Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/28983 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

Author: Ehsani, Kaveh
Title: The social history of labor in the Iranian oil industry : the built environment and the making of the industrial working class (1908-1941)
Issue Date: 2014-10-02

THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF LABOR IN THE IRANIAN OIL INDUSTRY: THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAKING OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKING CLASS (1908-1941)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van

de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,

op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. mr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties

te verdedigen op donderdag 2 oktober 2014

klokke 16.15 uur

door

Kaveh Ehsani

geboren te Tehran – Iran

in 1960

Promotor: Prof. dr. T. Atabaki (Universiteit Leiden)

Copromotor: Prof. dr. M.M. van der Linden (Universiteit van Amsterdam)

Commissieleden:

Prof. dr. U.T. Bosma (Vrij Universiteit Amsterdam)

Prof. dr. D.C. Thomas (Universiteit Leiden)

Prof. dr. E.J. Zürcher (Universiteit Leiden)

ISBN: 978-90-9028391-3

Table of Content

List of Maps, Tables, and Figures: iv

Transliteration: v

Acknowledgments: vi

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Chapter 2: The Historical Geopolitics of Oil in Khuzestan 55

Chapter 3: The Oil Encounter in Khuzestan (1908-1921) 100

Chapter 4: WWI and Its Aftermath: The Emergence of the Social Question and its Impact on the Oil Complex 152

Chapter 5: Reluctant Paternalism and the Social Question in Khuzestan's Oil Complex in the Post War Era 217

Chapter 6: Abadan: The Making of an Oil City and a Working Class (1924-1927) 286

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Abadan and Oil Workers in the Interwar Years (1927-1941) 358

Bibliography: 405

Samenvatting: 434

Curriculum Vitae: 439

List of Maps, Tables, and Figures

Figures:

Figure 1- APOC crude production, profits, and royalties paid to the Iranian Government (1918-1925) 83

Figure 2- Abadan: Layout and density of workers' neighborhoods in Company Areas 389

Maps:

Map 1- Abadan in 1925 301

Map 2- Abadan in 1930s 319

Map 3- Abdan in 1960s 319

Tables:

Table 1- Oil production in Iran (1912-1934) 101

Table 2- Number of British workers involved in strikes (1912-1921) 178

Table 3- Share of national income in Britain before and after WWI 212

Table 4- Abadan Refinery main products (1912-1931) 227

Table 5- APOC/AIOC employees by nationality (1910-1950) 229

Table 6- APOC/AIOC employees in Abadan and Khuzestan (1910-1927) 230

Table 7- Estimated population of Khuzestan and selected cities (1880s-1956) 374

Table 8- Migration patterns by census district and birthplace (1956) 377

Table 9- Geographic Origins of Iranian oil industry employees (1956) 378

Table 10- Growth of labor force in selected industrial sectors (1920s-1930s) 385

Transliteration

I have used a modified version of the Persian transliteration system of the *International Society of Iranian Studies* with some minor adjustments. In particular commonplace names have been spelled as they sound pheonetically in Persian and local vernacular, for example *Khuzestan, Lorestan, Ahvaz*, *Masjed Soleyman, Bakhtiyari,* and *Majles* instead of the more contrived and Phonetically misleading *Khuzistan, Luristan*, *Ahwaz*, *Masjid-i Suleyman*, *Bakhtiari,* and *Majlis*, except when they have been spelled differently in a quoted passage from an archival or historical source. Some words that have common usage in English are left as they are conventionally spelled, for example *Sheikh*. There are a number of words that have been variously spelled in different passages: For example, *Mohammareh* has also been spelled *Muhammara*, or *Muhammara* in some quotations; *Iraq* as *Irak*; and *Abadan* appears as *Ebbadan* on one or two occasions. These different spellings always occur within quotations, and reflect how the original authors referred to these places at the time of writing. Rather than standardizing the spellings I have left them as they are, to reflect the absence of standardization at the time of initial writing and to retain the integrity of scholarship.

I have refrained from the practice of Persianizing place names, as it has unfortunately become somewhat common in recent years. Thus I have referred to Mohammareh, Khalafabad, Arabestan, Shatt al-Arab, for the time period when these were the official names in use, just as I have used the historic name Persian Gulf. Once the place names had been officially changed I have reverted to the new names, for example Khorramshahr in lieu of Mohammareh. The only exception is Khuzestan: Although the province was generally called Arabestan until the 1920s, the older name Khuzestan was also in use at the time, as it becomes clear in the text, although not as commonly as Arabestan.

All the translations from Persian and French are my own.

Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure at the end of a long project to have the opportunity to acknowledge and thank those who have aided me so generously, and over the years, in various ways. Their contributions have come in many forms – intellectual, practical, emotional, but they all have been equally invaluable and for which I am deeply grateful. Aside from my dissertation committee, Norma Claire Moruzzi and Stephen Engelmann read the entire manuscript and offered insightful criticism, new insights, and warm encouragement. Norma will see the influence of her ideas on most pages of this manuscript. Asef Bayat, Arang Keshavarzian, Molly Hoover, Ramin Karimian, Peyman Jafari, Michael McIntyre, Gil Gott, Lynn Schibecci, Grace Goodell, Azam Khatam, Mohammad Maljoo, and Erica Scheoneberger, read or listened to parts of the argument and provided precious feedback. Without the unwavering friendships and generous help of Ahmad Meydari, Iraj Amiri, Reza Pourparviz, and many other Khuzestani friends this work never would have been accomplished. Khuzestan is a unique place because of its remarkable people, something I have had the privilege to experience first hand. During the long periods of my fieldwork in Khuzestan, Farah Mashayekhi and Abdolhossein Ehsani were the bedrock of my support, as was Mostafa Azkia, without whose support I would not have been able to find my way to Khuzestan during the difficult period after the Iran-Iraq war. My historian colleagues at the journal *Goftogu* in Iran were greatly helpful with sources pertaining to the oil complex in Khuzestan, especially Kaveh Bayat and Reza Azari Shahrezaei. Kaveh's friendship and work has taught me to value the historian's craft and its social and political significance even more highly than I did before I engaged in the role of the social historian myself.

I would like to thank the helpful staff at the Iranian National Archives, the BP Archives (Warwick), the research staff at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (IISH), and the Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA, London) for their assitance. My wonderful colleagues at DePaul University have supported me when I needed them, as have the amazing students at the International Studies Department. INT is a truly special community and I feel lucky and honored to be a part of it. This research was made possible by a generous grant from the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) toward the project "Social Histories of Labor in the Iranian Oil Industry". I am grateful both to KNAW as well

as to IISH where my research has been based for the better part of the past two years, where I have felt at home among a great community of social historians and other colleagues who have supported me in completing this project. In particular I would like to express my gratitude to Ben Stroomberg, Jacqueline Rutte, Astrid Werburg, and the other wonderful staff at IISH for all their support, as well as their warm friendship. Last, I would like to express gratitude to my dissertation committee, Professors Marcel van der Linden, Ulbe Bosma, Eric-Jan Zürcher, and Daniel Thomas, for their critical feedback that improved the final work. Last, and in particular, I would like to thank Touraj Atabaki, my thesis supervisor, but also dear friend, colleague, and collaborator, whose comradeship and unwavering support and patience allowed me to finish this work.



Source: Norman Kemp, *Abadan* (London: Wingate, 1953)

Chapter 1
Introduction

The Social History of Labor and Oil as an Urban History:

This dissertation is a social history of the establishment of the Iranian oil industry and the formation of an oil working class in the southwest province of Khuzestan during the first decades of the 20th century. My approach to and perspective on the topic are essentially inter-disciplinary; although for reasons that will be explained below and further elaborate in the subsequent chapters, my entry point will be spatial and geographic. I will investigate the processes that contributed to the taking shape of the built environment of oil in the refinery city of Abadan, an industrial city that was assembled quite rapidly in a short but monumental burst of effort in early 20th century, and played a key part in making possible the establishment of a new and fast growing oil complex that went on to contribute to the reconfiguration of not only local conditions, but also national relations of power, the economy, regional geopolitics, and global industrial capitalism.

This urban and geographic entry-point into the social history of oil offers a unique perspective: The built environment of Abadan was the material and physical place produced by the actions and interactions of the myriad social actors involved in the making of this history, the focal point where they were brought together, often violently; and it was from there that the extractive political economy of petro-capitalism took hold of the existing natural and social environment of the region in order to transform it into an economic resource of global significance. This process involved oil workers, drillers, engineers, and corporate managers, but also spouses, extended families, urban landlords, bureaucrats, political activists, smugglers, prostitutes, beggars, indigenous farmers, merchants, policemen, and migrants who had flooded to the city and worked for and lived on the margins of the oil complex.

The built environment of the city was produced by these oil encounters, but it also created the physical frame that gave them structure. In Abadan, the urban space itself and how it was assembled and re-designed through interminable efforts, violent frictions, and unpredictable events, has been a reflection of the "great

transformation"[1] brought about by oil capitalism. In other words, the social history of oil and of labor formation in the oil industry in Khuzestan is also its urban history.

This urban historical and geographic perspective will serve as my entry point in analyzing the interactions of the myriad social actors who were integral to this story. In this introduction I will elaborate my theoretical framework, and explain a number of concepts and terms that I will be using throughout the text, such as the oil complex, oil habitus, oil encounter, urban process, built environment, Global Labor History, and assemblage. I will then discuss my methodology, and how I see this work as part of a larger project on the relationship between oil, politics, and society, that I intend to continue later on. The introduction will conclude with a plan of the chapters.

Theoretical Concepts:

1. The Oil Encounter

> "If the spice trade had a twentieth century equivalent it would be the oil industry. Yet, while that earlier violent encounter generated a voluminous literature the oil encounter has scarcely produced an equivalent. Not much is known about the human experiences that surround the production of oil, while a great deal is invested in insuring the muteness of the oil encounter, all wrapped in regimes of strict corporate secrecy, and encased in enclaves… keeping especially the labor experience irrelevant and insignificant"[2]

The "oil encounter" is how the novelist Amitav Ghosh calls the transformative coming together of local, national, and transnational social agents around petroleum portrayed in Abdelrahman Munif's disturbing masterpiece *Cities of Salt*. Munif, a Saudi oilman exiled to Syria for his political views, published a trilogy of novels in the 1970's about the rise of the oil complex in a fictional state in the Arabian Peninsula that captures all too well the underside of a story that is often missing from

[1] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, 2nd ed. (Beacon Press, 2001).
[2] See "Petrofiction", in Amitav Ghosh, *Incendiary Circumstances: A Chronicle of the Turmoil of Our Times*, Reprint (Mariner Books, 2007), 138–151.

the social analysis and the historiographies of oil[3]. Thus, the oil encounter refers to the historical interactions, frictions, conflicts, negotiations, and cooperation among the plethora of people whose lives were deeply and permanently affected by the construction of the oil complex in southern Iran and became integral to its subsequent development. These included not only those working directly for the oil complex in various capacities, but also indigenous agrarian populations as well as migrants, many of whom were not directly employed by the oil industry but, as we shall see in the following chapters, were affected by the advent of the oil industry and became an extension of it.

2. The Social and Political Order of Oil as 'Assemblage':

Perhaps more than any other internationally traded commodity in history - such as salt, sugar, tobacco, or cotton - oil has had a transformative and unifying impact on the globe, to the extent that it is not an exaggeration to claim we now live in an 'oil civilization'. The process of oil becoming the cornerstone of the contemporary global political economy and lifestyle was neither inevitable nor the end result of a natural progression of industrial capitalist modernization. Instead, I will argue that we need to think about and discuss the history of oil as one of an 'assemblage'[4] – intentional and sometimes accidental acts of human construction, riddled with friction, uncertainty, and based on praxis - rather than one of 'emergence' – an expression suggesting an almost biological and natural progression. The first expression, 'assemblage', frames the history of oil as the outcome of social and historical 'encounters' between the material world and the actions of different and unequal social actors, making calculated decisions that cannot be necessarily categorized as 'rational' or predictable, nor can their success or failure be taken as a

---

[3] Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt* (New York: Vintage, 1989); idem. *The Trench* (New York: Vintage, 1993); idem. *Variations on Night and Day* (New York: Vintage, 1994)

[4] On relevant actor-network thinkers and social analysts whose work has influenced my approach see Timothy Mitchell, "The Properties of Markets," in *Do Economists Make Markets?*, ed. Donald MacKenzie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 244–75; Timothy Mitchell, "Carbon Democracy," *Economy and Society* 38, no. 3 (2009): 399–432; Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in *State/Culture*, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 76–97; Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 19–53; Donald MacKenzie, *Material Markets: How Economic Agents are Constructed* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: A Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009); Michel Callon, ed., *Laws of the Markets* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998).

sign of anything but the outcome of the balance of power relations under the circumstances.

The term assemblage as a social analytic concept was first used by Deleuze and Guatari, and later on adopted by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, Donald McKenzie, and other actor network theorists, to highlight the often overlooked but central role of technopolitics, of the praxis of scientific and technical professional experts, in shaping contemporary social and political economic order. As in its common usage, here also the term assemblage refers to a group of objects brought together in close association with one another, usually for a purpose that is different from the individual characteristics of each object. While there are other dialectical social science concepts that view social change as active production of difference and heterogeneity, what I find valuable here is the equal emphasis on the material rather than discursive assemblages, without neglecting either or separating them. Thus, the material world, whether human manufactured or natural, is also considered as a social actor in human - non human relations. Tim Mitchell's work, especially his essays *Can the mosquito speak?* and *Carbon democracy*, are examples of how the material world should be conceptualized not simply as a passive object, but an active agent (if not a conscious subject) in the making of the contemporary social and political order.

The commodification of nature, in this case subterranean fossil carbon deposits, is not only a technical and scientific endeavor, but above all it is a social and political process that requires relentless effort to overcome and repress any resistance against it. It involves the continuous creative destruction of existing social and natural configurations through the dispossession of rival and competing claims to land and resources. Extractive industries also create a backlash by the natural world, resulting in a growing number of critical social scientists re-conceptualizing nature as possessing its own forms of agency. Although the relation of nature and society has been at the center of philosophical and social science inquiry since the 18th century, the validity of a clear-cut dichotomy between the two has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. This has been in part as reaction to the environmental crises brought about in large measure by the hegemony of market society of mass production and consumption, and its carbon based sources of energy[5].

---

[5] See Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*; Noel Castree, "Commodifying What Nature?," *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no. 3 (2003): 273–97; Karen Bakker and Gavin Bridge, "Material Worlds? Resource Geographies and the 'Matter of Nature,'" *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 1 (2006): 5–27.

