

ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF IRANIAN VILLAGES

— With Special Reference to *Deh* —

MORIO ŌNO

In Iran the peasant (*ra'iyat*) lives and works in a small village called a *deh*. His production and living in this village are under the rigid control of the landlord (*mālik*). From the point of view of the landlord, the *deh* is primarily a peasant community-control mechanism; in fact, it is the base of the *mālik-ra'iyat* land system. This study attempts to place the socio-economic structure of the *deh* in theoretical perspective by analysing how the *mālik* manages to control his land as well as the patterns of social relationship which exist among the peasants.

FOREWORD

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the socio-economic structure of Iranian villages. It is my belief that a scientific study of this problem can be achieved only by personally living in a *deh*, participating in the daily life of the peasants, and observing and collecting first-hand data. This paper covers some abstractions made from the limited amount of data collected by the author during his field-research¹ in rural Iran. It is hoped that this work will prove helpful for future studies in this field.

* For convenience, the plurals of Persian words are shown throughout as being formed by the addition of an 'S' to the singular. The true Persian plurals are formed differently.

¹ Monographs published by the author in connexion with his Iranian village studies are: (1) "Iran nōson no shakai-keizai kōzō no kenkyū" (On Socio-Economic Structure of Iranian Villages) *Tōyō bunka kenkyūsho kiyō* (Memoirs of the Institute of Oriental Culture), University of Tokyo; Part I, Sā'atlū (Āzarbāyjan) No. 38, 1965, pp. 41-144; Part II, Bihjatabād (Isfahān), No. 39, 1965, pp. 209-313; Part III, Khayrābād (Shirāz), No. 40, 1966, pp. 181-290; Part IV, Ibrāhimābād (Nishābūr), No. 44, 1967, pp. 129-240. (Hereafter cited as "Iran nōson.")

(2) "Nōson chōsa ni kansuru jakkan no mondai—Iran no *Deh* ni tsuite—" (Some Problems Relating to Village Surveys—The Case of the *Deh* of Iran), *Ajia Keizai*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (January 1966), pp. 49-61.

(3) *Gozaresh-e Barresi-e Eqtesadi va Ejtemai-e Rustahay-e Nishabur: Monografi-e Dehkadeh Ebrahimabad (Nishabur)* (Report of Economic and Social Study on Nishabur's Villages: Monography of the Village Ebrahimabad), Tehran, Institute for Social Studies and Research, University of Tehran, 1967.

I. THE IRANIAN VILLAGES (*DEH*) UNDER THE *MĀLIK-RA'ĪYAT* SYSTEM

With a certain radicalism taken for granted, Iranian agriculture and village life are still basically controlled by the *mālik-ra'īyat* system, which remains the representative land-system of that country. In essence, the system involves the *mālik*² as the landlord and the *ra'īyat* as the peasant; the former allowing the latter to cultivate his land for rent (rent-in-kind). Since the Qājār Dynasty, the entire rural area of Iran is understood to have been brought under control of this land-system³ which evolved from continuous modifications in the land-systems such as the *iqṭā'* and *tūyūl*, which preceded it.

The *mālik* controls the *ra'īyat*'s production and exploits him by charging excess rent; in most cases, the *mālik* also controls other aspects of the *ra'īyat*'s life. The *mālik-ra'īyat* relationship therefore goes beyond that normally arising from the lending and renting of land between a landlord and his tenants; it is substantially a relationship of rigid control and subordination between the two. The term *mālik* implies one who controls both production and living, but it is often mistakenly associated with feudal landlords in Europe and Japan.⁴

The land reform programme begun in Iran in 1963 aims at eliminating the *māliks* by creating owner-farmers and thus ultimately putting an end to the *mālik-ra'īyat* system. It is evident that the *mālik-ra'īyat* system will outlive the current land reform under disguise and remain in essence as dominant as ever in Iranian agriculture and in the villages. Even at this moment, no serious discussion of Iranian agriculture and villages can be hoped for without dealing squarely with the *mālik-ra'īyat* system as the basic factor regulating them.

Under the *mālik-ra'īyat* system, the *ra'īyat*'s production is anchored in and his very way of life entirely determined by the *deh* or village community. The *mālik*, on the other hand, holds sway over the *ra'īyat* by using the *deh* as his tool. The *deh* is generally "possessed from outside," and it is commonly said, "this *mālik* owns several *dehs*" or "this *deh* is owned by several *māliks*." Up till now, the *deh* was, in practice, owned, ruled and often made an object of commercial bargaining without the knowledge, to say nothing of the consent, of its inhabitants. Consequently, the relationship of control and subordination between landlord and peasants which is expressed in the abstract term "the *mālik-ra'īyat* system" takes concrete form in the real structure of peasant production and living in the *deh*. Thus theoretical generalizations on the organization of Iranian agricultural or rural society should be

² *Mālik* as landlord is also called *arbāb*. The term *arbāb* also implies master or patron, and is often used for a *mālik* who holds sway over both production and living.

³ As for the historical development of the land-system in Iran, Professor A. K. S. Lambton's works, particularly *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, London, Oxford University Press, 1953, are quite enlightening.

⁴ Prof. Lambton, among others, is also very critical of this type of error. (*ibid*, pp. 53-54)

taken up through an analysis of the actual conditions of the socio-economic structure of the *deh* under the *mālik-ra'iyat* system. The above reasons motivated the author to engage in field-research geared to the collection of first-hand data in the *deh* itself.

