah and Kurdistan (Fateh, 1926:29). The value of exports of raw wool before World War One was 11,500,000 Krans (Ibid), i.e., 212,963 pounds sterling. It decreased to 4,808,000 Krans (Ibid), i.e., 102,298 pounds sterling after the war.⁴⁶⁸ In 1928-29 the value of exports of wool reached 16,000,000 rials, i.e., four percent of total value of

⁴⁶⁸ The rate of pound sterling before the World War One was roughly 54 Krans and it was around 47 Krans in 1922-23.

non-oil exports (Gupta, 1947 117)

During 1934-38, on average, some 6,985 metric tons of wool and the same amount for the period of 1939-43 on average was exported (Tannous, 1944 39 table 2) In terms of weight, wool exports reached 8,400 tons in 1958, this constituted about seven percent of total non-oil exports (e.g Baldwin, 1967 75 table 6) The total production of camel and sheep wool in 1960 amounted to 35,564 tons (Plan and Budget Organization, 1977.110, table 29)

Wool production contributed to the peasants income In Do-hesaran in 1954, about 50 percent of value produced in this village came from wool produced by 1,500 sheep (Research Group, 1968.238)

To provide a cursory glance at animal husbandry it can be said that the production of cattle, sheep, horse, mule and ass, goats and camel was on the increase between 1930 to 1959 (Table 10)⁴⁶⁹.

Table 10. Livestock Population Between 1930 and 1960 (1000 head)

Type	1930-34 a	1960
cattle	1,820,000	5,500,000
sheep	15,200,000	30,000,000
horses&mules	274,000	600,000
asses	1,100,000	2,000,000
goats	6,821,000	12,500,000
camels	67,000 b	234,000
poultry	---	24,000,000

a: annual average

b: this camel population is for 1939-43.

Source: Aresvik (1976.43); Hooman (1962 116), Gupta (1947.27)

⁴⁶⁹ The production of camels dropped between 1950 and 1974 (e.g Askari and Cummings, 1976 114, table 3.15).

There is not much evidence that would suggest that livestock was exported between 1911 and 1957 (e.g. Sultanzade, 1931:55-56, Gupta, 1947:117-19, Plan and Budget Organization, 1977:109, table 27). After 1957 a limited number of livestock were exported (e.g. Plan and Budget Organization, 1977:109, table 27). There are records, however, for the exports of animal products. Value of skins and hides exported in 1910-13⁴⁷⁰ was 15,900,000 rials, i.e., 4.2 percent of non-oil exports (Karshenas, 1990:73, table 3.1). The value of exported skins increased in 1922-23 to 16,627,000 Krans (Fateh, 1926:28), i.e., 353,766 pounds sterling but decreased to 13,800,000 rials, i.e., 5.1 percent of total export of the oil products in 1938-39 (Karshenas, 1990:73, table 3.1; see also Gupta, 1947) and formed 8.7 percent of total non-oil exports in 1960, i.e. before the 1962 land reform (Fardi, 1976:359, table 73). Animal husbandry, then, was a source of income for the peasants. In Shokat-abad, in 1954, 64 percent of the value produced came from animal husbandry (Research Group, 1968:246-47). In Farak, in 1964, the total income of the village from animal husbandry was 400,000 rials which formed 13.1 percent of the total value produced in this village (Ibid:170-71). In Do-hesaran the value produced by animal husbandry amounted to 370,000 rials which formed 19.7 percent of value produced in this village (Ibid:182-83). While the per capita income of the nasaq-holders was nine dollars the per capita income of the whole village population was 45 dollars and this was partly because of the contribution by carpet weaving and animal husbandry (see Ibid:). In Zeidan-loo 11.8 percent of value produced in the village was from animal husbandry

⁴⁷⁰ Annual average

(see Ibid:194-95) The outflow of value produced by animal husbandry from the rural economy was through market relations where the merchants dominated the market and only some data exists that can provide an insight about this type of extraction as we will review them later. A great part of animals were produced by the tribes and this fact makes it difficult to calculate the amount of profit extracted in this field.

5.4 Some Figures on the Overall Rate of Extraction and Comparative Internal-External Markets for Agricultural products:

The extraction of various products can now be concluded (Table 11) although we use these figures cautiously.