A point of clarification regarding the relation of nature and society may be necessary here. Critical social theorists have strived to challenge and decolonize the dichotomies of nature/object versus culture/subject at least from the advent of the industrial revolution. For Marx, the alienation of the laborer occurs as the time discipline and the division of labor of industrial work take hold of the very body of the laborer, turning her into an extension of the machine, and making the product of her creative and collective labor appear as the fruit of technology, private property, professional knowledge, or market exchange. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1976), Ch.1, section 4. A more explicit rethinking of the consequences of positing nature and society as two mutually exclusive realms was articulated in the work Karl Polanyi Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, which focused on the social consequences of the commodification of land, labor, and money; with the subsequent disembedding the economic institution of the market from the wider modifying constraints imposed by society and nature (which he appears to consider as mutually exclusive, but symbiotically interconnected). The critique of the instrumentalization of nature by positivist scientific rationality, and market criteria was also taken up by Frankfurt School theorists who argued in different ways that the quest for the domination of nature in fact leads to the domination of "man". See Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Continuum, 2001); Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991). Instead, Marxist critiques of the liberal and utilitarian theories that framed nature and culture as two separate and distinct realms introduced the notion of "the social construction of nature", arguing that the natural world was effectively being continuously transformed by social intervention, and that the idea of a pristine and autonomous nature was an illusion Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, 3rd ed. (Atens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

It was the third wave of feminist thinkers, as well as post-structuralist theories of Foucault (inspired by the work of Nietzsche), who highlighted the gendered human body (the natural body) as the site of exercise of disciplinary power. See Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body*, Revised (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977); Donna Haraway, *Simians Cyborgs and Women* (London: Free Association Books, 1996). These theorists critiqued the earlier Marxist notion of the "social construction of nature" as another way of objectifying nature as inanimate, passive, and 'out there, lacking any agency or subjectivity'. They objected that this dichotomy would still limit agency to conscious subjective human interests, rendering 'nature' as the passive 'other'. For example, Emily Martin's discussion of the discursive effects of medical science in objectifying the female body was an important intervention in this debate, by demonstrating that the objectification of nature is effectively an exercise of power over the natural as well as the human subjects.

This critique stirred a response from Marxist geographers, who have begun to reconsider more explicitly the consequences of thinking of the physical world as simply inanimate 'resources' to be exploited for economic benefits. Harvey, in particular, has clarified and highlighted Marx' insights into capitalist exploitation as a corporeal experience through which the human body becomes an extension of socially invented machines. David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996); David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Smith, *Uneven Development*. In addition, Harvey has engaged and expanded on Marx' original critique of the Malthusian legacy within classical political economy and its present version in neo-classical economics, with its objectification of the natural world as scarce resources, and the reification of subaltern populations as either a reserve army of the labor market, or as the 'undeserving poor' who pose a menace to limited resources. His target of analysis has been the highly influential neo Malthusian work of Gareth Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" and its continuing legacy in development studies, welfare reform, and environmental policy-making. See for example David Harvey, "Population, Resources, and the Ideology of Science," in *Spaces of Capital* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 38–67.

Other critical scholars have continued the attempt to synthesize the insights of post-structuralist and Marxist approaches to overcoming the discursive dichotomy between society and nature, emphasizing the fact that these two positions are not as mutually exclusive as some protagonists have claimed. See for example Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts, eds., *Violent Environments* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Richard Peet, Paul Robbins, and Michael Watts, eds., *Global Political Ecology* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Richard Peet and Michael Watts, eds., *Liberation Ecologies*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004); Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (Verso, 2002); William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis:*

Especially in chapter 4 I follow this line of inquiry to explain how the nature of the chemical substance petroleum as a new source of energy played an integral part in the formulation of *the social question*, contributed to paving the way for the transition to Fordism and the era of mass politics, and affected the assemblage of the oil complex in Iran. In particular, my spatial focus on the built environment of oil and the material landscapes created for and destroyed by it, will reveal that the new social and political order of petroleum was the end product of intentional but contested acts of assemblage, and not the natural progression of the evolutionary history of the capitalist industrial order. However, while I borrow from the actor network theory and use some of its theoretical insights, I find its overall neglect of labor, value theory, and the historical and political agency of subaltern agents in favor of a structuralist emphasis on technopolitics, rather problematic. Tim Mitchell's implicit work of synthesis with Marx, and especially his focus on and inclusion of the role of regimes of property in assembling the contemporary socio-technical systems of political economy is a compromise approach that is closer to my own interpretation.

The Anglo Persian Oil Company (APOC) maintained that the territory it was claiming for the extraction and processing of oil was a 'natural setting', virtually empty of population. Repeatedly the region was portrayed as misused by its sparse population, who were ignorant of its resources, and wasted its potential commercial productivity by failing to exploit it properly. In addition, throughout the relentless propaganda generated by the Oil Company (chapter 5), the local peoples populating the Zagros range were presented as part of that natural world, virtually lawless bandits who would benefit from the civilizing effects of the industrial capitalist order (see below, as well as chapters 3, 6). This framing of the region as an empty frontier to be

---

Chicago and the Great West (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water, Revised Edition*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1993); Robert Gottlieb and Margaret Fitzsimmons, *Thirst for Growth: Water Agencies as Hidden Government in California* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994); Toby Craig Jones, *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Water Forged Modern Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

The central concern of this new environmental scholarship is to rethink the notion of "social construction of nature" so that it is not about finding a more "sustainable" solution to the same practice of instrumentalization and subjugation of "the natural" by the "social". Instead, the aim is to recognize that this dichotomy is an exercise of power, and conceptualizing a material world where these abstractions hold sway only as a way to facilitate interested actions, rather than explain a complex and overlapping reality (See the aforementioned Timothy Mitchell's *Can the mosquito speak?*

conquered for the universal benefit of all was a vision that was by and large shared by many Iranian modernist nationalists in the early 20th century, and even today[6]. As I will argue in a later section of this introduction as well as in the following chapters, these discursive geographic presentations of southwest Iran as a wild frontier, an empty land populated by noble savages or rogue bandits (pending on the normative preferences of the observers) who were simply an extension of its rugged and unclaimed natural setting, were integral to the exercise of power that made the assemblage of this extractive global industry possible.

3. The Oil Complex

The term 'oil complex' refers to the web of extraction, processing, production, distribution, and consumption that underline the global system of oil provision, and the oil encounters that accompanied its protracted historical assemblage. I use the term as distinct from "the oil industry", and "the oil sector", both of which are more frequently used but loaded terms that distort the frame of analysis in such a way that the wider social, spatial, and cultural relationships that surrounded the rise to prominence of oil are excluded from view. The first term, *the oil industry*, refers to the institutions and firms directly involved in the linked production processes in procuring oil and its byproducts as a final commodity for consumption; while the second term, *the oil sector*, analyzes oil as part of the economy, a financial and natural resource, and a source of employment and revenue. The term *oil complex*, is an alternative formulation to allow us to include in the analysis not only the people and institutions that were directly involved in the business of oil – such as oil companies, states, oil workers, technical experts – but also the plethora of other social actors whose lives were directly altered by being drawn into the global and local dynamics of the oil regime, and were integral to its continuance and eventual consolidation.

These included the range of social actors I have investigated in this dissertation, including rural populations, urban migrants, and others who were not directly employed by the oil industry or did not participate directly in the economics

[6] Kaveh Ehsani, "Sweet Dreams; Sugarcane and the Politics of Development in Pre and Post-Revolution Iran" (Conference presented at the Development After Development, New York University, 2003); Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Grace Goodell, *Elementary Structures of Political Life: Rural Development in Pahlavi Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

of the oil sector, but were organically connected to its everyday reproduction. The concept also allows us to incorporate the material and spatial transformations that paved the way for the consolidation of the oil industry, including the urban built environment of oil; the new property relations that were introduced to provide a legal framework for the operations of the new industry; as well as the ecological as well as architectural transformations that accompanied its new forms of land use.

Harriet Friedmann first coined the term "complex" to differentiate between networks of social and political economic relations that surrounded the provision of specific and highly strategic food commodities that had become essential to the operation of the world system; namely the "wheat complex", the "durable food complex", and the "meat complex":

> "The post war food regime consisted of different complexes, each defined as a chain or web of production and consumption relations linking farm workers to consuming individuals, households, and communities. Within each web are private and state institutions, which buy, sell, provide inputs, process, transport, distribute, and finance each link. Each complex involves many gender, class, and cultural relations within a specific (changing) international division of labor. Although each country or region inherits a specific legacy of incorporation and marginalization, each of the three complexes created general conditions for the third world"[7]

Friedmann's agenda was ambitious, and her own work did not incorporate and fully analyze all the linkages, commodity chains, and scales that had been outlined in her essay. But other scholars working on food and agriculture under the general umbrella of world system theory have been gradually addressing this agenda in exiting ways and gradually filling the blanks[8]. Nor am I claiming to be able to fulfill

---

[7] Harriet Friedmann, "Distance and Durability: Shaky Foundations of the World Food Economy.," *Third World Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1992): 371.

[8] See for example Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael, "Agriculture and the State System.," *Sociologia Ruralis* 29, no. 2 (1989); Philip McMichael, ed., *Food and Agrarian Orders in the World-Economy* (Westport: CT: Praeger, 1995); Ben Fine, Michael Heasman, and Judith Wright, *Consumption in the Age of Affluence: The World of Food* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Alessandro Bonanno et al., eds., *From Columbus to ConAgra: The Globalization of Agriculture and Food* (Lawrence, KA: University Press Of Kansas, 1994); David Goodman and Michael Watts, eds., *Globalizing Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*, (New York: Routledge, 1997); Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin, 1986).

such an ambitious project in this dissertation, which is much more focused on producing a solid micro history and linking it to the larger national and global trends, than analyzing oil in a worldwide context. However, as it will become clear in the following chapters, I do attempt to analyze the social history of oil commodity as an 'open history', situated within a larger social and geographic framework than its immediate institutional and geographic surroundings.

While Friedmann did mention in passing an "oil complex" among the strategic commodity chains that knitted together the post WW2 world system, it was not her object of study. Michael Watts has used the concept of "oil complex" in his insightful review of the literature on transnational oil corporations, predatory national states, and dispossessed local populations[9]. While Watts' copious work on oil, environmental degradation, state corruption and violence, and the trammeling of indigenous rights in Nigeria is very important and close to my own interests, it is interesting that neither he, nor many other authors who pursue similar critical investigations into the local impact of global oil consider *labor* to be an integral part of their analysis[10]. Indeed, for Watts and most of these authors oil seems to be a substance that simply emerges out of ground without any work. For example, Tim Mitchell's *Carbon Democracy*, by and large excludes the role of oil workers from consideration of the historical dynamics of oil in shaping modern Middle East politics[11]. Mitchell compares the dynamics of labor process in coal mining against that of the oil industry, and concludes that the resulting political agency of coal

---

Timothy Mitchell's analysis of the transformations of Egyptian food consumption within the larger framework of American geopolitics and foreign aid regime, and the shifting patterns of landownership, labor regimes, and elite formations in post Sadat era is an important model of analyzing a commodity complex within its larger social and political context. See "The Object of Development" in Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 209-243.

[9] Michael Watts, "Righteous Oil? Human Rights, the Oil Complex, and Corporate Social Responsibility," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 30 (2005): 373–407.

[10] Suzana Sawyer, *Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Suzana Sawyer and Edmund Terence Gomez, eds., *The Politics of Resource Extraction: Indigenous Peoples, Multinational Corporations and the State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Tom Perreault and Gabriela Valdivia, "Hydrocarbons, Popular Protest and National Imaginaries: Ecuador and Bolivia in Comparative Context," *Geoforum* 41, no. 5 (September 2010): 689–99; Andrea Behrends, Stephen P. Reyna, and Gunther Schlee, eds., *Crude Domination: An Anthropology of Oil* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); Pauline Jones Luong and Erika Weinthal, *Oil Is Not a Curse: Ownership Structure and Institutions in Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[11] To be fair, Mitchell's book (versus the earlier essay) is focused on the relation of oil, economics, and politics in general, although Middle East is his main study case.

miners weighed much heavier than oil workers in shaping popular politics[12]. This odd observation is based on Mitchell's case study of the Haifa pipeline that carried Iraqi oil for export. Thus, oil is analyzed essentially as a mining and transport enterprise, and not as chemical manufacturing and processing.

Mitchell's analysis by and large excludes the Iranian oil workers, who have had a substantial continuous presence throughout the 20th century as political actors. In addition, workers in the Iranian oil complex have not been producing petroleum simply for export, but formed the backbone of further industrial developments in refining, petrochemicals, gas, and other related enterprises[13]. Their erasure as significant political actors has been the product of intentional political decisions and discursive maneuvers backed by administrative policies, such as the casualization of the labor market from the 1990s, rather than a reflection of their actual social and political irrelevance[14]. Similarly, Fernando Coronil's classic study of oil and politics in Venezuela, *The Magical State*, intentionally excludes the role of labor almost completely, and chooses instead to focus instead on the formation of elite nationalism and the establishment of other industries in Venezuela with the economic proceeds from oil, such as car and tractor manufacturing[15].

---

[12] The argument is that coal miners worked in large numbers underground, away from the direct supervision of employers. Their overseers shared similar high risk working conditions with rank and file workers, and therefore were not solely acting as enforcers safeguarding the interests of employers. Furthermore, the underground workspace allowed room form relatively unsupervised networks of workers solidarity and coordination to take shape away from the relentless surveillance of employers and their agents. By contrast, oil extraction and work on pipelines and transport employ large numbers of temporary workers, many for relatively unskilled construction work, who are dismissed as soon as the infrastructure is in place. The spatially scattered and isolated locals are easier to supervise, and more visible to disciplinary managerial gaze. Empirical studies of the petroleum industry's operations in Iran, for example those presented in the following chapters, reveal a different and more diverse dynamic from this portrait.

[13] Fathollah Sa'adat, *Jughrafiya-ye Eqtesadi-e Naft-e Iran*, vol. 1 & 2, 2 vols. (Tehran: Pars Publishers, 1967); Alexander Melamid, "Petroleum Product Distribution and the Evolution of Economic Regions in Iran," *Geographical Review* 65, no. 4 (October 1, 1975): 510–25

[14] Kaveh Ehsani, "Crude Power: Rethinking Oil and Politics," in *Lecture Series: Fueling Societies: Energy Resources and Politics from Below* (presented at the Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, 2014); Mohammad Maljoo, "Eqtesad-e Siasi-ye Nirou-ye Kar-e San'at-e Naft da Iran-e Pas az Jang [The Political Economy of the Labor Force in Post-War Iran]," *Kanoun-e Modafe'an-e Hoqouq-e Kargar*, September 4, 2012, http://kanoonmodafean1.blogspot.nl/2012/09/blog-post.html.

[15] Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London: Verso, 2011); Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1997).

Of course there are noted exceptions to this de-socialition of oil. For example, both Bob Vitalis and Miguel Tinker Salas situate the role of labor at the center of their historical analyses of the oil complex in Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. See Miguel Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy: Oil, Culture, and Society in Venezuela* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2009).

Part of the reason for this glaring neglect may be the technical aspects of the oil extraction process itself. As an extractive enterprise the early phases of oil exploration and extraction involve large initial inputs of labor, which tends to fall off in the latter phases once the fixed capital investments have been put in place and a technical infrastructure of transportation and export has been consolidated. Offshore oil explorations have taken the isolation of oil installations from wider social settings and established centers of population to another level[16]. The often remote locations of oil fields, and the proclivity of oil companies to create protected enclaves around installations further add to their occlusion from outside view and hide the social relations around the oil-works behind protective walls, guarded fences, and barbed wires.

However, as I will argue in a later section, this blindness to the integral role of labor is a symptom of a larger phenomenon that prevents oil from being analyzed *as a social relationship*. To quote Amitav Ghosh again, "A great deal is invested in insuring the muteness of the oil encounter, all wrapped in regimes of strict corporate secrecy, and encased in enclaves… keeping especially the labor experience irrelevant and insignificant". The systematic and glaring erasure of the role of labor in oil is an issue that I have addressed elsewhere[17], and intend to take up in later publications. In this dissertation I provide a detailed micro history of how this regime of secrecy encased in enclaves became integral to the operations of the oil complex from its early inception in Khuzestan (chapter 6). Meanwhile, using the term "oil complex" is intended to frame the social history of oil within the larger spatial and social processes and relationships in which it is embedded.