Those who are primarily interested in studying Iranian agriculture, taking it as an independent sector of the Iranian economy, side by side with manufacturing industry and other economic sectors, would be tempted to approach their problem through scrutinization of such variables as productivity, the degree and scope of mechanization of the means of production, labour-force, price of products, profitability, etc., the routine method of theoretical study developed in the discipline of agricultural economics in general. For them "village" would not mean any more than the antonym of "city," that is, an area where farming remains as the mainstay of human activities. The significance of starting an analytical study of Iranian agriculture from structural analysis of the *deh* would most probably be very much underrated, if not totally ignored, by them. However, Iranian agriculture as it stands today has not attained sufficient maturity, so to speak, to be adequately dealt with by means of theoretical analysis based on economics. When viewed from the narrowest angle, limited to farm production alone, Iranian agriculture may well pose as one of the industries but, as mentioned above, its productive function is confined within a framework of control and subordination, the *mālik-ra'iyat* system, which is beyond the reach of pure economic theorization. In other words, Iranian agriculture is less an independent entity than an instrument for the *mālik's* possession and control of the *deh*; agricultural operations based on the spontaneity of farmers themselves are yet to develop in Iran. This should be enough to convince the readers that Iranian agriculture, unlike that of the advanced countries, is hardly a suitable object for conventional theoretical economic study.

The land reform now under way claims to be liberating the *ra'iyat* from the hands of the *mālik* and, in concrete terms, the weakening of the *mālik's* power vested in the *deh*, or the liberation of the *deh* itself, has been emphasized up till now. This may be proved by the fact that the maximum emphasis has been laid on the reform of the socio-economic structure of the *deh*. At the initial stage of the land reform in Iran, the task of setting ceilings on the landlord's holdings was taken up as in any other country, but, once the programme really got under way, the liberation of the *deh* has been pushed irrespective of the size of the holdings in the hands of the *māliks*. Understandably this is partly for the technical reason that ceilings on the landlord's holdings can be established only after completion of legal land surveys which might run for a great number of years at a stretch, but important is the practical reason that the *mālik's* power comes not merely from the size of their holdings but also from their control of the *ra'iyat* through manipulation of the *deh*. The importance of handling the *deh* as a unit is largely based on this consideration.

Has the *deh* maintained to this day those characteristics peculiar to the

village community which the Iranian peasants founded in the remote past for the maintenance of their own production and living? Or, on the other hand, was the *deh* after remaining in its primitive or original patterns for sometime, then brought under the *mālik-ra'iyat* system, which had developed from ancient land-system, and eventually reorganized to meet the purpose of the *mālik* until it came to assume its present form? The pattern of formation and growth of the village community in Iran is by itself an interesting piece of historical research and, in fact, an analysis of the factors which give momentum to its formation is really essential in shedding light on its socio-economic structure which, by now, has been turned into the basis of the *mālik-ra'iyat* system. Factors which give momentum to *deh* formation may be classified as follows: (1) In the remote past, people settled down in a communal society and began maintaining an order of self-sufficiency within a limited area of land surrounding each communal village. As village production increased and the economic life of its inhabitants improved, however, the self-sufficient economy began breaking apart as the *deh* exchanged its surplus products for those which it was short of with the outside world. It did not take very long until labour, too, became an objective of sale and purchase, and the outflow of labour from the *deh* took place as circumstances encouraged it. Let us call such momentum and process of *deh* formation as the "communal body/natural village" type. This type of natural village later fell into the hands of landlords by means of specific land-system; although most of them were brought under the *mālik-ra'iyat* system, some still retain the basic characteristics of the communal-natural village pattern of olden days. Several examples of latter case can be found among those *deh* which are scattered in the valleys of the Alburz and Zāgrus Mountain Ranges where it has been comparatively easy to obtain irrigation-water. (2) The second momentum behind *deh* formation is discernible in the case where minority groups and/or religious groups consolidated their own settlements, with the explicit or implicit desire of adhering to their own social system or "way of life"⁶ in isolation from the surrounding majority groups. Some such religious *deh* were built by the Assyrians and the Armenians (both Christians), as well as the Zoroastrian groups. Among them the Kurd, a part of the nomadic tribes, may be mentioned. Not a few share in their origin those elements common to the first group ("communal body/natural village" type) and some *deh* started by the minority groups maintain to this day characteristics apparently attributable to the communal body/natural village pattern. Some of them, having been captured by the Muslim *māliks*, today assume an appearance very similar to, and are eventually living under the same circumstances as, those of the Muslim population in so far as they are invariably under the control of the *mālik-ra'iyat* system. In essence, however, they are unmistakably non-Muslim and betray their minority group origin and traits in their social order as well as in their way of life. (3) The last type of *deh* comprises those partially created by the *mālik*. The formation and develop-

⁶ Detail description is given in Section III-2 below.

ment of this type of *deh* is wholly due to the *mālik*'s initiative in matters such as the obtaining of land by some means or other to begin with; the construction of *qanāt* (underground irrigation canal) to make irrigation-water available; the creation of *deh* by building *qal'eh* (mud-walled enclosure) to serve for peasant habitation; the scraping together of peasants from the nearby *deh* to serve as settlers in the newly-created *deh* and eventually turning them into so many *ra'iyat*-in-cultivation for the *mālik*. Thus, the momentum behind the formation of such *deh* is entirely due to the *mālik*. The *deh* which today are most rigidly controlled by the *mālik* understandably owe their formation to this last type and many of the *deh* now subjugated to 'umdeh *mālik* and *khurdeh mālik* (heirs to 'umdeh *mālik*) are typically of such creation.

Through this tentative categorization of the momentum behind *deh* formation into the above three types, the author is not so much concerned with numerical comparisons among different types of *deh* as to call attention to the basic factors leading to *deh* formation. The above discussion is primarily based on the findings obtained during the author's on-the-spot research in Iranian villages and, in fact, should be verified by additional historical materials before it can be considered conclusive. Yet the author has been compelled to reflect upon the factors leading to *deh* formation in the process of his rural survey there and is still of the opinion that clarification of the formation-momentum will be quite helpful in analysing the socio-economic structure of the present-day *deh*.