Table 11. Production and Extraction of Various Agricultural Products in 1960

item	production		D. share a	P. share b
	tons	rials	(%)	(%)
cereals c	3,503,147	24,522,029	66-75	33-25
rice	709,000	8,508,000	33-50	66-50
silk ⁴⁷¹ (1910)	540	21,600,000	66	33
opium (1947)	480	288,000,000	75	25
tobacco	16,000	217,600,000	66	33
cotton	328,000	3,396,000,000	66-75	33-25
sugar beet	706,804	471,202	66-50	33-50
tea ⁴⁷²	24,685	530,727,500	15-50	85-50
fruits d	589,000	1,438,350,000	50-60	50-40
wool e	35,564	3,556,400,000	50	50

a: share of the dominant classes

b: share of the peasants

c: wheat and barley combined

d: fruits included fresh and dried. The production value of fruits is not available and only the export value of fruits has been calculated based on information provided by Fardi (1976:359 table 73). This value for the most part is the extracted value.

e: The price of one kilogram on-site wool was 100 rials (Research Group, 1968:238).

Source: constructed based on Ghahreman's (1982b:182, table 7) data and information provided earlier.

Using Baldwin's (1967:75) figures for 1958, we can also see the comparative contribution of various products in external and internal markets (Table 12). This provides enough reason to review the market mechanism where the non-rural forces played a significant role in extraction of surplus through market relations.

⁴⁷¹ We calculated the value of silk for 1910 when its production was still significant to the economy. The price of one kilogram was about 40 rials (see Jamalzadeh, 1983:29). The value of rial fell 32 fold between 1910s and 1950s which means the value of silk produced in 1910 would become 32 fold in the 1950s, i.e., 691,200,000 rials.

⁴⁷² Although the production of dried tea in 1960 was 15,000 tons but a more reliable data has been provided by Ata-ee (1963:129-30, table 14) who indicates that the total production of tea was 24,685 tons (this must be tea leaves because the dried tea production was lower, 15,000 tons) and the price of one kilogram of tea produced in Gilan was 21.5 rials.

Table 12. Relative Importance of Export and Domestic Markets for Major Agricultural Crops

item	ratio ('000 tons)		percentage a
	exports	domestic uses	
barley	10	:940	1
rice	3	:489	1
oilseeds	6	:156	4
tobacco	0.5	: 12.5	4
ginned cotton	42.5	: 27.5	155
dates	35	: 95	37
raisins	39.5	: 22.5	175
shelled almonds	6	: 12	50
unshelled pistachios	2.5	: 1.5	167
walnuts	2.1	: 3.9	54
wool (cleaned)	8.4	: 11.6	72

a. This percentage is based on exports as percentage of domestic uses

Source: Baldwin (1967:75, table 6).

Cereals had more domestic use than cotton and fresh or dried fruits (Table 12)

Further discussion about cotton and its value and the role of merchants in extraction of cotton will be reviewed below.

5.5 Market Mechanisms:

We now review the level of state intervention in the market. The central government prior to Reza Khan period was not able to control the marketing of agricultural products. Prior to the second half of the 19th century self-sufficiency was the dominant mode of agricultural production (Nowshirvani, 1981; Lahsaiezadeh, 1990:118) although a long history of trade and urbanization in Iran stimulated exchange relations between rural and urban areas where the Iranian bazaar played a key role in marketing the products (e.g., Bonine, 1981:237-38). Due to lack of transportation facilities trade relations were, however, limited compared to the late

19th century (Lahsaiezadeh, 1990:119) Olson (1981:175), who focuses on the southern part of the country, indicates that in this period agricultural surplus nevertheless existed. The extracted product by the state and the dominant classes either was used by the state or was marketed by the landowners (including the state). In a general approach to market activities Bonine (1981:234) argues that during the Qajars the absentees sold their agricultural surplus in the urban bazaar and Olson (1981:175) argues that the peasants did not have any control on the distribution of the extracted agricultural surplus product. Between 1800 and 1869, part of the country's agricultural surplus was shipped to the southern ports where they were either marketed locally or exported (Ibid:178).