4. The Oil Habitus

The last theoretical concept I have found useful and necessary for this work is that of the *oil habitus*. Habitus is a concept coined by Pierre Bourdieu to explain how aspects of culture and socialized norms and tendencies that shape and guide actions, thinking, behavior, and practice, are not solely articulated explicitly at the level of ideology or conscious thought, or enshrined in codified institutional rules or customary norms. Rather, they are embodied (internalized) by societies, nations, and

[16] Hannah Appel, "Offshore Work: Oil, Modularity, and the How of Capitalism in Equatorial Guinea," *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 4 (2012): 692–709.
[17] Ehsani, "Crude Power: Rethinking Oil and Politics."

individuals as non-verbal and transposable dispositions, or as "the totality of learned habits, bodily skills, styles, tastes, and non-discursive knowledges that go without saying. [Habitus] operates beneath the level of self-conscious rational ideology"[18].

Trying to explain how agents make sense of the world beyond the simple object-subject dichotomy, Bourdieu's defines the notion of habitus as produced over time and in concrete places -- a spatial and historical "structuring structure" that shapes individuals and their collective practices. Habitus shapes how agents think and perceive the world, but it exists only through the practices of actors and the way in which they interact with each other and their environment. Bourdieu also emphasized that habitus is produced collectively: "to speak of habitus is to assert that the individual, and even the personal, the objective, is *social, collective. Habitus is socialized subjectivity"*[19].

The *oil habitus* - how the range of social agents involved in the oil complex understood their world and behaved in it and with each other, and reproduced it through their practice - was shaped collectively, historically, and geographically. It was shaped not only by the actions of all-powerful macro-agents, like the Oil Company shareholders, their management, British policymakers, or Iranian state functionaries and politicians, but also by the collective and conflictual practices of all the other social actors there. These included workers, migrants, and their families (and by extension their extended kinship networks in their mostly rural places of origin), and expatriates coming primarily from Britain, India, the Caucasus, and Mesopotamia. It then contributed to molding the perceptions and practices of individuals, institutions, and collectives.

Thus, as the following chapters will show, the historical encounters and the practices of various social actors involved in assembling the oil complex in Khuzestan created a new oil habitus that shaped and structured their subsequent actions and interactions in a manner that was substantially different from before, as well as from those of the adjoining and neighboring social settings.

---

[18] See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 66–67.
[19] Ibid., 126; Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 81. (My added emphasis).

Entry Points: Theoretical, Empirical, and Historical

1. The Urban Life of Oil: The Urban Process, the Built Environment, and Everyday Life in Abadan

The human experiences surrounding the production of oil in Khuzestan took place in numerous distinct but interconnected spaces: There were the extractive places of oil wells and fields as in Masjed Soleyman; the link nodes of transportation routes and security zones surrounding them; the administrative centers that coordinated operations in Ahvaz and Mohammareh (later renamed Khorramshahr); and the industrial processing, storage, and shipping center that was the heart of the operations in Abadan. During the period under study there were other strategic nodes influencing local events in Tehran, London, Delhi, Basra, and Baghdad. Thus, the oil complex in Khuzestan was always part of a larger national and transnational web of interests and decision-making, while at the same time it began to take on a complicated dynamic of its own.

In Khuzestan, these different oil centers did not operate in a spatial and social vacuum. They spread out into the countryside to appropriate territory from existing local populations and land users, and to siphon off human labor power to carry out the work of mining, the industrial production of petroleum products, and their export. Thus, the landscape of oil connected together as never before the urban and the rural; and the local with the provincial, the national, and global spaces, to make possible the supply of petroleum to its expanding markets and the accumulation of capital in the oil business. The everyday experiences that were essential to making the contemporary "oil civilization" occurred in these material places, the oil boomtowns and company towns where the encounter between the heterogeneous populations occupying many social roles made the production of oil and its reliable, cheap, and expanding provision to the market, in a growing variety of forms, a reality.

The following chapters will investigate the successive spatial reconfigurations produced by the advent of oil capitalism in Khuzestan, and analyze how they affected the oil encounters and shaped its new habitus. Conventional social histories of labor in the oil industry tend to focus on the workplace relations, wages and compensations structures, corporate management relations; or highlight workers struggles for collective bargaining, self-organization, and improvements in living conditions. This focus on the workplace can occlude what takes place outside and around the places of

production; and thus only partially reveal the dynamics of the new oil habitus. It leaves unanswered equally important questions such as how workers maintained and negotiated ties to their places of origin, how those places of origin were transformed as they became tangled in these new sets of long distance relations, whether the social and geographic background played a role in helping, hindering, and shaping the manners of oil workers interactions with their neighbors in their new urban settings, and reveal the range of novel alliances and hybrid and cosmopolitan new collective cultures that shaped their outlook and informed their subsequent practices in the workplace and outside[20].

My intellectual influences will become evident in the course of the text, but for the spatial entry point followed here I must highlight the influence of critical urban geography on my work, in particular the framework for the urban analysis of capitalism provided by Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, and Frederick Cooper[21]; as well as what I would generally label as the post-structuralist spatial analysis of colonial and industrial urban history and modes of governance[22].

My primary focus of investigation will be the refinery city of Abadan, initially a rural and sparsely populated river island in 1909, before multiple social actors converged there and transformed it by late 1920s into an oil and shipping boomtown

---

[20] For valuable, but partial social histories of labor in the oil industry see Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Touraj Atabaki, "Sandicalizm dar Jombesh-e Kargari-e Iran dar Faseleh-e Salha-ye 1320-25," *Alefba* Second Series, Paris, no. 6 (1985): 39–60; Habib Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985); Willem M. Floor, *Labor and Industry in Iran, 1850-1941* (Mage Publishers, 2009); Cosroe Chakeri, *Origins of Social Democracy in Modern Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Asef Bayat, *Workers and Revolution in Iran* (London: Zed Books, 1987); Sa'id Taeb, *Az E'tesab-e Karkonan-e San'at-e Naft ta Pirouzi-e Enqelab-e Eslami* (Tehran: Markaz-e Asnad-e Enqelab-e Eslami, 2003); Peyman Jafari, "Reasons to Revolt: Iranian Oil Workers in the 1970s," *International Labor and Working Class History* 84, no. 1 (2013): 195–217

[21] David Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); David Harvey, *Limits to Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Frederick Cooper, "Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labor in Africa," in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa*, ed. Frederick Cooper (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983), 7–50; Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'Espace* (Paris: Anthropos, 1983).

[22] Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982); Robert Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London: E & FN Spon, 1997); Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Paul Rabinow, *The French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Brenda Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003); Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat, Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

with a rapidly growing population of over 60 thousand and the site of the largest refinery in the world. As a city built by and for oil, Abadan became the home of people in multiple roles – managers, workers, bureaucrats, merchants, servants, smugglers, indigenous date farmers, prostitutes, soldiers, etc. It was a polarized "quartered city"[23], a city shaped by conflicting and competing claims to space that did not harmonize or succumb to the hegemony of a single urban form, but left their imprint on the urban geography and social relations within. Thus, while the Anglo Persian Oil Company (APOC) attempted to carve out exclusive enclaves on the island to build living and working spaces that would fit its stringent criteria and be organized under its monopoly control, other residents fought to shape space according to their own needs and priorities. The indigenous population struggled to keep hold of its agrarian spaces, groves, pastures, fields, villages, and modes of tribal life. The huge inflow of migrants lived under appalling conditions in precarious shelters and slums, which they attempted to defend against evictions and speculative commodification by creating new networks of neighborly solidarities. And state agents, newly arrived in the city after the gradual consolidation of a military, authoritarian, and centralizing state worked hard to impose the new legal and administrative order of the nation-state over the Oil Company, the strategic national border region, the restless local population, and the expanding oil boomtown. Thus, the urban process in Abadan was hardly harmonious, even though it became increasingly channeled toward the social transformation of the population and the urban space for the purposes of the refinery and the oil industry.

Adam Przeworski argued in his essay *Proletariat into a class*, that the story of working class formation was the story of resistance to becoming wage laborers[24], an observation certainly true in the case of the population of southern Iran who eventually formed the core of the oil industry's labor force. Thus, a main challenge is to find an explanation for why people came to work in the oil industry when

---

[23] The term "quartered city" is coined by Peter Marcuse as a critique of Janet Abu Lughod's notion of a "Dual City", as in colonial Rabat divided between a European sector and a native Qasba. Marcuse argues that neither the "traditional city" is ahistorical and unchanged, nor the European city is shaped exclusively and definitely by the will of colonial planners. He outlines multiple social and spatial dynamics that constantly muddy the urban and spatial boundaries, even in seemingly segregated and subdivided urban settings. See Peter Marcuse, "'Dual City': A Muddy Metaphor for a Quartered City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 13, no. 4 (1989): 697–708; Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Rabat, Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
[24] Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 47–97.

alternative modes of social and political life were not a nostalgic and distant memory, but a living reality in the province: Why did people consent to becoming an extension of the industrial order and accepted its time discipline, its harsh regime of corporate management and punishing physical labor, and allowed their social relations and aspirations to be defined by what Polanyi calls the "Satanic Mill"[25]? The built environment of Abadan, its refinery, and the oil habitus that framed people's viewpoints and practices there was a product of these frictions and the interactions of all these heterogeneous social actors. Its micro social history provides an answer (although not the only one) to the larger questions of how this consent was obtained, and how oil capitalism and the nation state were consolidated.

Urbanization is a process that is celebrated normatively by a range of modernization theories as inherently progressive, modern, and inevitable [26]. The critical approach I adopt here sees the urban history of Abadan not as a celebrated byproduct of the forward movement of history toward an ideal type modernity, but as a site of ongoing political and social tensions, struggles, and negotiations, over how alternative modes of life and heterogeneous populations are first fragmented, before being integrated into the new social order of capitalism and the nation state. Thus the questions I pose here are not only about employment, municipal services, food, housing, sanitation, property laws, and police; but also about culture, ideology, and new forms of solidarity and resistance, in forming a new spatial order. These issues form the basis of the production and reproduction of the social and political economic order; they are not abstract and discursive, but concern the concrete experiences that are framed by and rooted in material space[27].

The Oil industry produced many urban spaces in Khuzestan, the largest of which were Masjed Soleyman and Abadan, with significant differences between them. The first was a strictly mining town, built around oil wells and designed

---

[25] Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*. Of course, the issue of proletarianization under capitalism and the place of labor in the transition to capitalism is of general concern to radical social history; a topic that I will address in the next section.

[26] W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), is one of the classic articulations of this teleological approach in the post WW2 development literature. In the case of Iran see the example of Eckhart Ehlers and Willem Floor, "Urban Change in Iran, 1920-1941," *Iranian Studies* 26, no. 3–4 (1993): 251–76; Jamshid Behnam, "Population," in *Cambridge History of Iran; the Land of Iran*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 468–88. My critical analysis of modernization theories and practices is sketched out in Kaveh Ehsani, "A Critique of Planning, Development and Progress" (MA Thesis in Regional Planning, University of Massachusetts- Amherst, 1986).

[27] Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 17–89.

functionally and under the strict coercive control of APOC to extract crude oil. Its location was dictated by geology. It remained an enclave with the typical characteristics of a company town. Once oil began to run out, the city and its residents were discarded unceremoniously, gradually turning into a de-industrialized shell[28]. While I do discuss the urban and regional history of Masjed Soleyman, my focus is on the much more variegated and cosmopolitan Abadan.

By contrast, Abadan's choice of location was down to a political decision and not dictated by geology (chapters 2, 3, 5). It was a river port city, a border town, a major chemical industrial center that became the converging ground for tens of thousands of deracinated rural populations of diverse origin who formed the core of the oil working class and a new urban citizenry. The Oil Company never managed to cast a monopoly control over its development, and nor did the central government. Its vast slums and condensed neighborhoods were home to heterogeneous populations of different kinds of oil workers, ranging from temporary and casual to more skilled workers and artisans, as well as many others who were not directly employed by the Oil Company, but made a living there on its margins. Its urban space became a combination of organized company enclaves, industrial spaces, indigenous settlements, and a frontier boomtown, making it an ideal case study for analyzing the web of relationships that created this unique oil habitus and became the heart of the oil complex.

Marx argued that the basic reality of capitalism boiled down to the circulation and flow of capital requiring the simultaneous separation and concentration of capital and labor in one place. This dual movement becomes possible through the initial moment of the primitive accumulation of capital and the dispossession of existing communities whose economy and society are not based on money relations, commodity exchange, and private property[29] (see chapter 3). David Harvey adds that this transition is essentially an urban phenomenon, which involves a revolutionary *urban process* to dissolve community by money, state coercion, and wage labor, "A

---

[28] Kaveh Ehsani, "Social Engineering and the Contradictions of Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns: A Look at Abadan and Masjed-Soleyman," *International Review of Social History* 48, no. 3 (2003): 361–99; Kamal Athari, "Masjed Soleyman; Sherkat Shahri Madaniyat Yafteh," *Ettela'at-e Siasi-Eqtesadi*, no. 47/48 (1991); Danesh Abbasi-Shahni, *Tarikh-e Masjed Soleyman*, (Tehran: Hirmand, 1995).
[29] Marx, *Capital*, 1:873–941.

built environment has to be created before capital accumulation can start. The urban process is all about how this new landscape is produced and used"[30].

In an industrial oil city like Abadan, this urban process meant that casual workers and migrants had to be controlled and co-opted, before being absorbed and integrated. Markets for land, labor, and living necessities had to be created where they did not exist at all, or did so on a limited scale. Customary relations of work had to be transformed, and the impact of social, technical, and political change had to be managed. As a result, from the 1920s onward, the Oil Company had to engage into a set of social policies, which I have called "reluctant paternalism" (chapter 5), that involved propaganda and public relations, educational and vocational training, municipal improvement, sanitary and public health measures, organized leisure activities (chapters 5 and 6). These social measures were in part a response to existing conditions in southern Iran, and partly a byproduct of the momentous changes taking place in the wider global habitus of industrial capitalism in the inter war era when welfare social policies promoted by professional experts, under pressure by working people, were being considered as credible alternatives to placate the rise of mass politics and class strife in the revolutionary circumstances following the end of WWI (chapter 4).

2. Social History of Oil as a Global Labor History

The approach I have adopted in this work falls within the field of research of the *Global Labor History* (GLH). Without being a grand narrative, GLH lays out the possibility of critically rethinking key concepts of social, historical, and geographic analysis in a manner that will be further outlined below[31]. In the first instance, GLH mounts a challenge to both nationalist and diffusionist historiography, by emphasizing relations and connections between various scales of analysis – for example, transnational, national, local - rather than privileging one over the others as more significant

> "Global history is primarily concerned with the description and explanation of the intensifying or weakening connections (interactions, influences, transfers)

[30] Harvey, *The Urban Experience,* 59-89
[31] Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays Toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 6–14.

between different world regions, as well as of economic political, social, and cultural networks, institutions, and media that played a role in it"[32].