Coming back to the socio-economic structure of the *deh*, the author has to deal with numerous factors conditioning or regulating the *deh*. Of these, he likes to name those primarily working to turn it, under the *mālik-ra'iyat* system, into an instrument of *mālik*'s control over the *ra'iyat*, "vertical conditions." The *deh*, at the same time, exists as an arena of production and living of the peasants themselves and, therefore, those conditions which regulate the peasants' social relations, in which are blended the peculiarities of the communal or natural village and the religious and/or racial way of life, need to be identified. These will, then, be named "horizontal conditions" in the present study. The former conditions work upon the vertical phase of the socio-economic structure of the *deh*, while the latter do so upon the horizontal phase of it. The *deh* where vertical conditions are prominent or predominant are represented by those under the 'umdeh-*mālik*, while those predominantly horizontal in their socio-economic conditions as well as structure are among the *deh* settled by minority nomadic tribes. The majority of *deh* can be placed in between these two extremes.

These two phases have been and are still, responsible for the socio-economic structure of each *deh* but neither of them work independently, free from the other. The author's analytical study of the *deh* which follows, therefore, must focus on the complex interaction of these two factors.

II. VERTICAL CONDITIONS—FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR *MĀLIK'S* CONTROL OF THE *DEH*

As mentioned in I above, the *deh* is usually "possessed from outside" by a *mālik* and the Iranian *deh*-community is very rigidly controlled by the *mālik* under the *mālik-ra'iyat* system. A study of the terms and conditions of *mālik* control of the *deh*, therefore, needs to be taken as the first step in considering our problem.

1. *The Aim of Mālik's Control of the Deh and Mālik's Right of Control*

In the course of the author's tentative classification of the formative impulse of the *deh* into three categories, it has been said that the Iranian *deh* has a primary heritage of the communal/natural village although its socio-economic structure was reorganized by the landlord to facilitate his external control under a land-system which had undergone not a small degree of historical change. Under the *mālik-ra'iyat* system, most *dehs* have been and still are remote-controlled by *māliks* who reside in cities. The structural characteristics of such *deh* show considerable variations from those of the Japanese village or *mura*.

The Japanese *mura* too can be placed in one of the above categories, its primarily communal/natural village substance having undergone structural reorganization under the landlord's control.⁶ The Japanese *mura*, however, keeps far stronger characteristics of the communal/natural village. Japanese landlords (*jinushi*) were living in a *mura* together with the peasants who were their tenants (*kosaku*). On the first visit to an Iranian *deh*, the author asked a peasant "How many *māliks* are there in this *deh*?" with the intention, of course, of looking into the land-holding system there. The answer which he received was: "There are none." Remembering that the *mālik* who owned that particular *deh* was surely living in a far-off city, the author realized that his spontaneous question was based on Japanese common-sense and hastily asked "How many *māliks* own this *deh*?" The answer was: "There are... *māliks* who own this *deh*." Analogically speaking, Japanese landlords enjoyed "territorial privileges" by virtue of their belonging to the *mura*, while the Iranian *deh* belongs to the "personal privileges" of the *mālik*. Even in Japan, not all the landlords were domiciled in *mura*, but those who were not used to be distinguished as "absentee-landlords." Such a distinction betrays that absenteeism of landlord from his *mura* was rather a rare case in Japan.

Solidarity among the constituent members of the *mura* (village community) has been strongly maintained, even after the start of the rapid transformation from the old feudal pattern of society to a capitalist one after 1868. The existence of *iriaichi* (common; usually a forest or pasture-land open for common use of the villagers) helped maintain and is representative of the strong

⁶ In the present study, the landlord-tenant (*jinushi-kosaku*) system prevalent in the Japanese *mura* (village) during the period from the Meiji Restoration (1868) to the Land Reform at the end of the Second World War is referred to.

solidarity among the people living together in a *mura*. Landlords shared with peasants, who were their tenants, the faith that were invariably protégés of the same village patron-deity. In the *mura*, the villagers' sense of ancestor-worship has been quite firm even though none could be sure of the date when their ancestors first settled down in the village; yet, the descendants of those families who migrated into the village not more than 100 years were often treated discriminately, simply because of their relative newness.

The Japanese *mura* is characterized by the fact that it emplaces both lord and tenants within communal human relations; still, the principle of the landlord-tenant system—the landlord allowing his tenants to work voluntarily on his land in return for a rent in kind at a prefixed rate which was to be paid by the latter out of their yields. This principle did not fail to realize itself in full measures in spite of the above-noted villager-to-villager relationship between the two. It might be said that the most rigid aspect of the landlord-tenant relationship was made ambiguous or less apparent, at least superficially, through the permeation of ethical as well as of moral doctrines of the feudalistic age, on the one hand, and the propaganda of physiocracy or the “agriculture-first” principle, on the other. More precisely, the landlord was requested to be “virtuous” and “merciful” towards his tenants, while tenants were expected to have a proper esteem for their landlord as of higher status, if not because of his personal goodness. A relationship of mutual trust was always looked upon as an ideal between these two, in spite of and irrespective of, the cold fact that the former was the controller and the latter, the controlled. The norm of the human-relations between the landlord and his tenants as illustrated in the above is in accord with the communal human-relations which prevailed among the villagers as so many primary constituents of the self-same *mura*. Then, the human relationships which helped bind the community were in a sense, a means of justifying the relationship of control and subordination.