The 'country trade' of southern Iran was a trade among towns and urban merchants. It was not a trade among villages and farmers. The foodstuffs and other products involved were drawn from the surplus crops which were accumulated in the form of rents or tax revenues by landowners and officials in the towns. They in turn relied on towns-based merchants to dispose of whatever they did not consume themselves (Olson, 1981:179).

Due to the strength of the merchants, the state virtually did not have any monopoly on internal or external marketing of agricultural products. Olson (1981:179) illustrates this by arguing that the trade of the south with the British East India Company was handled by a small number of Shiraz Merchants. In the case of opium the landowners and the merchants in the south even before 1869 attempted to use opium for exporting purposes (Ibid:181, 185). Later Olson confirms that the economy of the south was controlled by the merchants, landowners and tax-farmers (Ibid:185). This included Yazdi and Isfahani merchants who also engaged in exporting cash-crops (Ibid:185-86). Generally speaking, the merchants had a high degree of monopoly in

exports (Karshenas, 1990:45). The role of the state in the agricultural market was more apparent during famine years (1972) when the state's grain reserves were used to offset shortfalls in the market. In some cases the state intervened to put a limitation on the production of opium in favour of production of food crops but this was not a success and opium production continued to develop (e.g. Olson, 1981:187). Due to the weakness of the state its role in the bazaar (the traditional Iranian market) was limited to collecting revenues (Bonine, 1981:234).

During Reza Khan (1921-1941) a different role was taken by the state. During the 1930s the state began creating trade monopolies on cotton, tobacco, tea, dried fruits, sugar and opium (MacLachlan, 1991:611). In the sphere of exports Bharier (1971:86) argues that "...exports of cotton, jute, rice, carpets and other products " were monopolized. Banani (1969:130-31) indicates that the state monopoly was primarily on foreign trade and limited to regulating import-export activities by means of licences⁴⁷³. Import quotas were applied to non-monopolized items and the export merchants were required to sell 90 percent of their foreign exchange to the government (Bharier, 1971:86). Other government policies included barter transaction with trading partners (Ibid). Bharier argues that these policies were not necessarily a success and resulted in malfunctions and some of them, such as the foreign exchange law, were repealed in 1932-33 (Ibid). In 1949 the first development plan was introduced which further brought the economic activities under the control of the central government and marketing agricultural products was no exception. Bharier (1971:78) indicates that

⁴⁷³ Baldwin (1967:12) argues that this was a policy against a long-standing free trade policy

state monopolies on the above items continued into the 1950s and 1960s. These monopolies, nevertheless, did not prevent profits going to the non-government sources. Momeni (1980:155-56) refers to the reports that confirmed the profitable cotton market in 1960 which resulted in more investments in agriculture by the landlords. Okazaki (1968:34) also refers to the role of the merchants in the 1960s who became involved in the export of cotton. In the local markets they collected as much as 43 percent of total cotton production in the agricultural district in northern city of Gorgan (Ibid). The internal market of agricultural products was still under the control of the merchants. In Kirman, merchants imported sugar rice, tea and non-agricultural products and exported carpets, wool, dried fruits and nuts (English, 1966:74).

In addition to what was described in the previous chapter as modes of extraction, through pre-harvest selling of the crop by the peasants (i.e., *salaf-khari*) we should emphasize the role of money-lenders and merchants in capturing the peasants' tiny surplus. The transactions were mostly in barter and were carried out by merchants from the nearby towns or the local village shopkeeper (Lambton, 1969b:380). There are no hard data which would indicate the total percentage of the profit they made this way in the pre-land reform era. However, the Plan and Budget Organization (1977:98-99, table 8) indicates that the whole-sale price of cotton was 39 to 44 rials per kilograms in 1960. We do not have the on-site purchase price for the same year. However, in 1964 the price of one kilogram of cotton was 16 rial in Farak and 15 rials in Do-hesaran (Research Group, 1968:174, 182) which was probably the same or even lower in 1960. This means that in a situation like this the merchants

and shopkeepers profited probably more than 100 percent. However, considering that these data are not totally reliable an estimate of 50 percent profit was the rate of profit that went to the merchants' pockets solely through the market mechanisms. This percentage for the post-reform era was 50 percent (Doroudian, 1976:174)⁴⁷⁴. The same pattern affected the wool and animal markets and of the total value of wool produced by 35,564 tons of wool in 1960, by estimate, some 50 percent of profits were collected by the merchants and shopkeepers or by the tribal leaders.