In this sense 'global' does not refer to large scale, or 'the world', with local dynamics reduced to mere case studies proving the universal rule. Rather, global history can be a local history, so long as the micro scale is understood as relational and an integral part of a global network of connections and interactions. Thus, I construct the story of urban change in Abadan in chapters 5 and 6 around the controversial history of the building of a small, modern, 'sanitary' market place by APOC in 1924-1927, where a seemingly micro event captured and reflected the revolutionary transformations taking place at national and transnational scales.

Likewise, GLH allows the reconceptualization of the working class on the basis of inclusion rather than exclusion[33]. Thus, rather than focusing on a narrow definition of oil working class as only those directly employed for wages by the Oil Company, I will include the extended network of all those whose purposive activities contributed directly or indirectly to the continued functioning of the oil complex. These include soldiers, casual workers, landlords, extended family members in rural areas who shared economic ties with urban migrants, and well as professional company experts and staff. In the following sections I will further elaborate on this approach and my reliance on GLH as a framework of analysis.

Concepts, Linkages, and Scales of Analysis:

By and large, the historiography of oil in Iran has been dominated by works of geopolitical, corporate, economic, political, and nationalist history that focus on the role of formal institutions, elites, and states, framed within various meta-narratives of modernization[34]. While of great empirical value, this copious literature neglects or

---

[32] Marcel van der Linden, "The Promise and Challenges of Global Labor History," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 82 (October 1, 2012): 62.
[33] Ibid., 66–69. On widening the category of working classes see van der Linden, *Workers of the World*, 17–37, 366–377.
[34] Prominent examples include Ronald Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol. 1, of 3 vols. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982); James Bamberg, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994); L.P. Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955); Laurence Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.* (London: Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), 1938); Lawrence Lockhart and Rose Greaves, *The Record of the British Petroleum Limited (1918-1946) Relations with the Persian (Iranian) Government* (London: British Petroleum Company, 1968); Chamseddine Amiralaii, *Khal'e Yad az Sherkat-e Sabeq-e Naft-e Iran va Engelis*

even tends to erase the lived experiences surrounding the oil complex as it was being assembled in Khuzestan. Even local provincial histories tend to narrate *what happened* there once the oil industry and the central government were established instead of unpacking the mechanisms of *how it happened.* Furthermore, the equally central question of *why it happened* seems to be taken as self evident, inevitable, and not particularly in need of further inquiry[35].

The same can be said of the existing histories of labor in the oil industry, where "the making of" or "the emergence of" a wage laboring class in the oil industry is presented as a passage from a state of particularistic primordialism (tribal, ethic, local) to one of a universal modernity of wage earning in the labor market and of eventual inclusion in the nation state. To some extent this approach seems to characterize the labor historiography of the Middle East and not only Iran. In a critical review of an important collection of essays titled *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East,* Dipesh Chakrabarty took issue with this tendency of accepting important analytical categories -- such as citizenship, the state, modernity, nation state, and class -- as universal and self evident, and not particularly open to contestation[36]. Chakrabarty notes that in this literature the state tends to be framed as external to class and society, and as an adversary and a repressive organ serving its own interests or those of a ruling class by hindering the development of self-consciousness among

---

(Dispossession of the Former Anglo Iranian Oil Company) (Tehran: Dehkhoda, 1978); Mostafa Fateh, *Panjah Sal Naft-e Iran* (Tehran: Sherkat-e Sahami-e Chehr, 1956); Ministry of Petroleum of the Islamic Republic of Iran, "San'at Naft-e Jomhouri-ye Eslami-ye Iran dar Yek Negah," accessed January 20, 2014, http://www.mop.ir/; Mohammad 'Ali Movahed, *Naft-e Ma va Masa'el-e Hoquqi-e An (Our Oil and Its Legal Issues)* (Tehran: Kharazmi, 1978); Foad Rohani, *Tarikh-e Melli Shodan-e San'at-e Naft-e Iran* (Tehran: Jibi, 1973); Sa'adat, *Jughrafiya-ye Eqtesadi-e Naft-e Iran*; Fathollah Sa'adat, *Pajouheshi dar Masa'el-e Nafti-e Iran (An Investigation into Iran's Petroleum Issues)* (Tehran: AmirKabir, 1976); Iraj Zoghi, *Masael-e Siasi-Eqtesadi-e Naft-e Iran* (Tehran: Pazhang, 1991); Geoffrey Jones, *The State and the Emergence of the British Oil Industry* (London: Mac Millan, 1981); Nasrollah Fatemi, *Oil Diplomacy; Powderkeg in Iran* (New York: Whittier Books, 1954); Fereydun Fesharaki, *Development of the Iranian Oil Industry* (New York: Praeger, 1976).

[35] Danesh Abbasi-Shahni, *Tarikh-e Masjed Soleyman* (Tehran: Hirmand, 1995); Ali Ya'qubinejad, *Raiis-e Naft* (Tehran: Yadvareh Ketab, 1994); Mohammadi Yousefi, *Tarikh-e Khorramshahr* (Tehran: Nil, 1971); Eshaq Shakiba, *Negahi beh Tarikh-e Mahshahr* (Shiraz: Navid-e Shiraz, 2007); Abdolali Lahsaeizadeh, *Jame'eh Shenasi-e Abadan* (NP: Kianmehr, 2004). There are of course notable exceptions to this trend, where the social history of the local society is taken seriously and not subsumed under the larger political and economic histories of the nation or the oil industry, for example Mostafa Ansari, "The History of Khuzistan, 1878-1925: A Study in Provincial Autonomy and Change" (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974); Arash Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of 19th Century Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Stephanie Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41* (London: Routledge, 2007). However, these local histories are not primarily focused on the oil industry.

[36] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Labor History and the Politics of Theory; an Indian Angle on the Middle East," in *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East*, ed. Zachary Lockman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 321–34.

the working classes. Likewise, workers become agents and subjects only when they fight the employers or go on strike, but if they fight amongst themselves or resist their subsumption to wage labor and various forms of state citizenship they are seen as still mired in a traditional and pre-modern state, or as victims of external manipulation by elites, employers, and government agents[37].

The second issue that Chakrabarty has raised in his reflexive work on the historiography of labor in non-western settings is to ask how these histories can be written as if they were not a mere extension of 'the real history' taking place in the metropole:

> "There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called 'the history of Europe'…Only 'Europe'…is 'theoretically' knowable (i.e. at the level of the fundamental categories that stage historical thinking). All other histories are matters of empirical research that fleshes out a theoretical skeleton that is substantially 'Europe'…The paradox is that third world social scientists find these theories eminently useful to understanding their societies"[38]

The problem to engage in this literature on the histories of oil in Iran is the recurring tendency toward Whig historiography, or the presentation of the social history of working people of the global south as a relentless forward march that is sometimes regrettable and costly in human terms, but ultimately moves toward inevitable industrial progress and modernization[39]. This narrative of transition frames the histories of local subaltern people prior to the advent of modernization in terms of incompleteness, inadequacy, and a series of,

> "Absences – [and a] 'failure' of history to keep an appointment with its destiny…This is a picture shared by colonialists and Indian [and I would add

---

[37] Ibid., 321–327. See also footnote 15

[38] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postocoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?," in *A Subaltern Studies Reader (1986-1995)*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 263–266.

[39] There now exists a substantial literature that frames oil as a curse, both economic and political. I have discussed and analyzed this literature briefly and critically, and I intend to return to the topic later on. The common theme between both trends - framing oil as a boon or alternatively as a curse – is the reification of "oil" as an abstract historical agent that shapes politics and economics on its own, without being connected to any concrete history or social dynamics. See Ehsani, "Crude Power: Rethinking Oil and Politics"; Kaveh Ehsani, "Naft na estebdad misazad, na democrasy (Oil is neither the cause of authoritarianism nor democracy.," *Tarikh Irani*, 2012, http://www.tarikhirani.ir/fa/files/13/bodyView/131/ .

> Iranian] nationalists alike, as the diversity of 'Indian pasts was conquered and represented through a homogenizing narrative of transition from 'medieval' period to 'modernity'…of 'despotism' versus 'constitutions' presented as the rule of law and private property."[40]

The approach I have adopted in this work challenges the narratives of transition (to modernity) and diffusion (of a western model of development and progress) by questioning their underlying assumptions, and by subjecting some of their key units of analysis - such as the state, oil, citizenship, class, and national identity - to critical historical inquiry. Specifically, I will make the following arguments:

First, state formation is inseparable from the formation of class and other social identities. Rather than being a self-contained monad, confronting another free-standing entity called society by imposing its political will, the state is as shaped by class frictions and social dynamics as the other way around. As Tim Mitchell argues, the state is an 'effect' rather than 'a thing'; its boundaries with civil society are fuzzy at best, but the state effect is nonetheless an important presence and a material force in shaping the political arena[41]. Like class and ethnicity, the state has a history, and its development is intertwined with those of the former.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, the micro history of the oil complex in Khuzestan shows the state, class, ethnicities, and other institutions and social identities were formed through relational processes that were inseparable from one another. Chapter 2 shows how state institutions and governmental practices in Iran, as well as British government positions toward Iran and the Persian Gulf, underwent constant reconfigurations in an attempt to keep up with and to adapt to turbulent and novel circumstances. In Khuzestan, these shifts led to the emergence of

---

[40] Chakrabarty, "Postocoloniality and the Artifice of History," 267–268. For a brilliant deconstruction of the concepts of modernity, identity, and globalization see Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 59–151.

[41] Mitchell asks, for example, whether financial institutions of Wall Street, multinationals such as Aramco or General Dynamics, or educational and social welfare institutions, such as universities and so on should be considered as extensions of the American state, as they are integral to its policy decisions, despite being formally private or semi private. He also questions the reductive Marxist argument that reduces the state to a mere instrument of the ruling class. His point is that 'state theory' is a construct that functions in various forms to present the state as a separate entity to a similar construct, the civil society, rather than a relational process. See Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect."

a new oil habitus in the 1920s. Chapter 3 shows that supposedly primordial and traditional categories, such as tribal identity, were never stable, permanent, or hermetic, but were constantly adapting to the flows and demands of the larger world, as well as contending with their own internal frictions, that in the end proved insurmountable. Chapter 4 shows the manners in which the British state underwent profound transformation in the course of WWI in response to the rise of mass politics, the newfound prominence of the professional middle class, the rise of anti-colonial nationalism, and the advent of Fordism. The subsequent result of this was the rise of *the social question* as a central concern of the modes and institutions of governance. By *the social* I refer to the field between the economy and political institutions that began to be perceived by nation state builders and nationalists everywhere as the field where collective expectations, grievances, and demands needed to be addressed in order to avoid radical challenges to the political and economic order, and to increase the efficiency of the nation state[42].

The 'social question' also affected the modes of regulation of private corporations like APOC, and how their management and directors viewed labor relations and dealt with class frictions in their operations in Khuzestan. Chapter 6, in particular, reveals that new state agents in Iran had to invent novel notions of governmental responsibility and were pushed to define the fields of their sovereignty and administrative practices in response to ongoing barrages of local popular demands for new entitlements, as well as strategic calculations regarding their relations to transnational capitalism. As for class formation and acquiring the identity of "worker", this history reveals that it was not a straightforward process of accepting wage labor as the new basis of economic existence, but a highly contested and politicized process that was entangled with the formation of the state, the violent dispossession of local economies, global oil capitalism, and modern citizenship.

Second, the notions of citizenship, social rights, and the production of identity and difference within a nation state are equally relational, and highly contested. The nation state is now taken as the normative and natural unit of analysis, but modern nation states are more often that not the result of nationalist and imperialist projects in

---

[42] George Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social : The Welfare State and Local Politics in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Jacques Donzelot, *L'Invention du Social: Essai sur le Declin des Passions Politiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1994).

establishing imagined communities through invented traditions, social engineering, and mythologized histories. This does not negate their 'authenticity', but accepting these notions as 'natural' ignores the historical fact that the projects of building nation states and citizenship are also coercive projects of power that displace alternative and competing categories of collective solidarity. While citizenship bestows certain democratic and coercive rights on individuals, and demands certain responsibilities in the name of universal belonging to a national community, it also eradicates other rival claims. For example, newly registered property rights for some dispossess the customary rights of others in the name of private property (chapters 3, 6, 7). Universal military conscription in service of the nation demands great sacrifice from working people (chapter 4) and dismantles labor regimes in agrarian and pastoralist communities (chapter 7). Individual identity registration and the census are the foundations of social welfare measures, yet they also subjugate everyone to the disciplinary gaze of the market and state institutions (chapters 5, 6, 7), which gain unprecedented power in determining what category of citizen each person belongs to, evaluate their relative usefulness or potential threat, and decide what rights they are entitled to enjoy or ought to be denied[43].

The question of citizenship is about the distribution of power - political, symbolic, and economic - within the nation state[44]. It is also "a universality that is always contested on the ground, as subalterns in whose name liberal democratic narratives are written can both embrace and reject [the liberal and nationalist imagination…whose project it is]"[45]. As Hannah Arendt argued, citizenship is not simply bestowed by the state (the liberal formulation), it is also enacted by people

---

[43] Michel Foucault et al., *The Foucault Effect : Studies in Governmentality : With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Sharon Lee, "Racial Classifications in the US Census: 1890-1990," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16, no. 1 (1993): 75–94; R. J. P Kain and Elizabeth Baigent, *The Cadastral Map in the Service of the State: A History of Property Mapping* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Donzelot, *L'Invention du Social: Essai sur le Declin des Passions Politiques*; Jane Caplan and John Torpey, eds., *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[44] Margaret R. Somers and Christopher N.J. Roberts, "Toward a New Sociology of Rights: A Genealogy of 'Buried Bodies' of Citizenship and Human Rights," *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 4, no. 1 (2008): 385–425; Margaret R. Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*.

[45] Chakrabarty, "Labor History and the Politics of Theory; an Indian Angle on the Middle East," 331–332.

who stake their own claims to the political distribution of rights[46], making the development of citizenship and social identity an "open history", which is then scripted by democratic (and sometimes anti democratic) collective movements claiming equality and citizenship rights for labor, women, civil rights, and so on.

Chapter 4 reviews the rise of mass politics and social welfare measures in the wake of WWI as partial response to subaltern demands for a range of rights that fell under the category of political and economic citizenship[47]. It argues that these social welfare measures became part of the repertoire of corporate responses to similar subaltern and working class challenges that faced the APOC in Khuzestan. Chapter 6 investigates a range of new urban solidarities that emerged in Abadan in the interwar years to resist further dispossession by oil capitalism, and to demand the 'right to the city'. These subaltern counter movements were by a heterogeneous and deracinated population, including oil workers but not exclusive to them, who were adopting the language of national identity as a collective strategy of negotiating their relations with oil capitalism and the authoritarian and nationalist central government.

Third, the histories of local, national, and global development are also inseparable from each other. The following chapters show that the development of the oil complex in Khuzestan was not the outcome of ready-made diffusion of technical and scientific knowledge, capital investment, and labor practices from Britain to Iran, but was a clear case of tangled developments (i.e. a GLH) that linked together the different spaces, institutions, people, and social arrangements that were party to the assemblage of the oil complex. To be sure this was a highly unequal process: Its story is one of ruthless dispossession and of authoritarian social engineering on the one hand, and on the other the emergence of a new regime of vast accumulation of capital that took at its raw material the existing local social and material resources. However, it is not a story of diffusion, and without the entanglements and contributions of ordinary people and their material world in Khuzestan there would have been no oil complex to speak of.