In Iran, the *mālik* exploits the peasants, his *ra'iyats* with the sheer purpose of getting labour out of them and to squeeze land-rent out of them, and his means of controlling the *deh* is attuned unscrupulously rather directly to meet this purpose. It is in this disregard of any scruples that the difference between Iran and Japan is clarified most. The deep-rooted sense of mistrust between the *mālik* and his *ra'iyat* is seldom witnessed between the landlord and his tenants in Japan. Entirely unlike Japan, it is never taken as degrading of his character for any *mālik* to openly speak of his bad faith in his own *ra'iyat*. Similarly, it is regarded as natural for the *ra'iyat* to express their dissatisfaction openly to third persons. But all this and other similar external factors do not affect the regular payment of rent by the *ra'iyat* to their *mālik*.

The term *mālik* is the Persian equivalent for land-owner. A *mālik* who owns one *deh* in its entirety is called an *'umdeh mālik* and one who shares possession of one *deh* with other *māliks* (in terms of land or proceeds) is called a *khurdeh mālik*. The *mālik*'s ownership rarely has anything to do with cultivation, but, purely for his raising rent from the *ra'iyats*. The most typical

pattern of *mālik's* *deh* control can be seen when the *deh* is entirely owned and wholly controlled by an *'umdeh mālik*. Irrespective of the size of the *deh* in question, the *'umdeh-mālik's* control over it is complete, almost absolute. On the other hand, when several *māliks* share the possession and control of any specific *deh*, their individual control is not so strong, as it rests on the balance-of-power among the *khurdeh mālik*.

The rights for *deh*-control are freely negotiable. Suppose, there are two *deh* each 6 *dāng* large. One *mālik* may dispose of a whole *deh* of 6 *dāng* and buy 2 *dāng* out of the other *deh*. When a transaction involving an entire *deh* or a part of it is concluded, not only the lands change hands but the peasants who have tenanted the specific lands will also be brought under the control of the new *mālik*. The *deh*, therefore, is not merely a plot of land covering a certain area but is also a unit of management which brings some constant amount of rent yearly in kind or in cash. The *mālik*, if he so desires, may contribute a whole *deh* in his possession or a part as *vaqf* of *masjid*.

The *mālik* sometimes leases out to a third person, on contract, the managerial rights of any *deh* in his possession, while retaining the proprietorship of that *deh* as *mālik*. The proprietorship of a *deh* is thus separable from its managerial rights. A person who leases the managerial right of a *deh* is called a *mustājir*. Once a *mustājir* takes over the managerial rights of a *deh*, he is authorized to control its *ra'iyats* as if he were their *mālik*. The *ra'iyats* often fail to distinguish *mustājir* from *mālik*. In fact, the managerial right of the *deh* donated as *vaqf* of *masjid* are often leased out to a *mustājir* by *mutavallī* (*vaqf* care-taker).

2. The Pivot of Deh-Control—the Role of the Kadkhudā—

The *mālik* controls and sucks rent up from his *ra'iyats* while living away from his *deh*, usually in a far-off city. This is made possible because the *mālik* keeps someone who fulfils the pivotal function of *deh*-control in lieu of himself in each one of his *deh*. This, the *kadkhudā*, is one of the *deh's* peasants but is appointed by the *mālik* for such a responsible job. Since the days of Rezā Shāh's rule, when the *deh* began to be accepted as the smallest rural administrative unit in the country, the government began to utilize the *kadkhudā* as something like an administrative head of the village. The *kadkhudā*, is expected to act on behalf of three different bodies, viz: villagers, *mālik* and government, simultaneously.

The author's research work carried on by personally living in a *deh* among its *ra'iyat* was made feasible only after interviewing its *kadkhudā*. *Kadkhudā* personifies in himself authority originating from three different sources: villagers, *mālik* and government, and he has to keep a balance among these three different powers. In approaching a *deh*, the author had to contact its *kadkhudā* through the good offices of any one of these authorities. Indeed, nobody can approach a *deh* without the backing of one of these powers. What sort of treatment one might enjoy in the *deh* in question is determined by the *kadkhudā's* judgment, which in turn depends on which one of these

three authorities one is affiliated with. If one approaches a *deh* with the introduction of its *mālik* the *kadkhudā* does not make any difficulties about his entry as the *kadkhudā* is the *mālik's* agent in the *deh*, but the *ra'iyat* will not be very happy with this kind of guest, towards whom they may assume an air which will implicitly betray their deep-rooted enmity towards their *mālik*. Such a situation would make his inquiries for reliable data from amongst the peasants a difficult job. Next, what happens if one tries to approach a *deh* with the introduction of the government? At present when land reform is in progress, the *deh* is invariably placed under considerable governmental pressure and the *māliks* are generally tolerant of the *deh* surveys undertaken by the government. The *kadkhudā* who is not ignorant of the situation, will come out to co-operate in the survey work. Lastly, when one approaches a *deh* as one of the acquaintances of the peasants, he will be treated just as one of their neighbours or even relatives, very much more warmly than in the two previous cases. This is true, however, within the limits of personal dealings with the villagers, and once the matter goes deeper into the realm of the *deh* survey—when one's dealings develop from a private sphere to an official one—the peasants become suddenly incommunicative from the fear of any interference of either *mālik* or government or both. An analysis of the position of the *kadkhudā*, resting as it does on the balance-of-power among the three different sources of authority, can provide many clues of extreme importance for one's analysis of the socio-economic structure of the Iranian *deh*.

3. *Cultivation-rights and the Farmland-system*

When a *mālik* makes arrangements for a peasant to cultivate his land, he generally bestows cultivation-rights on the peasant. Such cultivation-rights are to be effected, as a principle, through a contract between one *mālik* and one peasant; in many actual cases, when the *mālik's* land needs to be cultivated by several peasants, cultivation-rights become effective only when several peasants en bloc enter into a contract with a single *mālik*. The mode of farm-labour and rent-payment will be regulated by the pattern of contract between *mālik* and peasant, whether it is between one *mālik* and one peasant or between one *mālik* and several peasants. Such *mālik*-peasant relationships take concrete form in the farmland-system and the *mālik* uses the farmland-system as a tool to control his peasants.