5.6 Industrial Development:

We review this sector to show which section of industry contributed to the rural economy. Some efforts were made in the late 19th century to establish national industries but since Iran had undergone some loss of power to Russia and Britain these efforts were not successful (Motazed, 1988; Razaghi, 1989). Curzon (1966:523, Vol 2) reported in 1890 that 'factories' as a term which was used to describe industrial enterprises in Europe did not exist in Iran. Only some factories such as silk-spinning, iron-turning and spinning factories had been established in the 1850s but were all closed down due to lack of support from the government (Razaghi, 1989:12)⁴⁷⁵.

The period between the 1880s and 1905, nevertheless, is considered by some to

⁴⁷⁴ In a general statement to the system of commodity circulation in the period before 1979, Razaghi (1989:557) indicates that as a result of the control of the merchants on the market some 80 to 90 percent of the country's capital was concentrated in the hands of merchants

⁴⁷⁵ Further information about the discouraging treatment of creative minds during Nasir-oddin shah (1848-1896) can be found in Bagheri (1992:186-89). For example, Agha Sheikh Ali invented a gun but the gun was sent abroad to be copied by foreigners (Ibid).

be the beginning of industry in Iran (Ashraf and Hekmat, 1981:737). To be precise, it can be said that industrialization began after World War One (International Labour Review, 1949:552). Between 1937 and 1939 some 680 factories were established in which some 44,613 labourers worked (Razaghi, 1989:17-18). In addition to modern industries, some 121 weaving and spinning units and hand-made industries were in operation in various cities in which some 54,353 labourers worked (Ibid). By 1960, about 4,430 factories had been established of which some 10 percent were established in 1939 (Momeni, 1980:180). Industries, however, did not seem to attract many peasants into their labour force. Handicraft, however, played an important role in increasing job opportunities for the peasants. I shall now try to shed some light on the traditional industries with a focus on carpets.

5.7 Carpet:

In the textile industry, carpet weaving has traditionally been a reliable industry and although it has been both an urban and a rural industry carpets were mostly produced in non-urban centres. Although present as long ago as the 15th century, the carpet industry began to flourish in 1880s when foreign companies became interested in Iranian carpets (e.g. Etemad, 1988:195).

The share of carpets in the non-oil exports of Iran increased from 0.5 in 1860 to 13.2 percent in 1911 and to 32.7 percent in 1927 (Etemad, 1988:197). The value of exported carpets in 1922-3 was 92,864,000 Krans (Fateh, 1926:46), i.e., 1,975,830

pound sterling.⁴⁷⁶ In 1960, the export of carpets accounted for 19.8 percent of total non-oil exports, i.e., second after cotton (Fardi, 1976:359, table 73).

Until the land reform of 1962 this industry contributed to the average income of the peasants especially those (the *khoshneshins*) who did not have land-use rights⁴⁷⁷. This can be understood by looking at the total work force engaged in this industry. Between 1937 and 1938 some 200,000 Iranians were engaged in carpet weaving (Razaghi, 1989:22) compared to 44,613 workers engaged in non-handicrafts industry (Ibid:17-18).

In order to clarify the level of surplus extraction by the merchants we will review the production of carpets in Farak in 1964. The per capita income in this village was 22 dollars (Research Group, 1968:169). The owners of looms who hired the peasants received loans from the urban merchants and the total production of the village was 180 carpets per year, each measuring 12 square meters. Each carpet was worth 18,000 rials but 15,000 rials was spent on production costs including loans (Ibid). Thirty looms in Farak produced a net value of 540,000 rials whereas its gross value was 3,240,000 rials, i.e., 2,700,000 rials or 83.3 percent of its total value went to production costs. Research Group indicates that the peasants in Do-hesaran also produced 576,000 rials of net income in 80 looms (Ibid:183). It appears the level of costs in Do-hesaran were the same as Farak and therefore, 83.3 percent of value of carpets produced in this village was reaped by the urban merchants. It should be

⁴⁷⁶ The rate of pound sterling was 47 Krans (Fateh, 1926:71).