---

[46] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958); Norma Claire Moruzzi, *Speaking through the Mask: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Social Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000). I have discussed the urban dimension of citizenship claims in Kaveh Ehsani, "The Politics of Public Space in Tehran," *City and Society*, under review 2015.

[47] The categorization of stages of citizenship into political, economic, and social is from the classic essay by Marshall. See, T.H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class* (London: Pluto, 1992).

For one thing, oil was not a ready-made industry to be simply introduced to Khuzestan in 1908 (chapter 4). At the turn of the 20th Century oil was still a relatively novel and emerging extractive business not yet assured of its eventual role as the most significant commodity of the modern era[48]. As chapter 4 will elaborate, WWI and the advent of Fordism played a major part in the rise to global prominence of oil, and the oil complex in Khuzestan was very much part of this trend. This new paradigm was not simply economic and technical, but also social and political.

At a quick glance, the scale of change can be seen in some important numbers: At the onset of WWI British forces in France had less than a thousand motorized millitary vehicles, by 1918 they had more than fifty thousand, in addition to tanks and an air force. Abadan's contribution to this war effort was crucial in providing fuel to the navy and army, especially in the Middle East and Indian Ocean (chapters 2, 4, 5)[49]. Between 1914 and 1918 APOC's production increased tenfold, to nearly 900 thousand tons of fuel products. By the end of the War the British government was not only the major shareholder of APOC, it was its most important customer, with the Admiralty alone taking two thirds of Abadan's output[50]. This was a symbiotic relationship, for without the British governmental investment the Company, which had been seriously overstretched and found itself in dire financial state, may well not have survived (chapter 2)[51]. The strategic and economic benefits of Khuzestan's oil for the British war effort was often acknowledged in a self-congratulatory language, for example by Winston Churchill who reminisced:

> "We may not unreasonably expect to claim that the mighty fleets laid down in 1912-1914, the greatest ever built by any power in an equal period, were

---

[48] See for example Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power*, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 2008); Ida M. Tarbell, *The History of the Standard Oil Company: Briefer Version*, ed. David M. Chalmers (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003); Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:235–294.

[49] For these figures and for Abadan fuel supplied to military during WWI, see Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:213, 235, 243–244, 262, 278, 282.

[50] Ibid., 288-293. It is important to emphasize the commercial nature of the Company. APOC never was simply a patriotic majority government owned company. When given the opportunity it acted like any commercial agent out to maximize profits, even at the cost of becoming a war profiteer, for example at the expense of British troops fighting in Mesopotamia. For example, see the complaint by Arnold Wilson, who was by then the chief of police in Basra, to APOC general manager in Mohammareh, about the Company selling petrol to the army at higher rates than petrol imported from Burma via Bombay (28 October, 1915); and of being overcharged by the Company for mules and transport (12 December, 1915), BP 68779.

[51] See detailed discussion of the Company's financial situation in Marian (Kent) Jack, "The Purchase of the British Government's Shares in the British Petroleum Company 1912-1914," *Past and Present*, no. 39 (April 1968): 139–68; Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:97–113, 160–200.

> added to the British navy without costing a single penny to the tax payer …Fortune brought us a prize [Khuzestan's oil] from fairyland far beyond our brightest hopes"[52]

What Churchill portrayed as a piece of crafty business was perceived as outright plunder by successive generations of Iranian nationalists at the time and since, and contributed to the nationalist movement that finally saw the monopoly of APOC (renamed Anglo Iranian Oil Company after 1936 (AIOC)) over Iranian oil come to end in 1951. From the onset, the dispute between the Iranian government, APOC, and the British state, was over several intertwined issues: First, the Oil Company's accounting practices in calculating the Iranian share of royalties[53] (see

---

[52] Quoted in Mostafa Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 17.

[53] The **question of oil royalties and shares of profits** received by Iran were seen at the time of their signings and after, by Iranian critiques and even by the British agents and experts who overtime finalized various contracts with various Qajar monarchs, the Bakhtiyari Khans, and Reza Shah and his statesmen, as lopsided bargains benefiting the British side. While many in the Iranian press and among political commentators portrayed the concession as little better than thievery, the formal Iranian objections overtime were framed in legalistic terms against the arbitrary nature of the initial grant in 1901 by Muzaffar al-Din Shah to William D'Arcy, a private individual, and not to the British Government, which had become the majority shareholder of a private concern by purchasing its shares and investing in its future. The Concession had been bestowed prior to the Constitutional Revolution, which had ushered in parliamentary jurisdiction and elected representation as the new basis of law making, thus nullifying previous royal decrees and concessions bestowed on foreign nationals by the arbitrary whim of the Monarch. The outrageously generous terms of the D'Arcy Oil Concession made in exchange for personal payment to the Shah, with little regard for what were now considered as 'national interests', only added to the grievance. Furthermore, the separate agreements between APOC and the Bakhtiyari Khans, and the formation of the Bakhtiyari Oil Company with a 35 share for a few of their senior Khans who had signed the agreement, was perceived by Iranian nationalists as a direct challenge to the national sovereignty, and a violation of the government's interest, which owned no shares of the enterprise.

Through the D'Arcy Concession Iran was supposed to receive 16% of net profits as royalties, but the Company itself was in sole charge of accounting and of carrying out all details and methods of calculation of operations. Its accounting excluded highly profitable and rapidly expanding subsidiary activities, like tanker shipping, retail marketing etc. which ought to have been added to the balance sheet. Soon APOC came to own and operate considerable shares in other oil and commercial operations in Iraq (Mesopotamia), the Persian Gulf (Bahrain, Kuwait), Mexico, and Britain (Llandarcy). The D'Arcy Concession had defined the share in net profits of APOC as the source of royalties, yet the Company refused to include any offshore operations as integral to the Concession. It paid taxes and duties in Britain, which were then deducted from the gross profits, but not in Iran, and it provided guaranteed quotas of various refined oil products to the British military at highly subsidized rates, regardless of their current market valuation. All of these political arrangements reduced the royalties' share of the Iranian party and caused resentment and ongoing friction with the central government in Tehran. Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle*; M Nakhai, *Le Pétrole en Iran* (Bruxelle: Editions J. Felix, 1938); Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*; Movahed, *Naft-e Ma va Masa'el-e Hoquqi-e An (Our Oil and Its Issues)*; Abolfazl Lesani, *Tala-ye Siah ya Bala-ye Iran* (Tehran: AmirKabir, 1978); Fateh, *Panjah Sal Naft-e Iran*; Fatemi, *Oil Diplomacy*.

Eventually, these frictions led to the revised agreement of 1933, but that agreement was itself dissatisfactory to the Iranian nationalists. Reza Shah signed the 1933 agreement personally in the midst of a critical period of economic and political crises. The global impact of the Great Depression, the subsequent drastic reduction of royalties from oil, the major tribal uprisings of 1929, the

chapter 7); second, the legitimacy of the British Government as a majority shareholder in APOC and its obtaining preferential rates and influencing Company policy, when the terms of the initial D'Arcy Oil Concession were with a private company, and not an imperial state that was consistently and brazenly interfering in domestic Iranian affairs as an de-facto colonial overlord (chapter 2). Third, Iranian government demands for the Company to adhere to the letter of the Concession and hire Iranian workers only and to train managers and skilled workers to replace the Indian and Europeans who staffed the middle ranks and technical positions throughout the operations (what I will refer to as *Iranianization*. See chapter 5). Fourth, the recurring objections of the central government in Tehran against the Oil Company acting like a sovereign state in southern Iran, by drawing separate land lease and labor recruitment agreements with local magnates and tribal leaders in Khuzestan, and implicitly supporting their political and military autonomy and their flirtation with territorial separatism (chapters 2, 3, 6).

In other words, the establishment of the oil complex in Khuzestan was not a straightforward act of capital and technology transfer by a ready-made industry from Britain to Khuzestan. Rather, it was a highly contested enterprise, intertwined from the onset with the internal political, social, and geographic dynamics of an Iranian society in throes of crisis and transition, and caught in the midst of international great

---

monopolization of foreign trade and key commodities by the state, and the rise of the Shah's ever more personal tyranny which led to the physical elimination of some of his closest statesmen and erstwhile allies, undermined the legitimacy of the new deal and effectively meant that the 1933 agreement was never widely accepted as a fair deal by the majority of Iranians, as became evident in the rise of post-WW2 Oil Nationalization Movement. The long simmering and accumulated political, legal, and economic discontent discussed above were at the heart of the eventual nationalization.

However, the general account provided here, which is the standard narrative of Iranian nationalist grievances, does not include the most decisive aspect of these frictions, which is the local-provincial dimension. The standard accounts of oil royalties cited above focus on questions related to royalties, contracts between national governments, and defining a fair division of proceeds: It is a dispute about distribution. But, as Marx notes correctly, capitalism is not assembled only in the open realm of exchange, contracts, and the market, where all parties are supposed to be equal and participate of their free will. Producing the wealth that circulates and is distributed in the realm of exchange takes place behind enclaves, in factories, mines, and refineries, which are shielded and highly controlled spaces, such as company towns like Abadan.

Regarding the oil agreements, the focus of our discussion is not about what was obviously a crooked and shady relationship between unequal partners, but about why and how the manner in which the oil complex was constructed in Abadan depended so fundamentally on presenting the illusion of an equal and transparent contractual relationship. On APOC's mode of calculation of royalties, and how this was integral to the oil complex see Katayoun Shafiee, "A Petro-Formula and Its World: Calculating Profits, Labour and Production in the Assembling of Anglo-Iranian Oil," *Economy & Society* 41, no. 4 (2012): 1–30.

powers rivalries that were beyond its abilities to maneuver (chapters 2, 5), as well as a changing Britain itself (chapter 4) during a historical period of revolutionary change.

The oil complex was constructed out of a multiplicity of intertwined relationships across various scales. For simplicity and practicality's purpose the scales of analysis that I have focused on in this work are global, national, and local. This argument requires that we clarify the notion of *scale* itself. But before proceeding to engage the topic theoretically, I will lay out the case study of the Bazaar of Abadan that serves as a convenient empirical entry point in the following chapters.

The New Bazaar of Abadan: Small Case, Big Story?

In 1925-27 APOC decided to build a "properly planned, efficient, and sanitary" market place in a small area sandwiched between the refinery, the European residential quarters, and the indigenous Town. It was to be roofed, made of modern materials, concrete floors, with properly ventilated and well-lit stalls, to be leased out until Company investment had been repaid. As always, there were additional motives involved: the Company was interested in socializing the locals in what it considered reliable ways of money accounting and unambiguous legal contracts. Equally important were considerations over sanitary issues and food security. As Abadan had grown exponentially so had the threats of food shortages and epidemics during the tumultuous years of war, drought, and conflict, with each crisis threatening the fragile but vitally important oil export operations at critical times. With regard to the bazaar, APOC argued that a modern and sanitary commercial space designed and regulated by the Company would go some way in reducing potential food crises stemming from the risks of contamination or the panic caused by hoarded supplies and predatory price inflations.

APOC claimed it the initiative to take over the area and build a bazaar had come at the behest of local notables and it was only acting as a responsible corporate citizen and not a self-interested party. By the time it began preparations in 1925 the provincial ruler and British ally Sheikh Khaz'al had been deposed by the emergent central government under Reza Khan, and the position of the local elite associated with him had become shaky. Implementation of the bazaar scheme required the removal of area residents who had settled there in recent years – shopkeepers, peddlers, coffee shop owners, oil workers, company employees, and others who had made the place their home. However, in this case most of the residents refused to

move and demanded proper compensation. Unexpectedly the affair dragged on, when earlier the evictions would have been considered a rather minor routine, and handled forcefully and without hesitation. Only a few years back, Company experts had characterized the small island of Abadan as "unpopulated" and "desolate" (see further below and chapter 3), but by now (1925) it was home to an estimated population of more than sixty thousand, coming from quite diverse backgrounds. After the eruption of initial protests in the neighborhood, local Iranian officials and company managers got involved. As protests and petitions escalated and resistance continued, senior managers in London, Cabinet Ministers, the Prime Minister, newspapers, and even the Royal Court in Tehran got tangled in an affair that was becoming surprisingly messy. Eventually, after two years of wrangling, a compromise was reached and the bazaar was built. In the process a new form of urban politics had begun to take shape that affected all the social actors involved and shaped their future actions, but also signaled a significant reconfiguration of the oil complex itself, and changed the oil habitus.

Why did APOC entangle itself with a controversial project that had little to do with oil? What prompted neighborhood residents who by all counts were poor if not destitute, had few resources, and shared little in terms of ethnic or communal ties except their common claim to a patch of (what had become urban) land, to band together and resist a giant corporation? How did the neophyte state bureaucrats see the situation and react once Sheikh Khaz'al's rule was at an end and a new form of politics and administration was being assembled[54] around the oil complex and at the national level? How did the eruption of this new form of urban protest in the long run affect the oil encounter between workers, the Company, urban dwellers, and state

[54] The new state institutions that began to be assembled from the mid-1920s, either from scratch or in radically reconfigured administrative form, included municipalities, property and legal documents' registration, birth certifications, notary publics, mass education at various levels, including the first university, standardized taxation, public health, civil laws, etc. See Amin Banani, *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 52–111; Hossein Mahboubi Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Moassesat-e Tamadoni-e Jadid dar Iran* , 3 Vols. (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1975), especially volume 2; Stephanie Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910-1926* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1997); David Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 91–161; Jalil (Seyyed) Mohammadi, "Seyr-e Malekiyat dar Iran va Chegounegi-ye Sabt-e Asnad va Amlak (The patterns of property in Iran and the manners of registeration of documents and properties)," *Kanoun (Nashriyeh-ye Kanoun-e Sar-Daftardaran va Daftaryaran)* 41–45, no. 1–31 (1997- 2002); Cyrus Schayegh, *Who is Knowledgeable is Strong; Science, Class, and the Formation of Modern Iranian Society, 1900-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)

officials? These much larger questions lie at the center of the deceptively minor tale of the bazaar of Abadan.

The New Oil Habitus in Post-War Abadan:

Small and local as this episode may appear, it encapsulated the emergence of a new habitus around the oil complex in Khuzestan. WWI was generally acknowledged to have marked the end of an era, and the following decade and the interwar period were experienced globally as a period of transition, uncertainty, and experimentation. This was true in Europe, the primary instigator and the main theater of the total war, but also in West Asia, which the main protagonists had turned into a major center of conflict and contention.

The struggle over the construction of the bazaar of Abadan caused major *frictions*[55] between the Oil Company, the upstart provincial bureaucracy, and the local residents, which included oil workers and their dependents living in the neighborhood. It is ironic that a small patch of land and ongoing disputation over its control, ownership, and land use, became a major " frontier of awkward engagement" between the key actors in the oil complex and played an important part in shaping the new oil habitus.