While there are multiple patterns of farmland-systems all over the country and they are invariably used by the *māliks* to control peasants, these farmland-systems do reflect the traditional forms of cultivation originally shaped in the communal/natural villages in olden days. They seem to have been turned into *mālik* instruments of peasant-control at a later stage of Iranian history. Based on his field-research, the author deems it proper to classify Iranian farmland-systems into the following three types:

(1) The *Şaharā*-System

This type of farmland-system was observed in Ibrāhimābād,⁷ a *deh* 30 km.

⁷ *Gozaresh-e*, pp. 11-24; "Iran nōson," Part IV, pp. 159-160, 170-174.

west of Nishābūr in Khurāsān province. This is a *deh* managed by 'umdeh *mālik* and its main crops are wheat, barley, cotton, and beets. In Ibrāhīmābād, each *ra'iyat* has independent cultivation-rights (*nasaq*) and, therefore, the form of contract is that between one *mālik* and one *ra'iyat*. In fact, however, five *nasaq*-holders are used to form a team called a *ṣaḥarā*, with four head of cattle for ploughing (2 pairs) and 4 donkeys belonging to any one of them. This *deh* consists of eight such *ṣaḥarā*, each *ṣaḥarā* cultivating the land which has been allocated to it in harmonious team-work among these five *ra'iyats*, who pay their rent-in-kind jointly. Under this system, there can be no individuality allocated land, for which any one *ra'iyat* can claim cultivation-rights and none of them pays rent to the *mālik* individually. This *deh* embraces 24 blocks of land (*āyish*) in total and each *āyish* is sub-divided into 8 sectors (*bijeh*). One *bijeh* in every *āyish* is allocated to each *ṣaḥarā*, giving it a total of 24 *bijeh* scattered all over the *deh*'s land. The five co-operating *ra'iyat* cultivate this *bijeh* today and that *bijeh* tomorrow.

Out of these five, one is made the head of the *ṣaḥarā* (*sālār*) by the *mālik*'s choice and this *sālār* supervises his *ṣaḥarā*, acting as the terminal agent of the *mālik* for his control of the *deh*. The eight *sālār* from eight *ṣaḥarā* come under the command of the *kadkhudā* who is the *mālik*-appointed manager of the entire *deh*. While the *kadkhudā* is one of the *ra'iyat*, he does not belong to any particular *ṣaḥarā*.

Nasaq is given to a *ra'iyat* by a *mālik* upon verbal contract and, therefore, it is far from secure. A *ra'iyat* who needs to take a rest extending for a period of less than a year may lease out his *nasaq* to someone other than a *ra'iyat* and a *nasaq*-holder can also employ a few wage-labourers to work in his stead if it is for a short period of time. This *nasaq* is given or retrieved at any moment at the mercy of the *mālik*. Few of the *ra'iyat* have been settled in this *deh* longer than 10 years.

The *ṣaḥarā* system is prevalent in Khurāsān province, but the number of *saharā* per *deh* and the number of its members vary from *deh* to *deh*. Ibrāhīmābād, too, used to consist of 3 *ṣaḥarā* each of 6 *ra'iyats* until several years ago. A similar system, *buneh*, is in practice in the neighbourhood of Tehran.

(2) The *Mazra'eh* System

Khayrābād^e is an 'umdeh *mālik*'s *deh* some 20 km east of Takht-i Jamshid (Persepolice) in Fārs province. This *deh* was created about 40 years ago by the wish of one *mālik*. Since it was built, wheat and barley have been its principal crops, to which beets were later added. Each *ra'iyat*, in principle, holds *gāv* (cultivation-right) through bilateral agreement with the *mālik*. This *deh* is divided into 3 *mazra'ehs* (cultivable land) and each *ra'iyat* belongs to one of these 3 *mazra'ehs*. The *mazra'eh* works out a plan of re-allocation of its land among its *gāv* holders through mutual discussion among themselves. Every year the *mazra'eh* land is evenly redistributed among the *ra'iyat*, and the allocatees of the neighbouring lands may work together. Farming of the

^e "Iran nōson," Part III, pp. 201-210. This *deh* was liberated under the land reform and the statement here refers to the conditions prevailing there in pre-reform days.

land is the personal responsibility of each individual *ra'iyat*, and joint-cultivation is not the prerequisite. The rent takes the form of share-rent-in-kind, payable to the *mālik* by each *ra'iyat* separately. Therefore, under the *mazra'eh* system, the individuality of each *ra'iyat* is safeguarded to a somewhat greater degree than under the *ṣaharā* system, however, has certain limitations. As the *mazra'eh* group re-allocates its land among its members afresh every year, the site of each one's *gāv* changes from year to year, and the *mazra'eh* group does not readily allow any one of its members to grow any particular crops, like vegetables, for instance, as he pleases on the land allocated to him this year, because the group is not in a position to tell to whom the land in question will be allocated next year.

The over-all management of the three *mazra'eh* in Khayrābād is done by a *kadkhudā* who holds one *gāv* in each of the three *mazra'eh* in the village. The area and fertility of the land, as the number of *ra'iyat* among whom it is divided, differ widely from one *mazra'eh* to another and, accordingly, the size and fertility of the *gāv* also vary. Consequently, a considerable degree of unevenness, in terms of the crop each *ra'iyat* can obtain from his *gāv*, arises, depending on which *mazra'eh* he happens to belong. As a *gāv* is given to the *ra'iyat* by a *mālik* through verbal contract, it is very unstable: the *mālik* can shift the *gāv* of one *ra'iyat* from a fertile *mazra'eh* to a less fertile *mazra'eh* at his own will and the *ra'iyat* may be deprived of his *gāv* at any moment.