⁴⁷⁷ We discussed the *khoshneshins* in Chapter Two.

noted that the carpet production was made possible by the labour of the peasants and khoshneshins. To provide another example in the area of carpet production prior to 1962 land reform we can refer to the city of Kirman, one of the major carpet producing centres. English (1966:92) indicates the level of dependence of carpet production in rural Kirman on urban contractors as he argues that three-quarters of village weavers were under contract with the Kirman's factories to produce carpets for the urban merchants.

There are several points that can now be made about the agricultural economy and the commercialised agriculture in the pre-1962 period in Iran.

1) There were two types of industries in Iran; the traditional handicrafts; and, modern industry. Handicrafts were dominant but with the exception of carpet production they were essentially an urban phenomenon. Only the carpet industry, however, ever reached a high level of exports (see page 299-300). Modern industry in Iran began to develop in the 1880s but soon failed and only resumed after World War One. Among the handicrafts only the carpet industry reached a high level of export and it was mainly a rural industry.

2) Until the 1950s, despite the development of the 20th century oil industry, the economy relied on agriculture⁴⁷⁸. Before the 1920s, however, the export value of agricultural products was significant while after the 1920s the internal consumption of the agricultural products (through market exchange) became important. Despite this

⁴⁷⁸ It should be noted that as late as 1956, while agriculture accounted for 54 percent of the labour force manufacturing accounted for 13.8 percent (Danesh, 1993:57, table 1).

shift of market, agriculture continued to play a pivotal role and to determine the level of economic growth in Iran until the 1950s.

3) The presence of agricultural products in the market accounted for the extraction of surplus from the rural economy.

4) The most vital point in this argument, however, is the fact that the reliance on agricultural products also tells us about the dependency of the national and urban economy on agricultural production. Through the division of labour between the urban and rural economies and deprivation of the rural economy and the peasantry the national and urban economy thrived. In other words, as the urban economy failed to engage in industrialization a heavier reliance was placed on the exploitation of the rural economy which was reflected in the high level of the extraction of surplus derived from the various agricultural products. The movement of merchant capital by urban absentee landlords towards landownership and their engagement in cash crop production facilitated the extraction of this surplus from the rural areas.

5) Because of a lack of hard data it is difficult to provide the net surplus outflow, in rials, acquired by the merchants. In percentage terms, however, as noted earlier, at least 50 percent of the gross value of agricultural crop production was extracted as shares both by the landlords and the merchants. The merchants also realized up to an additional 50 percent of their purchase price (purchase from the peasants) in the market place. When the surplus extracted through handicraft production is included the total percentage of gross value extracted from the rural economy (agricultural and non-agricultural handicrafts) became higher than the above 50 percent that was

extracted from the agricultural products.

Conclusion:

The review of modes of surplus extraction and modes of landholding and landownership in pre-capitalist Iran presented in this dissertation reveals that the history of agricultural production can not simply be contained in a uniform history that Asiatic, feudal and low-productive theses provide. At the outset it was our contention that the underdevelopment of productive forces was not simply due to internally-embedded characteristics of a uniform mode of production which dominated Iran through centuries. Two traditional approaches to underdevelopment of this type were examined: the Asiatic approach and the feudal approach. The Asiatic approach examined the Asiatic state and its effect on the development of social classes and the consequent absence of extracted surplus by the social classes. The Feudal approach examined similarities between Iran's pre-capitalist formations and those of feudal Europe without considering the historical specificities that made Iran's pre-capitalist formation distinct from Feudal Europe. The basic elements of this specificity consisted of a longer history of urban development and a longer history of the development of merchants class and mercantile activities. These specific historical developments we claimed were determinants of Iran's pre-capitalist formations' developments and functions.

A careful observation of pre-capitalist agricultural production revealed that the rural and non-rural forces were in a structural relationship which led to the drain of surplus product from the rural economy into the urban economy. It was for this reason that, instead of looking for those characteristics in the pre-capitalist agrarian

structures in Iran which matched one of the above three models, this dissertation suggested that a different approach based on the rural-urban relations was needed to understand rural underdevelopment in Iran.