As we shall see, the frictions caused by this protracted struggle over controlling and shaping physical space forced all the main actors involved to redefine their strategies, to re-conceptualize their practices, and to re-organize their actions and dispositions in relation to each other and to the built environment and the social space they inhabited: Local bureaucrats and administrators of the fledgling new centralizing state began to define their institutional responsibilities as the protectors of national citizens and providers of general welfare in the form of municipal services and public health. In the aftermath of the war the Oil Company officials were in the midst of a

[55] The concept of 'friction' is borrowed from Anna Tsing, whose ethnography of extractive capitalism in Indonesian rainforest highlands sheds light on the mechanisms through which globalized capitalism is shaped not in a single privileged location, but through the awkward engagement between a diverse cast of characters ranging from speculative investors, adventurer and crony capitalists, environmentalists, eco-tourists, and indigenous activists. As in Tsing's case studies, the friction over Abadan's bazaar in the 1920's demonstrates that the Oil Company was not merely introducing a set of actions intended to flatten out local differences and shape Abadan according to some existing universals of global urban modernity. Rather, the demand for this bazaar project emerged out of the frictions between various actors involved, and the eventual outcome was the result of these awkward engagements. See Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 4, 21, 33.

major strategic rethinking of their long-term goals in Iran, and of understanding and managing their internal re-organization and external transition into a global giant corporation (chapter 2). Like the local state bureaucrats, the Oil Company experts and strategists had to scramble to fill the political and social vacuum left from the elimination of Sheikh Kahz'al and the old social order. Last, the local residents were forging new networks and links of solidarity and resistance that were based not only on the so-called "primordial loyalties" of language, kinship ties, and ethnicity[56]; but on the novel, effectively coerced, and shared experiences of urban living, participation in a wage labor market, dependence on an increasingly monetized economy. These new place-based ties were being forged amidst new and unfamiliar forms of destitution that resulted not only from natural calamities, familiar material scarcities, or local conflicts, but by the newly imposed regimes of property and legal exclusion[57].

Khaz'al had ruled over a relatively homogeneous tribal-agrarian region. But by the middle of 1920s when he was removed from power, Abadan had become a sprawling industrial boomtown of global importance. The refinery, shipping docks, and storage facilities soon came to be surrounded by European enclaves on the one hand, and on the other by slums and shantytowns housing migrant workers, a town center called *Shahr* (the City), and some remaining indigenous villages. Its governance required new skills and resources that were altogether different from anything that either upstart provincial Iranian bureaucrats or the Oil Company managers had previously experienced or possessed. Under the circumstances, the political and social vacuum left by the removal of Sheikh Khaz'al and the end of his British-dependent patrimonial rule had to be filled by the embryonic Iranian bureaucracy and/or the Oil Company itself.

There were major challenges facing the oilmen and bureaucrats. These ranged from the growing urban militantism among the new city dwellers, mounting class tensions in the workplace amongst skilled Indian workers who were angry at the

---

[56] Essentializing notions, always open to internal challenge and re-interpretation, yet held dear by orientalists and modernization theorists. See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Boston: Basic Books, 1977). For a pivotal critique of the notion of primordial identities see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

[57] For an incisive social and cultural differentiation of poverty caused by material scarcity versus the very modern forms of destitution imposed by the social and cultural norms of the market see Ashis Nandy, "The Beautiful, Expanding Future of Poverty: Popular Economics as a Psychological Defence," *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 3, 2004, 94–99.

repression of nationalist sentiments in India and against their own working and living conditions in Abadan, as well as among the unskilled Iranian workers demanding better treatment and decent work. There was the simmering discontent of indigenous populations that kept breaking out in bad tempered small skirmishes and confrontations, or on occasion into full-scale tribal revolts, as in 1925 and 1929 (see chapters 3, 6, 7). The anxiety of rising Soviet influence among oil workers, as well as the perceived threat of American competition for the oil business preoccupied Company managers and directors, and affected their policies; as did the ever present fear of deadly epidemics decimating the city, Europeans and 'natives' alike, scaring away valuable recruits, and harming production. There were cross border threats from Mesopotamia and an Arabian Peninsula that were in throes of nationalist upheaval under British occupation[58], while regional centrifugal forces on the Iranian side of the highly porous borders were equally challenging[59].

For APOC as well as the Iranian bureaucracy developing new techniques of managing these challenges were partly shaped by trial and error, through dealing relentlessly with protracted and controversial events like the newly proposed bazaar; or by reaching out to global innovations in professional techniques of social and spatial governance and industrial management. But these new mechanisms of governing the oil complex (what Foucault calls *governmentality*, or the art of governing populations, territories, and mentalities[60]) were not forged in isolation.

---

[58] On post-WW1 Iraq and British occupation there see Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 30–73. The vital importance of oil in Mesopotami and British calculations in their subsequent military forays and occupation there see Helmut Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq 1910-1928* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976). For a closer look at the range of political activism in Iraq, especially communists, see Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement in Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). although the great value of Batatu's analysis is his analysis of post WWII Iraq. The British imperial experience is well discussed from the first hand perspective of Arnold T. Wilson, *Loyalties; Mesopotamia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931). And critically evaluated by Marion Kent, *Oil and Empire; British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil* (London: McMillan, 1976). On Arnold Wilson's stint as de facto governor of British occupied Iraq, prior to his becoming the managing APOC director in Mohammareh/Khorramshahr, see John Marlowe, *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London: Cresset, 1967).

[59] See the fascinating memoirs of the British diplomat in Dezful C. J. Edmonds, *East and West of Zagros Travel, War and Politics in Persia and Iraq 1913-1921* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[60] Foucault defines *governmentality* as follows:
"1. The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means [the] apparatuses of security.
2. The tendency which, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led towards the pre-

They emerged during WWI and its aftermath in multiple but interconnected places, in Abadan as well as in London, Tehran, and other global nodes. They were the result of new parameters in social and political life that were tied to regulating the social domain.

Abadan and the World: Conceptualizing a Relational Scalar Politics

The story of the Abadan bazaar opens a window into the interplay of the local-national-global forces that produced a new configuration of the oil complex in this formative period. Each of these geographic scales is conceptualized as networks of relations, connections, and transfers of goods, ideas, policies, and people across space and scales[61]. Consequently, in order to provide a thick description of the multiple layers of the local story of the bazaar, I will begin by exploring a number of interconnected and formative processes that were taking place at the larger global and national scales, before proceeding back to explore in more detail what transpired at a micro scale in Abadan during the pivotal decade of 1920s. This shifting back and forth between different geographic scales allows us to unpack the relational processes

---

eminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, etc) of this type of power which may be termed government, resulting, on the one hand, in formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and, on the other, in the development of a whole complex of savoirs.
3. The process, or rather the result of the process, through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages, transformed into the administrative state during the 15Th and 16th centuries, gradually becomes *governmentalized*." Foucault et al., *The Foucault Effect : Studies in Governmentality : With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*, 102–103.

Foucault argues that the art of modern government under the contemporary welfare state has made a distinct shift from previous notions of statecraft that he calls pastoral power (government as a shepherd tending its individualized flock) and sovereignty (princely power imposing its hegemonic will over territory), to a notion of governance which combines disciplinary power (notions of productivity and self-improvement anchored within the individual body) with an even more absolute claim of sovereignty over territory and the individual, but not in the name of a prince, rather in the name of the universal welfare of all members of society. Foucault presents this shift as a defuse process, a "technology of power" embodied in individuals as well as in institutions, shaping 'the soul', and regulating the individual from inside. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*; Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population : Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

As I will argue later, the modern professional middle class and the institutions it helped create, and by which it is reproduced, ought to be assigned a defining role in shaping this hegemony. I do not think assigning significant agency to particular social groups is contradictory to Foucault's argument, even though Foucault saw modern power as a widespread, discursive exercise, rather than the exercise of particular groups seeking domination over others. I concur with Tania Li's view that various forms of power – sovereignty, disciplinary, governmentality – are not historically superseded, but act simultaneously in shaping modern political economies, especially in the domain of 'development'. See Tania Murray Li, *The Will to Improve* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 1–30.

[61] Christian DeVito, "New Perspectives on Global Labour History, Introduction," *Workers of the Wold* 1, no. 3 (2013): 17.

that informed each geographic scale of the story historically, and the manner in which these scales overlapped and mutually shaped each other.

Some critical geographers use the term "scalar politics"[62] to capture this relational and formative power play between different geographic scales of analysis. *Scale* is an important analytical category in geography that has been highly contested in recent times as the discipline has become more engaged with the insights of critical social theory. Whereas conventional geography tends to view scale as naturally given, self-evident, and unambiguously bounded (the nation, the city, the countryside), critical Marxist geographers in the 1980's and 1990's began to challenge fixed notions of scale as pre-existing and external to social processes[63]. Instead, they argued that spatial scales - such as the local, the urban, the national, the regional, the global – are interconnected and actively produced by historical political-economic processes[64].

However, this still left open the question of determinacy and agency: Are there privileged scales that determine the eventual outcome of these interconnected layers? Post-structuralist critiques have raised objections that the Marxian approach to scale tends to privilege macro processes, such as global capitalism, as ultimately determining the micro scales, such as the local, the household, or the individual body. There was also the added question of how the boundaries of each scale are defined, and understanding how these boundaries are produced and partitioned[65].

Most notably, Doreen Massey objected against conceptualizing places as rigidly bounded and defined (what she calls the Heideggerian sense of place, see pp.64-65). Citing the example of Kilbourn, Massey pointed out that this London neighborhood was populated by migrants, artists, refugees, workers, etc. and did not really have a rigid boundary, as its varied population were linked and integrated to the world beyond through complex and quite uneven economic, emotional, legal, and social ties. Just as residents of Kilbourn have multiple identities, the same can be said

---

[62] See Danny MacKinnon, "Reconstructing Scale: Towards a New Scalar Politics," *Progress in Human Geography* 35, no. 1 (February 1, 2011): 21–36..
[63] Eric Swingedouw, "Neither Global nor Local: 'Glocalization' and the Politics of Scale," in *Spaces of Globalization*, ed. Kevin Cox (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 137–66.
[64] See Neil Smith, "Scale," *Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); David Harvey, "From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity," in *Mapping the Futures*, ed. Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, and et.al. (London: Routledge, 1993).
[65] See Doreen Massey's critique of what she considers to be David Harvey's economic reductionist sense of place. Doreen Massey, "Power-Geometry, and a Progressive Sense of Place," in *Mapping the Futures*, ed. Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, and et.al. (London: Routledge, 1993), 59–70; Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005) 130-194.

for the physical place itself. This multiplicity of connections to larger geographic scales demonstrates three important points: First, that defining a place like Kilbourn (or Abadan) does not require drawing of definitive boundaries; second, that the multiplicities of connections and identities is a source of constant conflict, but also of richness of collective life; and third, that the relational flows that shape a place are uneven, and so is the scalar politics that shapes a place. The flow of resources and people to a place does not happen in the same way, for everyone involved. To paraphrase Massey "some people are in charge and initiate the movements and flows, some are more on the receiving end, [others] are effectively imprisoned by it". Refugees, disposed pastoralists, impoverished migrants moved to Abadan, just as English accountants and Punjabi skilled machinists. But they did so under very different circumstances, and as a result of very uneven distribution of power.

In applying these insights to our case study, the issue becomes the manner in which we conceptualize and frame the processes and agencies that shaped Abadan and produced its variegated spaces. Do we frame Abadan as a small locality whose built environment was ultimately produced by the global forces of oil capitalism, British imperial policies, and Iranian state actions? In other words, as just one more example of the same story repeated everywhere?[66] Or do we develop what Doreen Massey has called a progressive *global sense of place*, based on conceptualizing scale not as a determined by exogenous and abstract meta-processes, but a relational understanding of scale where locality itself is pro-active and a key vehicle for social mobilization, political intervention, and ultimately shaping larger macro scales, such as the nation and the global?[67] And, ultimately, the question of scale is also determined by how boundaries are defined. In the case of Abadan, do we understand the refinery city as a self-contained physical entity? Or as a changing urban space embedded within a complex and relational web of cultural and political economic ties to the larger region and the world?

My approach in this dissertation will be the latter. By mid 1920's Abadan had become an important component in the global political economic transition to oil as

---

[66] As stated by one of Marx' more questionable and seemingly teleological statements "the country that is more developed industrially shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future". Marx, *Capital*.

[67] See Philip Cook, "The Contested Terrain of Locality Studies," in *Human Geography; An Essential Anthology*, ed. John Agnew and et.al. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 487–488.

the new primary source of energy replacing coal (and steam power) and the most sought after strategic resource. The change to oil from coal was part of a larger paradigmatic shift where nearly all spheres of collective life -- from the forms of governance, to the contours of relations between nature-state-society, popular culture, class and gender relations, and the role of middle class technical experts -- were being challenged and revolutionized. In Iran a new nationalist central government was being assembled that questioned long established relations with Britain and was intent to forge a homogeneous nation state out of the fragmented territory and the heterogeneous population. In Abadan itself, the local population, mostly displaced migrants from different social and geographic backgrounds, now working for the oil industry or scraping a living on its margins, had to forge new forms of urban solidarity and militantism to resist their further dispossession, and to stake a claim to the city. The urban struggles to resist evictions to clear the path for the proposed bazaar of Abadan, and the expansion of exclusive Oil Company enclaves at the expense of the local population, affected the governmental practices of the new bureaucracy and the social, labor, and urban policies of APOC itself. Thus, what appears in the first glance as local and a micro scale, is shaped by global events and currents, but also affects these and contributes to their modification.

This multi scalar historical and geographic approach allows us to avoid the pitfall of conceptualizing the development of the oil complex as determined by the agency of all powerful macro agents such as APOC or the Iranian state. The bazaar affair and other similar struggles over the built environment in Abadan and other enclaves of the oil industry were the product of larger global forces at work but, in a real sense, they also contributed to shaping the global.

A Land Without People, and a People Without History? Making the Local Visible Again

The privileging of macro scales and meta-narratives of modernization and the nation state in the historiography of oil have tended to silence the lived experiences of subalterns, local populations, and the working people in the oil complex, or has reduced them to mere footnotes of ‘the real history’ of modernization, diffusion, nation state, and industrial development. This discursive maneuver has been a common feature of the modernization narrative in its many guises, with rendering the landscape and the people living on it as irrelevant.

Eric Wolf showed that the recurring theme of "land without people, and a people without history" had been essential to the maintenance and justification of western colonial domination from the end of 15th century, as well as of settler colonization of the so called frontiers in the Americas, Asia, and Africa[68]. In Iran, this recurring theme of an exotic and empty land lying wasteful and unused by unproductive natives was a regular feature of the vast and informative literature produced by successive European (mostly British) adventurers, explorers, missionaries, spies, soldiers, scholars, diplomats, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists from 19th century onward (chapters 3, 6)[69]. It was also a theme readily adopted by Iranian nationalists, and later on by policymakers and development planners, to pave the way for the modernization of the country and especially of Khuzestan, by imposing a succession of vast development projects, including railroads, dams, agribusinesses, petrochemical complexes, sugar cane plantations, and so on, with enormous social and environmental consequences[70].

---

[68] Eric Wolf, *Europe and People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). For the recurring theme in various reincarnations in frontier settler colonialism, such as Israel or the French in Morocco and Algeria, or the American West see Norman Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (New York: Verso, 2003), 21–50; Maxime Rodinson, *Israel, a Colonial-Settler State?* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2001); Will Swearingen, *Moroccan Mirages: Agrarian Dreams and Deceptions, 1912-1986* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayyad, *Le Déracinement: La Crise de l'Agriculture Traditionnelle en Algérie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1964); Worster, *Rivers of Empire*; Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*; ibid. On the fortified geography created as a consequence of this coercive colonial framing see Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007). The adoption of the theme of empty land by Iranian nationalism is discussed by Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*.