The *mazra'eh*-system is the farmland-system prevalent in Fārs province. Although all *ra'iyats* have been freed from *mālik* control in Khayrābād thanks to the land reform, the *mazra'eh*-system remains intact as the basic pattern of cultivation. It is also one basis of the communal rules regulating the peasants there.

(3) Cases Where Peasant-Co-operative Work Is Not Necessary

Sā'atlū,⁹ an Assyrian *deh* possessed by 7 absentee *khurdeh mālik*, some 20 km. south of Rizā'iyeh in Āzarbāyjān province will be introduced here. This *deh* chiefly produces wheat and barley grown by *ra'iyats* who take over their cultivation-rights directly from a *mālik*. The cultivation-rights last on a specific patch of land for years on/end and a *ra'iyat* works and pays rent (share-rent-in-kind) out of his proceeds, independently from his neighbours. One peasant, again, can be a *ra'iyat* to several *māliks*. In this *deh*, therefore, there exists a rigid relationship of control and subordination between *mālik* and *ra'iyat* and, yet, no communal regulations are working upon the peasants as in the case of the two previous examples. The cultivation-rights in the hands of the *ra'iyat* are far from stable in this *deh* also. Still, a majority of the *ra'iyat* here have vineyards of their own which they cultivate side by side with wheat and barley on their *mālik*'s land. The position of the peasants in Sā'atlū is definitely much higher than that of the two previous cases belonging to the *ṣaharā* and *mazra'eh* systems.

Bihjatābād,¹⁰ a *khurdeh-malik's deh* owned by small *mālik* who are mainly

⁹ "Iran nōson," Part I, pp. 71-76.

¹⁰ "Iran nōson," Part II, pp. 232-245.

living in Işfahān, is situated at about 80 km. south of Işfahān. Paddy and wheat are the two main crops of this *deh*. These crops are raised by the peasants who pay rent-in-kind at a fixed rate their *mālik* through *mustājir*, but there exist no cultivator-groups as in Sāt'alū.

From a comparison of the above three types of farmland system we may gather that the *şaharā* and *mazra'eh* systems are commonly adopted in those *deh* communities owned by 'umdeh *mālik* or in those which, though 'umdeh *mālik* ownership has disintegrated due to inheritance by subsequent generations, retain many essential characteristics of the original form of ownership. While the first two types are usually seen in those *deh*-communities which were created by the *mālik*'s initiative, the third type is found in such *deh* whose formation owed more to the peasants' own initiative than to the *mālik*'s and, therefore, the latter's control is comparatively weaker than in the two previous cases.

4. Forms of Land-Rent

In the preceding discussion, we have been mainly concerned with an analysis of the mode of the landlord's control of the *deh* under the *mālik-ra'iyat* system, by focusing on the socio-economic structure of the *deh*. The basis of the *mālik*'s control, however, lies in the *mālik-ra'iyat* relationship of levying and paying rent and the severity of the former's control and the latter's subordination must be reflected in the forms of rent. The forms of rent prevalent in today's Iran might be broadly classified into the following three groups:

(1) Labour Rent (*bīgāri*)

When the *mālik* requires labour services, as in the case of the repairing of the *mālik*'s *qanāt* in Ibrāhimābād, unpaid peasant labour is usually conscripted by allocation among its *şaharā*-groups. Such labour seldom takes a regular and independent form but is generally levied upon the *ra'iyat* in addition to or side by side with the share-rent-in-kind. As most such labour is said to be for the common good of the public, the *ra'iyats* themselves do not seem to mind it very much.

(2) Share-Rent-in-Kind (*ra'iyati*)

This is the commonest form of rent in Iran but the ratio of crop-sharing between *mālik* and *ra'iyat* differs widely according to the kinds of crop, power-relations between *mālik* and *ra'iyat*, traditional ways and customs, etc. and no uniformity exists even among neighbouring *deh* of similar type. Land, water, animal, seed, and labour count as the five basic elements of Iranian agriculture and the general rule of crop-sharing eventually falls upon the element-sharing between *mālik* and *ra'iyat*. This does not mean, however, that element-sharing by the two brings sharing of 2/5 of the crop. The *mālik* generally contributes land and water and the *ra'iyat*, animal and labour, while seeds may be at times provided by the *mālik* and at others by the *mālik* and *ra'iyat* jointly. As the *mālik* is increasingly keen nowadays in developing deep wells equipped with power-driven pumps, the *ra'iyati* involves joint management of farms by

the *mālik* and *ra'iyat*, but it essentially differs from the modern type of share-cropping one finds in America, for example, because *ra'iyatī* is after all an integral part of the severe control of *mālik* over the *ra'iyat*.

Share-rent-in-cash has been introduced as a variation of share-rent-in-kind. In Ibrāhīmābād, share-rent-in-kind was the ruling form of land-rent so long as the cultivation of wheat and barley occupied most of the land, but since cash crops like cotton and beets began to be grown, payment of rent in cash has also been introduced. Payment in cash is, in principle, the same as payment of rent-in-kind, but as long as the marketing of produce and subsequent share calculations are left to the *mālik*, the possibility of the *ra'iyat* being cheated will remain.

(3) *Fixed Rate Rent-in-Kind (ijāreyī)*

This is a prevalent form of land rent in the paddy belt on the Caspian Sea. The same form of rent is being adopted in Bihjatābād in Iṣfahān for paddy production. A peasant working under this system is no longer a *ra'iyat* in the pure sense of the word. Any increase in his productivity will, under this rent system, result in an increase of his income, and the peasant's lot is far better than if he were paying rent-in-kind. Land Reform now in progress in Iran is instituting the *ijāreyī* system, as for example in *vaqf*, where it has been installed for the next 99 years.