Based on Foran's approach to pre-capitalist Iran, which emphasized the presence of various modes of production, and by emphasizing the unequal rural-urban relations we first examined the presence of an absolutist state in Iran. We showed fluctuations in the political and economic power of the state over the centuries and the state's weakness vis-a-vis tribes and external forces suggested that a different direction than relying on the role of the state needs to be taken in order to identify the determinants of socio-economic processes in pre-capitalist Iran (Chapter Two). We showed not only that the state could not have been the ultimate determinant of the socio-economic formations as the Asiatic thesis describes but rather the state of Iran went through various stages of decentralization indicating a lack of the very conditions necessary for the establishment of absolutism. We also determined that the state was an urban phenomenon and its presence in the rural areas was very limited and not all that apparent. This led us to conclude that an alternative analysis would be more fruitful, i.e., we should examine class relations and the development of social classes and their functions in pre-capitalist Iran (Chapter Two).

While examining the class typology we introduced the notion of national and local class structures. The foundations of my thesis were built on this typology because as the notion of absolutist state was critically questioned and found wanting it was replaced by an analysis of class relations. This typology was particularly useful

because it highlighted the differences between the rural and urban class structures as well as providing the grounds for indicating that urban classes played the dominant role in the pre-capitalist agrarian structures. We were also able to show that the rural class structure remained unchanged through centuries as its members only functioned in the sphere of production as producers of agricultural products and not as owners of the major means of production, i.e., land and water. The composition of the dominant classes, however, underwent considerable change in the late 19th century. We also discovered that the tuyul-holders (i.e., land-rights holders but not owners) were replaced by landowners and that new groups began to buy up land, especially the merchants. That is, a major privatization of land was underway

The dominance of the urban classes on the rural economy, as we contended, could occur through involvement in the land tenure system where economic value was produced. This debate matched our earlier argument, in Chapter Two, on the absolutist state in the sense that no longer in our analysis did we pay attention to the role of the state in landholding although the state still granted land. This led us to search for and identify those classes which controlled land (Chapter Three). It became evident that even though over centuries there had developed numerous variations of landholding private land existed, even in the Safavids (1499-1736). But major attention was paid to the role of iqta-holders and tuyul-holders as we argued that in the absence of the state the landholders played a significant role in the exploitation of rural Iran. It also became evident that even the concept of landholding is not necessarily equal to a limitation of property rights vis-a-vis the state, this was

illustrated by the development of *suyurghal*, which entailed even more landholding rights than *tuyul* and *iqta*. This indicated the gradual loss of power by the state to these landholding classes. Following this we were able to show that one specific characteristic of landholding classes stood out, i.e., their absentee status and this supported our claim regarding the non-rural character of the dominant classes. This also supported the claim that the extracted product was appropriated by the non-rural forces.

Turning to later periods to which we also paid close attention, we showed that the element of absenteeism continued when landholding was replaced by landowning in the late 19th century. In pursuit of the claim that following the transitional period of the late 19th century absenteeism continued and took a particular form we showed that the merchants had now become involved in landownership. With this knowledge we shifted our debate towards the merchants to support our claim that merchant-landlordism was a determining process in pre-capitalist formations in Iran which has been neglected by the scholars studying Iran's rural underdevelopment. Finally, our argument on the development of private land indicated that in fact it was the weakness of the state that resulted in the alienation of the state lands in the pre-capitalist period and the abolishment of state land and its transformation into private land in the first half of the 20th century.

Until this time one part of our claim, i.e., the significance of the difference between urban and rural economies, was supported by the relevant argument as we showed that the history of pre-capitalist Iran was not uniform and the state of rural-