[69] Prominent and selective examples of this orientalist literature covering Khuzestan include George Nathaniel Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question* (London: Elibron, 2005 [1892]), Vol.2, 268–396; Ella Sykes, *Through Persia on a Side Saddle* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Georgias Press, 2008 [1903]); Percy Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia: Or, Eight Years in Iran* (London: John Murray, 1902), 239–260; Baron Clement Augustus Gregory Peter Louis de Bode, *Travels in Luristan and Arabistan*, 2 vols. (London: J.Madden & Co., 1845); Austen Henry Layard, *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, Including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes Before the Discovery of Nineveh*, 2 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1887); Vita Sackville-West, *Twelve Days in Persia: Across the Mountains with the Bakhtiyari Tribe* (London: Tauris Parke, 2009 [1928]); Merian C Cooper, *Grass* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1925); Arnold Talbot Wilson, *Persian Gulf* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954); Arnold T Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941); Edmonds, *East and West of Zagros; Travel, War and Politics in Persia and Iraq 1913-1921*.

[70] See Kaveh Ehsani, "Bohran-e Ab, Bohran-e Abadan [Water crisis/Abadan in Crisis]," no. 27 (2000): 162–72; Kaveh Ehsani, "Tabar Shenasi-e Tarh-haye Bozorg-e Tose'eh dar Iran-e Mo'aser (Genealogy of large scale development projects in contemporary Iran)," *Goftogu*, no. 54 (2009): 113–32; Kaveh Ehsani, "Tajaddod va Mohandesi-ye Ejtema'ei; Negahi beh Tajrobeh Abadan va Masjed Soleyman," *Goftogu*, no. 25 (1998): 9–45; Kaveh Ehsani, "Rural Society and Agricultural Development in Post-Revolution Iran: The First Two Decades.," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006); Ehsani, "Sweet Dreams; Sugarcane and the Politics of Development in Pre and Post- Revolution Iran"; Kaveh Ehsani, "Review essay: 'Omran-e Khouzestan'; edited by Gholamreza Afkhami.," *Iran Nameh* 13 (1999): 403–10; Goodell, *The Elementary Structures of Political Life*.

The theme of 'land without people' resonated in Khuzestan with its ample river water resources, fertile soil, rich petroleum deposits, agrarian and mobile pastoralist populations, and proximity to open sea routes, especially when these economic potentials were juxtaposed to the supposed paucity of the history of its current 'inferior' inhabitants. These were themes that were constantly stressed in the European scholarly and travelling literatures of the 19th and early 20 centuries, even as the authors steeped in the romanticism of the Victorian era, and reinforced with the positive knowledge of the new scientific field of archeology, waxed lyrical about the ancient imperial legacy of the region and its surviving monuments: "The Bakhtiyaris are entirely ignorant of their own history, they are devoid of legends and traditions of any kind, lacking the romance and folklore of other mountain people" wrote Elizabeth McBean Ross, a "lady doctor" who spent a year among the Bakhtiyari in Dehkord, which she called "a dreary little townlet in the midst of a desolate district", before succumbing to typhoid while serving in a hospital in Serbia during WWI[71].

However, the story was a bit more complicated than presented in this narrative, as Khuzestan's history had never developed in isolation from the larger world, and its current state was the result continued entanglement with it. Likewise, the notion of 'an empty land' is an ideational construct of the observer, rather than an objective reflection of an existing reality (chapters 3, 6)[72]. Thus, the relevant question becomes not so much *whether the land was without people*, but more pertinently, *who constructed the image of the empty land, and for what purpose*? Here I will first provide a brief long-term history of the province's landscape and population, as one of entanglement with the larger world beyond its provincial borders[73]. I will then analyze the role and motivations of the technical professional experts who authored this narrative and reproduced it as a discourse, especially as it related to the establishment of the oil complex in Khuzestan.

When oil was discovered in 1908 the river island of Abadan was populated by date farmers, fisherman, and sheepherders who lived in several villages across the flat

[71] Elizabeth Ness MacBean Ross, *A Lady Doctor in Bakhtiyari Land* (London: L. Parsons, 1921), 22, 32.
[72] Harvey, "Population, Resources, and the Ideology of Science."
[73] I should emphasize that a geographic history is meant to be different from a political or social history. Here I am merely sketching out the *longue durée* of the material landscape and dynamics of demographic change as a result of long-term regional and global connections.

and sandy stretch of silt land below the confluence of the major Mesopotamian rivers Tigris, Euphratus, Karun, and Bahmanshir. The latter initially had been a large canal excavated in pre-Islamic period to open an alternative channel to the Persian Gulf. Thus Abadan is an artificial island, similar to the ancient city of Shushtar, whose geography was shaped by the great irrigation engineering and water works carried out mostly under the Sasanids (224-651 CE) for whom Khuzestan was a major source of irrigated food crop production. By the early 20th century the Province's ecology and demography had changed drastically, and was even renamed as *Arabestan*. Although it now lied at the periphery of Iranian political and economic life, nevertheless Khuzestan was always considered by whichever central government was in power as integral to its national territory, especially given its strategic importance as a border region to the Persian Gulf and Ottoman Mesopotamia.

Sasanians (224- 651 CE) had built great irrigation works across Mesopotamia and Khuzestan, primarily for grain production. But these vast networks of canals and dykes lacked a proper drainage system that would have been too costly to build, and probably were beyond the era's technical abilities. Soil drainage was not as critical for agricultural productivity further upland, around Dezful and Shushtar where the land had a higher gradient and better natural drainage. But further south below Ahvaz, where the slope decreased and the silty flatlands stretched toward the Persian Gulf, poor drainage significantly affected soil quality. Overtime the problem reached a critical scale, as a result of large-scale irrigation schemes, especially around the major rivers and their tributaries.

Political upheavals and warfare made labor mobilization and maintenance work increasingly difficult. These problems were exacerbated by the failure to maintain a proper crop rotation and fallow schedule, and led to further land degradation. By the 9th century the lower reaches of the river networks were waterlogged and the topsoil had turned too saline for the shallow roots of many grain crops, and consequently lost its former productivity[74]. The Abbasids (750-1258 CE)

[74] See Robert McC Adams, "Agriculture and Urban Life in Early Southwestern Iran," *Science* 136, no. 3511 (1962): 109–22; Robert McC Adams, Theodore E. Downing, and McGuire Gibson, eds., *Irrigation's Impact on Society*, Anthropological Papers of the University of Arizona, no. 25 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974); Peter Christensen, *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environments in the History of the Middle East, 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press : University of Copenhagen, 1993); Gholamreza Kouross, ed., *Ab va Fann-e Abyari dar Iran-e Bastan*, 1971; Andrew M. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World: The*

resorted to indentured labor from the region, supplemented by imported slave labor from East Africa, to manually remove surface salt sediments. The cruel forced labor led to the great slave revolt of the Zanj (from Zanzibar) that was eventually repressed savagely[75].

Despite Baghdad's eventual bloody victory the long lasting civil war led to the destruction of the intricate network of dykes, levies, and canals that depended on constant maintenance and manual dredging. As a result, the once prosperous region fell into a long agricultural decline, and with it the Abbasid state itself. The Mongol invasion in the 13th century sealed the fate of the region's large-scale irrigation works. By the late Safavid period (1501-1736 CE), an area that had once been a center of prospering cities and vast agricultural estates often operated on coerced labor, had become a distant periphery, only nominally controlled by the capital Isfahan. Dezful, Shushtar, Ahvaz, Askar Mokram, and Basra, declined to small towns and villages or disappeared altogether as viable urban centers. The broken irrigation network led to the permanent flooding of the lowlands and the formation of the great swamps and marshes of southern Iran and Iraq, where many of the slaves and refugees from the great repressions of the 9th and 10th centuries and subsequent incessant warfare took permanent refuge. As a consequence of these historical changes other modes of economic subsistence and social organization had taken hold in the province's changed demographic and ecological landscape[76].

By the 16th century when the Safavids encouraged the large scale migration of Shi'a tribes from the Arabian Peninsula to settle the plains of Khuzestan as a bulwark against their rivals the Sunni Ottomans, the ecology and agrarian patterns of the entire region had been altered, along with the historic name of the province that had changed to Arabistan. In southwestern Khuzestan, the large-scale irrigated grain production estates disappeared, replaced by small-scale rain-fed subsistence agriculture along with limited irrigated rice, legumes, and vegetable productions as

---

Diffusion of Crops and Farming Techniques, 700-1100 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[75] Alexandre Popović, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999).

[76] See the remarkable orientalist travelogue of Wilfred Thesiger, *Marsh Arabs: Seven Years with the Primitive Tribesmen of a Watery World* (London: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1964); admittedly a guilty pleasure!

cash crops in the proximity of rivers[77]. Reeds from the expanding marshlands became raw material for housing construction, fuel, and winter fodder for the water buffalos, probably an import from India. Seasonal pastoralism and date farming along the rivers became more significant in the economy, especially in the lower reaches of Karun and Shatt al-Arab, relying on the sea tides of the Persian Gulf to raise the river water levels in the shallow and highly silted delta[78].

Thus, although to European observers thinking in terms of commercial agriculture production for consumption through the market, the land may have appeared as unused, unchanged, uncultivated and empty; the reality was socially and historically far more complicated. The region's landscape and population had changed constantly as a result of its entanglement with larger global as well as internal currents, but it could not be categorized as "an empty land and a people without history", until required so by the demands of oil capitalism and nation state development. Once oil had been discovered and petroleum became a global strategic resource that required the assemblage of a vast complex of social, technical, and human infrastructure, it became negligent to allow such abundant resources as oil, water, pasture, and fertile fallow land to go to 'waste' by ignorant and lazy natives. As a result, the development of these resources became a matter of historical responsibility to the grand and abstract ideas of scientific progress and welfare for all[79]. These are the themes that underlay the development of the oil habitus in

---

[77] Haj Mirza Abd-al Ghaffar Najm-al Molk, *Safarnameh Khuzestan beh Zamimeh Ketabcheh Dastour-e Ma'muriat-e Khouzestan va Gozaresh-e Barresiha-ye Ân Saman* (Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar va Mafakher-e Farhangi, 1962); Abd-al Ghaffar ibn-e Ali Mohammad Najm-al Dowleh, *Safarnameh Dovvom-e Najm-al Dowleh be Khouzestan; beh Peyvast-e Ketabcheh-ye Dastour-al Amal-e Nasser-al Din Shah dar Khosous-e Safar-e Aval beh Khouzestan* (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2007); John Gordon Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*, 6 vols. (Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, Eng.: Archive Editions, 1986); Ann K S Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia* (London: IB Tauris, 1991).

[78] See Mostafa Azkia and Kaveh Ehsani, "Abiyari dar Ramhormoz Part 1 (Social Aspects of Irrigation in Khuzestan)," *Ketab-e Tose'eh*, no. 2 (1990): 107–12; Mostafa Azkia and Kaveh Ehsani, "Abiyari dar Ramhormoz Part 2 (Social Aspects of Irrigation in Khuzestan)," *Ketab-e Tose'eh*, no. 3 (1992): 96–107. This analysis is based on my 18 months of fieldwork on agrarian society and rural change in Khuzestan between 1989-1992.

[79] An autobiographical note: This is not meant as a romantic or anti-modernist and anti-western critique. Working as a regional planner on post-war reconstruction of rural Khuzestan between 1989-1992, I found myself thinking and practicing within the same parameters and methodology I am subjecting to critical analysis here. As a development planner, seeing through the gaze of state priorities, I was evaluating local land use north of Ahvaz along the Karun River, to prepare the ground the country's largest agrarian project in history, a cluster of 7 giant sugar cane plantations to replace subsistence farming and seasonal pastoralism over 80 thousand hectares of what appeared to state planners such as myself and my colleagues, as wasted and negligently underused land. In fact, the land was constantly used, but not for commercial purposes, or mass production for the market. See Ehsani,

Khuzestan, and to which I will return to in chapters 3, 6, and 7. In the next section I will briefly discuss the role of the middle class professional experts who were the main authors of this narrative, and were instrumental in the consolidation of the oil complex.

The Role and Rule of Experts in Establishing the Oil Complex:

While the initial D'Arcy Concession of 1908 was the product of crafty and remarkably amoral negotiations and deals between British and Iranian statesmen and speculative investors (chapter 2), the actual work of discovery of oil and setting up the oil complex soon became the purview of professional experts. These ranged from geologists, engineers, surveyors, physicians, labor managers, accountants, corporate directors, security experts, urban planners, public health experts, chemists, and so on. As will become clear in the subsequent chapters, the boundaries between soldiers, diplomats, colonial officers, and technical experts in the employ of private oil business were rather fluid and ever shifting. However, the research in this dissertation reveals that they all played a defining role in assembling the oil complex in Khuzestan, and contributed significantly to shaping the oil habitus. Thus, rather than viewing the social history of oil and of labor in oil as defined primarily by frictions between labor, capital, and the state, I accord an equally important role to the mediation of middle class professional experts in this story. The role of experts was not limited to practical and technical affairs only. They were also instrumental in mediating political negotiations, contractual deals, and planning the long-term development of the oil complex by introducing 'the social question' (chapter 4) into the equation. This meant that in the defining interwar period, the question of social engineering, or of the active making of a permanent labor force in the oil industry and its cooptation through various strategies of coercion, as well as cooptation through class compromises and social policies, became a central tenet of APOC and the Iranian central government[80].

The following chapters will return to this theme and further expand on the role of technical experts. Here I would like to sketch out briefly the role of a few

"Sweet Dreams; Sugarcane and the Politics of Development in Pre and Post- Revolution Iran"; Kaveh Ehsani, "Rural Society and Agricultural Development in Post-Revolution Iran: The First Two Decades.," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006).

[80] Ehsani, "Social Engineering and the Contradictions of Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns."

individuals as an outline of the arguments to come. Arnold T. Wilson is a recurring character in this dissertation. As a young man from a middle class background (his father was a church minister), he went to a modest public school before joining colonial military service in India. Soon he was posted to Iran in 1907 as a young and inexperienced lieutenant heading of a force of 18 Indian Suwars (mounted cavalry) to guard oil explorers in Khuzestan who were under threat by local tribes. His intelligence, energy, and competence saw him rapidly elevated to act as British Consul in Mohammareh, to map and identify possible railroad routes in Iran as well as survey the possible location of the refinery in Abadan, before being appointed as acting head of the Boundary Commission charting the Iranian Ottoman border, once the actual Commission head was taken ill. During WWI he was posted to Basra as an administrative commander for the British military forces fighting the Ottoman army and local tribes. He was then rapidly elevated to the Acting Commissioner of British forces in Mesopotamia, serving as de-facto Viceroy of the new British protectorate of Iraq, an invented nation-state carved out by Britain, through a Mandate by the League of Nations, from three Ottoman provinces. Soon after the 1920 Arab Revolt in Iraq, for which he was partly blamed, Wilson left the military service and became the APOC Director in Mohammareh, in which capacity he was instrumental in the negotiations with the new Iranian central government that finalized the status of the oil complex in 1926.

Wilson was a prolific and talented author, and a remarkable individual. He wrote memoirs, and produced copious and detailed geographic, social, and political analyses of local populations, economies, and physical resources of southern Iran, that became the basis of British policymaking, as well as APOC operation[81]. Although an exceptional character, he was not unique but personified the growing trajectory of a new social class of technical experts who straddled the older world of Victorian and Edwardian colonialism, but now were becoming essential to the operations of modern corporate industrial capitalism in the era of Fordism, as well as the developmental institutions of the modern nation state.