(1), (2), and (3) above indicate that the forms of land rent have evolved from *biḡārī* to *ijāreyī*. The older forms of rent are more likely to be found in *deh* owned by *'umdeh-mālik* and conforming to the *ṣaḡarā* and *māzra'eh* types of system than in *deh* owned by *khurdeh māliks*, where peasants enjoy more freedom in production and living from either *mālik* or communal controls.

III. HORIZONTAL CONDITIONS REGULATING THE *DEH* —THE SOCIETY OF *DIHQĀN* (VILLAGER)

Apart from the vertical conditions regulating the *deh* which are related to *mālik* control of the *ra'iyat*, we need to look into such elements as traditional human relations, way of life, cultural patterns etc., which regulate the peasants' production and living in and around the *deh* in, so to speak, a horizontal manner. In this connexion, the author would like to dwell for some time upon a few problems.

1. *Social Stratification among the Dihqān*

Dihqān generally stands for villager and yet this term is scarcely used in addressing or designating anyone in the *deh* itself. The *deh* residents almost always use different designations based on class distinctions which can be broadly divided into the three following categories:

(1) *Khurdeh mālik* (owner-farmer)

In the Persian language, there is no distinction, at least in daily conversation, between the owner of the land and one who, while owning land, allows peasants to cultivate it in return for rent. Accordingly, there is no

word for owner-farmer, nor is it required until it becomes absolutely necessary to make this distinction. *Khurdeh mālīk* can mean two different types of land-owner and is rather confusing for us. In this case, the author means the land-owner who cultivates his own land with his family-labour as the main energy source, and using his own means of agricultural production. Such owner-farmers obviously occupy the upper level of village society, both in terms of economic prosperity and social respect, free from *mālīk* control. The income level of the *dehs* or districts where owner-farmers represent a sizeable portion of the population is, of course, higher than that of *dehs* or districts where this is not the case. In Sā'atlū in Āzarbāyjan, though a majority of the villagers are *ra'iyats*, many of them are *khurdeh mālīk* in so far as they are owner-farmers of vineyards. The current land reform aims at creating owner-farmers, *khurdeh mālīk* in the sense used here, out of *ra'iyat* who have been under *mālīk* control. Once freed from *mālīk* control, the *ra'iyat* becomes a *dihqān-i āzād* or free villager. *Khurdeh mālīk* owner-farmers are more numerous in *dehs* whose origin can be traced to communal/natural villages or the minority/religious groups referred to above. As such, Cham-i Taft, a Zoroastrian *deh* in the Yard district, may be pointed out as an example.

(2) *Zāri'* (holders of cultivation-rights)

Zāri' means one who, though not owning the land which he tills, is duly given cultivation rights of this land by the *mālīk*. One, (sometimes two) *zāri'* come from each family, and the cultivation rights given to the *zāri'* are generally inheritable from one generation to the next. When one visits a *deh* and asks how many peasants there are, the answer is the number of *zāri'* or the number of families having one or two of their members as *zāri'*. People of a class lower than the *zāri'*-class are not counted. While most *deh* are actually under the control of a *mālīk*, the majority of *deh*-dwellers consists of *zāri'*, who, in fact, represent the core of villagers. Strictly speaking, the *zāri'* should be further split into several sub-classes. Irrespective of the size of income, the relationship binding the *zāri'* to his *mālīk* is entirely different according to the type of rent he has to pay to the *mālīk*. The differences among the sub-classes are further sharpened by the differences in the quantity of the means of production in his possession—other than land—such as cattle and the number of labourers in his employment. A distinction is thus made between the higher and the lower *zāri'*, who are called by different designations in some regions: in the neighbourhood of Tehran; a *zāri'* who both possesses cattle for ploughing and employs *khūshnīshīn* is called *gāvband*, and he who owns hardly any means of production, *barzīgar*. They are nevertheless, all *zāri'* and all hold cultivation rights of the land they till. To obtain cultivation rights from a *mālīk* means simultaneously to acquire residential rights in the *deh*, and the day that a *zāri'* is deprived of his cultivation rights, he will most probably have to leave the *deh* with his family members.

(3) *Khūshnīshīn* (those who have no cultivation rights)

Zāri', because they are entitled to cultivation rights by heritage, are counted by families but *khūshnīshīn*, that is those who have no cultivation

rights, are simply counted by heads. They are allowed to live in the *deh* as a reserve force to occasionally supply auxiliary labour to the *zāri*'s or *khurdeh māliks*, or as peddlers of daily necessities, petty broker/merchants of farm products and, sometimes as public servants of the *deh*. Their domicile in the *deh* is tolerated by custom and, excepting those engaged in public service such as *dashtbān* (field watchman), *mīrāb* (irrigation water distributor), *hammamī* (bath-keeper), *salmānī* (barber), *chūpān* (shepherd) and so on, posts which have long been carried down from the past communal/natural village days, their residential rights are far from secure. They usually get such public assignments through nomination by the *mālik* and simultaneously obtain legal residential rights equal to those by the *zāri*'s. *Khūshnīshīns* have not been taken up as one of the objectives of the land reform programme now under way in Iran.

The class distinction among *dihqāns* (villagers) is not supposed to have been entrenched in the Iranian social order as in a feudalistic society, nor are the *mālik-ra'iyat* relations considered fatal or status-bound, but rather economic or material in nature, with their relative positions dependent on the levying and the paying of rent. Social distinction or stratification due to such factors as head-family vs. branch-families, boss vs. henchmen or age-group is not known in Iran, unlike conditions in Japanese villages. Social stratification in the Iranian *deh* does not seem to have been affected to any recognizable degree by racial, national, or religious factors.