urban class relations determined the level of the development of the productive forces in the rural economy. Another claim was that the question of unequal urban-rural relations would address the question of rural backwardness. To address this claim we dealt with the question of how surplus extraction took place and whether or not modes of extraction after the transitional period of the late 19th century continued and determined who the beneficiaries of exploitative relations in the rural economy were (Chapter Four). We also determined that the core element of the pre-capitalist extraction of agricultural product was sharecropping and its productive unit, the bonenh. We were also able to show that the involvement of the merchants and other new absentee landlords in agrarian relations did not alter these relations as sharecropping and its modes of extraction continued to exist under both landholding and landownership. Nevertheless, surplus extraction still needed to be reviewed. It was argued that with the involvement of the merchants in landownership the extraction intensified as the emphasis on cash crop production linked the rural economy to the urban market. By looking into modes of extraction of surplus it was shown that the relations of production through which a primary value was put on ownership of land and water also caused the undervaluation of labour. We showed the consequence of this undervaluation of labour by examining the various stages through which the peasants' crop was appropriated by the landlords and non-agricultural forces. This enabled us to show that at least up to 50-60 percent of the crop was appropriated by the absentee and non-agricultural forces and the remaining crop did not meet the sustaining needs of the 70 percent of the population who lived in the rural areas.

Another critical debate on the issue of surplus extraction was the significance of the extracted surplus in the Market. After we focussed on the role of the merchants and the absentees we were able to show enough evidence that supported our contention that prior to the 1962 land reform the extracted surplus from the rural economy provided the grounds for the economic development of the urban economy at the expense of the exploitation of the peasantry (Chapter Five)

After tracing the development of absentee landlordism and its particular form in the 20th century which involved merchants it is safe to claim that urban-rural relations through the dominance of absentee-landlordism on the rural economy was the major impediment to the development of the rural economy

It could be argued that the main contribution of this study for future research on rural-urban development in Iran is the significance of paying close attention to the existence of various socio-economic contexts in the pre-capitalist period. The findings in this study also suggest the importance of paying close attention to pre-capitalist formations in Iran and the various socio-economic contexts within which they were present. A research of this type may be useful in determining the full role of the tribal population in the development process. Foran (1993:118) claims that the tribal population formed 50 percent of Iran's population and even if one believes that estimate to be high we were still able to show how the tribes affected political development in Iran. Although we focussed on the issue of urban-rural relations in general a study to evaluate the effects of tribal life on the urban and rural economies would be very worthwhile.

There have been many studies which have examined the state of the peasantry since the 1962 land reform and show that little has changed. These studies look primarily at state policies with little emphasis paid to interregional mechanisms of development. This issue is now becoming a significant economic development issue in Iran. On my last research visit to Iran in 1993 there were heated debates among scholars concerned with the issue of the exploitative relations between large and small cities, on the one hand, and towns and villages on the other⁴⁷⁹. The experience gained in writing this thesis leads me to believe that these processes of unequal development need to be studied at the regional level rather than the national level and I have come to the conclusion that in order to understand these development mechanisms one needs to study these regions as independent socio-economic structures that are affecting the development of one another through the effects of class relations. In addition, what still needs to be shown is the consequence of absentee-landlordism and sharecropping practices upon the daily lives of the rural peasants as well as the impact of the merchants' investment of the siphoned-off surplus on the urban areas. These are areas which warrant serious future research.

⁴⁷⁹ Ali-zadeh (1992); Taghavi (1992); Kazemi (1991), Kazemi (1980) can be helpful in providing some theoretical and demographic insights about urban-rural relations.

Glossary

Abi:

It was used to refer to irrigated cultivation as opposed to rain-fed (daymi).

Abyar:

was a nasaq-dar member of bonehs who was responsible for irrigation of the land but was often the head of boneh as well (e.g Safi-nejad, 1989:127, 1980; Khosravi,1970).

Ahangar:

blacksmith.

Arbab:

a term used by peasants to describe landlords. The dichotomy of Arbab and Ray-yat were used together to describe the two major classes of landlords and peasants.

A-yan:

nobles and notables.

Barzegar:

a nasaq-dar peasant who was a member of the boneh and a member of the third layer in the boneh's social structure (Safi-nejad, 1989:127).

Boneh:

the Iranian unit of agricultural production which used to be dominant in Iran and was known by different names, such as Sahra, Haraseh and Kheesh in various parts of the country (see Hooglund, 1981). Safi-nejad (1989) identifies two types of bonehs: gav-bandi (oxen-owner) bonehs and landlord bonehs. In the former the oxen-owner provided the expenses and the seed for the cultivation and received more share from the product. In the latter the landlord was responsible and in turn received more shares (Ibid).

Dallal:

broker or a person who buys and sells; usually a middleman.

Dam-Abyar:

Irrigation assistant, he was a member of the second layer in the boneh's social structure.

Dang:

it was a unit of ownership of village. One dang was one-sixth of a village. In other words, a village could have only six dangs.

Dasht-ban:

village-watchman or farm-guard.

Daymi:

or rain-fed was a type of cultivation that was dependent upon irrigation by rain.

Deh-qan or Dehghan:

was usually used to describe owner-operator peasants of a fraction of rich peasants (e.g. Khosravi, 1982, 1979).

Divani land:

another term for state land (khaliseh).

Gav-band:

oxen-owner.

Hammami:

bathkeeper.

Iqta:

it was a post-Islamic term meaning 'to divide the land into pieces' (Shaygannik, 1985:81). This was a type of land assignment which first appeared during the Umayyid dynasty who dominated Iran from 661-750 A.D. The pieces of land which were given by the ruler or the state to the individuals for various reasons were called iqta (Ibid). There were two types of iqta: iqta al-tamleek and iqta al-isteqlal. While the former could be owned the latter was only used for its revenue.

Kadkhoda:

village headman.

Khan:

term used to refer to tribal leaders.

Kharaj:

this was tax that was levied on non-Muslims and usually consisted of regular Ushr tax and a variable amount of product.

Kharvar:

a unit of weight equalling 300 kilograms.

Khoshneshin:

agricultural landless labourer.

Khurdeh-Maleki:

small-landownership.

Maleki-yat:

ownership.

Mirza:

book-keeper, secretary.

Mobashir:

bailiff who was the agent of the absentee landlords.

Moluko-Tawa-yefi:

this is a concept used by Ashraf (1967) to refer to the independence of tribal forces within the Iranian social and economic context.

Mostawfi:

tax-collector.

Mozare-eh:

an Islamic term which is used to refer to sharecropping agreements (e.g. Ajami, 1976*b*; Lahsaiezadeh, 1990).

Najjar:

carpenter.

Nasaq:

or land-use right determined the position of rural work force in the boneh. Only those who had nasaq rights could be recruited in the boneh (e.g. Safi-nejad, 1989).

Pishivaran:

A plural form of pisheh-var which is used to refer to those artisans engaged in the profession of handicrafts.

Qanat:

Iran underground irrigation system (see Beaumont, 1989; and Beaumont, Bonine, McLachlan, 1989).

Ray-yat:

a general term which was applied usually to the peasants who had nasaq-rights (e.g. Khosravi, 1979:13).

Roghbeh:

it means estate and became known as Nadir Shah converted many lands into state lands called them Naderi Roghbeh.

Sahra:

it was also a unit of agricultural production similar to boneh, kheesh and haraseh.

Salaf-khari:

the practice of buying crop in advance usually by corn-chandlers. A salaf-khar was a person who bought the peasants' crop in advance with lower price.

Salmani:

barber.

Sar-abyar:

he was head of a boneh and his status was similar to Abyar's status.

Sarrafan:

money-changers. Its singular form is 'sarraf'.

Shesh-dangi village:

was a village whose six dangs were owned by the same landlord.

Suyurghal:

This type of land assignment was prevalent during the 13th and 14th centuries and it was a Mongolian land assignment type. It entailed more rights to the assignee than other type of land grants (see Keshavarz, 1984:447).

Tasarrof:

possession of land.

Tojjar:

Plural form for Tajer which means merchant.

Tuyul:

This type of land grant replaced other types of land grants such as iqta during the Safavids (1499-1736).

Tuyul-dar:

tuyul-holder.

Ulema:

religious scholars, religious leaders.

Ummal:

state officials.

Ushri Land:

in post-Islamic period, the non-muslims who converted to Islam could keep their land but paid one-tenth of their product as tax called Ushr. This type of land was termed Ushri land.

Zare-een:

The concept of Zaa-re (Zare-een is the plural form for Zaa-re) is a general term which means; he who cultivates, i.e., the tiller. This concept was not a self-explanatory concept and could be attributed to those involved in agriculture or to those with nasaq rights. Therefore, it did not have the same connotations as ray-yat when it was used alone and usually it was used with nasaq-dar to describe ray-yat.

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