2. *Way of Life in the Iranian Deh*

The social stratification among peasants noted above is due more to *mālik* control over them than to human relations among them. We may dare to say that, with the society under Islamic influences, the social stratification which had been established in the *deh* suffered little impact from racial, national, or religious factors. The difference of people's faith and the heterogeneity of blood among the races did sometimes nurture considerable prejudices against each other, but these did not take the form of discriminatory treatment based on social stratification.

The social elements peculiar to peasants living in one *deh* are not the same as those in others and it is difficult to establish any uniformity among them. The way of life in each *deh* has been determined by an amalgam of various ingredients such as racial, national, religious, and linguistic elements, plus habits and customs of the villagers. The most eloquent examples are the *dehs* settled by nomadic and minority groups. While a kind of nationwide standardization of these elements can be observed in Japan, the situation is quite different in Iran where each and every *deh* has, so to speak, its own particular way of blending social ingredients.

The common language in the Āzarbāyjān district is Turkish with a strong local accent, and the Muslim people which have adopted this tongue as their primary language are normally called Turks. They share, to more or less the same degree as people living in other provinces, the consciousness of being Iranian. They consider Turkish their "mother tongue." A sense of

nationalism, even though somewhat subliminal, surely binds them together. The way of life which has been formulated with such an idea is somewhat different from that of the non-Turkish-speaking people. In the same province, Assyrian (Nestorian) and Armenian Christian *dehs* are scattered like tiny islands in the ocean of Turks. The *deh* of the semi-nomadic tribes called Kurds are also there and these minority tribe *dehs* maintain their own way of life inalienable from their own language, kinship organization, customs, and religions and, therefore, although they all use Turkish as their common language, they are inevitably differentiated from each other. Political, economic and social measures originating at the centre meet different reactions from these tribes according to the peculiarities of their own way of life.

In this connexion, an example of Khayrābād in Fārs province is rather interesting. Khayrābād, as explained above, is a *deh* which was created by one *'umdeh mālīk*, who induced a nomadic tribe called Lashānī to settle there as a farming population. The Lashānī settled down in Khayrābād as a group of *ra'iyats*, and did not reproduce their traditional social order as long as they were bound by the *mālīk-ra'iyat* system which was controlling their *deh*, even though their way of life was no doubt somewhat strange compared with that of other *dehs*. After Khayrābād and its villagers were liberated from the *mālīk-ra'iyat* system, thanks to the land reform, the Lashānī did not lose time in unanimously electing their *khān* as the *kadkhudā*, thus preparing for adventurous post-reform days when determined leadership was the topmost necessity. The neighbouring *deh* lagged behind Lashānī Khayrābād in squarely meeting that challenge quickly and positively. The loyalty which the Lashānī in the liberated Khayrābād show today to their *khān*, from whom the authority of the past pastoral days had long been substantially gone, is extremely sincere despite this and of a kind which the pre-reform *mālīk* had never known. Khayrābād today is as different from the nomadic encampment of tents of bygone pastoral days as its *kadkhudā* is different from the chieftain of the nomads. And yet it was the traditional way of life which used to regulate the human relations among the nomads that gave new strength to the people's unity under modern circumstances.

The original way of life of the people is likewise reflected in their production. The example of the Zoroastrians will illustrate this. The Zoroastrians are far more agriculturally-minded people than the ordinary Muslim farmers. Farming had long been implemented in their way of life and agriculture occupies a supreme part of their life while the Muslim has a general inclination to take cultivation as a toilsome labour forced upon him under the land-system.

3. Dictatorship and *Qeid va Band-i Ijtīmā'ī*

Two conspicuous characteristics are found in the human relations of the Iranians, common to both urban and rural people. They are comparatively more obvious in the rural areas due to accentuation by the *mālīk-ra'iyat* system.

One is the relationship between senior and junior or high and low. Even when the determination of vertical position is due to functional reasons, such as chief vs. subordinates, professor vs. students, *mālik* vs. *ra'iyat*, etc., the highly-posted assumes an exalted posture with near-absolute authority over the lower while the lower is forced to submit fully to the authority of the higher. The vertical principle penetrating all human relations in Iran is so strong that it is to be wondered if reconstruction of its social order would ever be possible through horizontal patchwork if its vertical social framework should ever be broken. Under these circumstances, resistance to or rebellion against the current ruler, should it ever happen in Iran, must not be mistaken for people's maturity or readiness to build a democratic society based on sound horizontal human relations, as such would most probably be aimed at placement of the old ruler with a new. Through a long tradition of control and subordination, the Iranian people seem to have become accustomed to think of themselves as helpless without a dictator. There have been numerous cases when the poor peasants, after their *mālik* was removed through the land reform, were left in bewilderment until some new outsider entered the scene assuming new leadership over them.

Another is probably spelt out in the phrase: *qeid va band-i ijtimā'ī*. Literally translated, it reads as "social press and band," referring to a horizontal human relations concept rather than a vertical one. A similar expression may not be difficult to come across in the Japanese language, but would be almost impossible to find among the European languages. More exactly, this means that the speech and deeds of an individual can never escape people's watchful eyes and is always kept under silent pressure from others. This phrase precisely expresses human relations in a community where people are too inhibited to behave freely according to their own will. Such framework is foreign to the solidarity of people on the basis of horizontal human relations and does not help to sustain the unity of men rallying together against external pressures. It undermines any union of peasants through internal division. *Mālik* has benefited enormously by such a frame of mind on the part of the peasants in his controlling the *deh* from outside. It has also allowed the *mālik-ra'iyat* system to outlive its historical life. This aspect of the Iranian peasants' way of thinking is not contradictory but complementary to dictatorship.