---

[81] Arnold T Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941); Arnold T. Wilson, *Loyalties; Mesopotamia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931); Arnold Talbot Wilson, *Persian Gulf* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954); Arnold T Wilson, "The Bakhtiyaris," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 3 (1926): 205–23; Arnold T Wilson, *A Precis of the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes and Shaikhs of Arabistan*, 1911; Marlowe, *Late Victorian*.

The framing of Khuzestan as an "empty land and a people without history" in the period of oil explorations and the establishment of the oil industry during wartime (1908- 1921) was a discursive production of Wilson and other literary and technical experts like him, British, Europeans, as well as Iranians. In their writings, analyses, and policy proposals, Arnold Wilson and his colleagues emphasized the impending decline of the local social order in Khuzestan due to its many shortcomings. What they regularly failed to recognize or acknowledge was the historical and political context, and the connections between this state of affairs and the imperial policies of Britain and Russia, the political fallout from the upheavals of the Constitutional Revolution, the devastations of WWI, and the paradoxical impact of commercialization of southern Iran that had begun with the penetration of British merchant capital, and was about to expand into a whole new dimension with the establishment of the oil complex in Khuzestan (chapters 2, 3). They recognized that these momentous events were affecting local conditions, but they failed to acknowledge they were partially culprit in the current state of affairs.

Wilson was a representative of a generation of post-Victorian British colonial agents during a transitional period of paradigmatic global change. He went on to become part of the core of the technical experts that established the next, decisive phase of the oil complex in Khuzestan (see chapters 4 and 6). After its chaotic and haphazard beginnings, the consolidation of the oil complex began to demand an ever-greater degree of planning and coordination, technical as well political and social. The task of this coordination fell to professional experts: men (for they were all men) with certain credentials (formal education, maybe a university degree, military service, corporate experience, etc.) who began the task of planning for the successful operation of the oil complex amidst daunting difficulties.

The modern "rule of experts" relies on isolating and categorizing selected aspects of the world into systems of specialized knowledge, which are then correlated into technical practices that first define certain issues as problems that can be classified, measured, and understood as obstacles and anomalies, before being overcome and resolved through the formulation of scientific and technical solutions. Once these solutions are professionally implemented some form of productive

'normality' is expected to be attained, otherwise the cycle may resume[82]. Systems of implementing scientific and technical expertise, such as urban planning, public health, industrial management, or economic development, in turn become the basis of praxis to shape the world according to the criteria they have pre-established as scientific and objective.

Other equally significant figures of (more or less) Wilson's generation who played a key role in establishing the oil complex in Khuzestan, and who will figure in the following chapter include Percy Cox (chief British diplomat and negotiator in the Persian Gulf, later Minister (Ambassador) to Tehran, C.J. Edmonds (who was acting consul and de-facto governor in northern Khuzestan in various periods between 1913-1921); Sir John Cadman (APOC chairman in the 1920s), and J.M. Wilson (the main architect and urban planner of the company areas of APOC, from late 1920s until the nationalization of 1951), and Sir Percy Lorraine (chief negotiator with Bakhtiyaris while a council in Isfahan, and later Minister (Ambassador) to Tehran), among others[83].

These individuals followed a more or less similar personal trajectory: Most came form middling classes and were products of public schools, had stints serving in some official capacity in the colonies (especially India) or had established their carriers there. They seemed to circulate nearly seamlessly between government, military service, diplomatic responsibilities, colonial administration, and corporate professional occupations, across the Empire. This movement made the conventionally

---

[82] Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone Books, 1991); Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*; Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men; Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

[83] I mention these individuals because of the aforementioned similarities, but also because there are published biographies and public records available that reveal personal details of their lives that would otherwise remain in the realm of guess work. John Townsend, *Proconsul to the Middle East: Sir Percy Cox and the End of Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010); C. J. Edmonds, *East and West of Zagros Travel, War and Politics in Persia and Iraq 1913-1921*, ed. Yann Richard (Leiden: Brill, 2010); C.H. Lindsey-Smith, *J.M. The Story of an Architect* (London: Privately Published, 1976; John Rowland, *Ambassador for Oil: The Life of John First Baron Cadman* (London: H.Jenkins, 1960); Gordon Waterfield, *Professional Diplomat; Sir Percy Loraine of Kirkharle, Bt., 1880-1961*. (London: Murray, 1973); Roberta Pearce, "Cox, Sir Percy," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.lib.depaul.edu/view/printable/32604; Elizabeth Monroe, "Loraine, Sir Percy Lyham (1880-1961)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.lib.depaul.edu/view/article/34597; T.A.B. Corley, "Greenway, Charles (1857-1934)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.lib.depaul.edu/view/article/40994.

accepted boundaries of private/public domain rather murky. A surprising number were dilettante scholars who dabbled in history, poetry, linguistics, and archeology, published travelogues and memoirs, wrote political commentaries, and made public speeches aimed at shaping public opinion, or establishing scientific credentials and contributing to scholarly knowledge[84]. Most combined some form of technical expertise with administrative management and political authority. Their trajectories often crossed as they ran into each other in professional capacities, somewhere in the expanse of the post-Victorian British Empire. Their convictions were often unshakable when it came to the prevailing conception of the world seen through the prism of national interests and the Empire, and their own place in it. They held fast to how they framed the world according to the universal criteria of modern science prevailing at the time, and what they regarded as objective knowledge irrespective of where they were geographically, the indisputable rightness of the market economy, the civilizing mission of the European, and more specifically the English white man[85].

These individuals did not stand out only because of their shared worldviews, social backgrounds, upbringings, and intellectual formations. It was also the geographic trajectories that made them move across the world, within the Empire's dominions, and amidst hardships that local people, whom they invariably thought of

---

[84] See for example Christopher N. B. Ross, "Lord Curzon and E. G. Brown Confront the 'Persian Question,'" *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (May 15, 2009): 385–411. One of the most remarkable figures and a rare female example was Ann Lambton who served as embassy staff in Iran, was an intelligence analyst and a spy, before becoming a major orientalist and academic, penning a standard manual of Persian language, and publishing groundbreaking historical studies of the agrarian property regimes in Iran, medieval political institutions, doctrines, and jurisprudence, and so on. See Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*; Ann K. S. Lambton, *The Persian Land Reform, 1962-1966* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Idem., *Theory and Practice in Medieval Persian Government* (London:Variorum, 1980); Idem., *Qājār Persia : Eleven Studies*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988); Idem., *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia: Aspects of Administrative, Economic and Social History, 11Th-14th Century* (Binghampton: State University of New York Press, 1988). As with many of these historical figures, detailed biographical information about Lambton are surprisingly rare to come by. For a slightly conspiratorial semi-official Iranian perspective and obituary see Fatemeh Safavi, "Doushizeh Lambton [Ms. Lambton]," *Tarikh-e Mo'aser* 5, no. 19 (2007): 85–129.

[85] This account follows Edward Said's approach to the study of orientalists as individuals as well as contributors to discursive exercise of power. Said, *Orientalism*.

I do not intend to exclude women from this account. There are important travel accounts during this period of European women travelers to Southwest Iran and the Bakhtiyari country. In addition, there were remarkable women, such as Gertrude Bell, Elizabeth Ross, or Ann Lambton, who acted as experts and agents of political rule in the region at a time when very few women occupied such roles in Britain. See Safavi, "Doushizeh Lambton (Ms. Lambton)." Elizabeth Ness MacBean Ross, *A Lady Doctor in Bakhtiyari Land* (London: L. Parsons, 1921). Unfortunately, there are very few published sources and biographical information about these women that I am aware of. The same can be said for the pivotal figure of the Scottish Dr Young, the Company physician in Masjed Soleyman.

as 'backward natives', had long ago found ways to negotiate or to avoid altogether[86]. Most acted effectively as secular missionaries for the cause of European civilization, political influence, and economic enterprise, which they equated unquestionably with welfare for all. In the process they perceived their own role as one of selfless service to scientific progress (chapters 3, 5, 6), disregarding the coercive colonialism that underlay the whole edifice[87].

The shift to what I have called *the social question*, or the range of social reforms and interventionist projects that used non-market criteria to ensure the relative inclusion of selective segments of the local population within the sphere of technological and material modernity, was the strategy in part conceptualized by these men and others like them. These programs of social paternalism included urban planning, sanitary and public welfare measures, education, leisure programs and facilities, food provision, etc. that together constituted the extensive social engineering that began in Khuzestan from the 1920s, and were intended to facilitate the operation of the oil complex and allow for the smoother accumulation of capital in oil. Although these paternalistic programs were framed as strategies to deal with the political and social obstacles hindering the Company's operations, they implied great changes in the lives of the people they affected. Some were welcomed; others felt coerced and alienating, and were resisted and fought.

As for the professional experts, the pragmatic and utilitarian nature of their formation within the new technical and political habitus meant that upon encountering resistance to implementing their tasks, they sought practical and technical solutions involving the population and the material landscape for overcoming obstacles and planning for long term success of their enterprise, instead of resorting to coercion or limited alliances with local elites, as in the old days. In the post WWI era, the emergence of the social question was a turning point that gave more power to these

---

[86] The shared quest for conquering uncharted landscapes, such as mountain peaks or vast deserts, and recording the endeavor as pioneering discoveries was a typical example. See the remarkable examples of Thesiger's adventures in the Empty Quarter and Iraqi Marshlands, or Layard's 'discovery' of Bakhtiyaris in the Zagros: Wilfred Thesiger, *Arabian Sands* (London: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1959); Thesiger, *Marsh Arabs: Seven Years with the Primitive Tribesmen of a Watery World*; Austen Henry Layard, *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, Including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes Before the Discovery of Nineveh*, 2 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1887); Merian C Cooper, *Grass* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1925).

[87] Said, *Orientalism*; Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men; Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*; Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

professional men as versus corporate shareholders, financiers, and politicians. These changes were most clearly reflected not only in the form of the parliamentary compromise that emerged in Britain after the 1926 general strike (see chapter 4), but also abroad, and in the reformulation of the whole paradigm of *development*. With the *1929 Colonial Development Act* the notion of development, and the role of indigenous professional experts from the global south was recast, consolidating the belief that regulating and planning for coordinated and rational development to smooth the path for a more frictionless accumulation of capital was the professional task of technically trained experts[88]. The posing of the social question opened the way for a different strategic approach to the development of the oil complex in the interwar years that allowed greater compromise with local society in the form of expanding social policies that were eventually materialized in the built environment of Abadan.

Tribes, Ashayer, Ilat, Qabael: A Question of Terminology

There are a number of questionable and problematic terms I have had to use extensively in this work that are loaded with troubling symbolism, but I have found hard to avoid. Foremost among these is *Tribe*, a problematic label that is accompanied by a heavy baggage from its extensive use in the English language in the colonial discourse and exercise of power, and its subsequent adaptation until the 1970s in various versions of post-colonial modernization theories and academic scholarship, especially anthropology. The colonial baggage comes from the period when the designation "tribe" was used as an instrument of British colonial governmental policy to categorize diverse and shifting populations as a-historical units, formed around fixed notions of hierarchic and segmentary chiefdom systems, putative kinship, and of economic systems based exclusively on subsistence and reciprocity.

In the colonial exercise of power these fixed notions of "primordial" identity were then used to fit "tribal" groups into specific places within state strategies. The Sikhs in India, for example, were designated as a martial race; the Lurs in Iran were repeatedly portrayed as bandits and brigands, and so on by British authors and

[88] George C. Abbott, "A Re-Examination of the 1929 Colonial Development Act," *Economic History Review* 24, no. 1 (1971): 68–81; M. P. Cowen and R.W. Shenton, *Doctrines of Development* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Frederick Cooper, "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept," in *International Development and the Social Sciences*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 64–92.

diplomats. Mahmood Mamdani, for example, has provided a brilliant analysis of the operations of the administrative and discursive designations of certain groups as traditional tribes with fixed racial characteristics in Uganda and South Africa, and their subsequent incorporation and inclusion in the system of indirect rule under British colonial domination, but only according to those criteria[89].

More recently, Marshal Sahlins reiterated the essentializing and a-historical framing by presenting "tribesmen" as a third intermediate category of cultural development between the primitive and the civilized, "The state differentiates civilization from the tribal society…Tribal society is intermediate in complexity between mobile hunters and gatherers and early agrarian states…[Structurally, a tribe is a] segmentary hierarchy; i.e. a pyramid of social groups…[organized economically around] a familial mode of production"[90]. For evolutionary anthropologists such as Shalins, as well as for earlier colonial policymakers and scholars, tribes are defined as primordial groups who have failed to establish a proper state system, primarily because they live in geographic settings which force upon them a flexible ecological adaptation to nature and subsistence[91].

Despite this troubling baggage that risks the association of 'tribe' with 'the noble savage' and a mere extension of nature, I have chosen to use the term throughout this text, but with the heavy qualifications discussed above. I have done this primarily for convenience, and because I don't believe a keyword should be held hostage to a questionable part of its past. Persian (and other vernacular languages spoken in Iran) is quite rich in the lexicon referring to mobile pastoralists and other social groups organized around kinship, non-state chiefdoms, and economic systems based on reciprocity and mixtures of agriculture and animal husbandry. This rich vocabulary is understandable since at least until the 1930s an estimated quarter of the population belonged to various tribal and mobile pastoral groups. In Persian, the equivalent terms to "tribes" are "*Ashayer*" (plural of *ashireh*), an Arabic term referring to horizontal as well as hierarchic constellations of kinship-based groups; "*Ilat"* (Turkic word, *il* in singular, *ilat* in Arabicized plural), and "*Qabael*" (Arabic, singular *qabileh*).

---

[89] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
[90] Marshall Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, Foundations of Modern Anthropology (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968), vii, 5, 19, 75, Ch.3.
[91] Cooper, *Grass*; Wilson, "The Bakhtiyaris"; Ross, *A Lady Doctor in Bakhtiyari Land*.

These terms do not carry the potential ideological baggage burdening the term "tribe"; they are all still used by state agents as well as the ilati, qabileh-yi, and ashayeri populations, without being overly weighed by essentialist preconceptions or a negative hint of primitivism. However, they cannot be used interchangeably and without considerable awkwardness in English. Ashayer, for example, is used primarily to refer to Khuzestan Arabs. The various Lur groups, such as Bakhtiyaris, Kuhkiluyeh, Bahmai, etc.; as well as Turkic speaking groups such as the Shahsavan and Qashqai are referred to as Ilat. The same goes for a mixed confederacy such as the Kahamseh, who were made of an alliance of five groups of different ethnicity, including Arabs, Turkics, and Lurs.

There is no single mode of production and economic activity that uniformly defines all these groups; as they can variably rely on mobile livestock herding, village based agriculture, or multisource exploitation of land and ecological resources. In more recent times urban employment, including wage labor in the oil industry, has become a feature of these flexible social groupings. Most significantly, Ilat referred to confederacies of various clans, segments, and subgroups; not necessary claiming common parentage and blood ties, but forging contextual alliances that were consolidated by marriage and mutual political commitments, including in warfare and defense against external rivals, shared territories, and loyalty to common leadership.

Although I use these terms on occasion, I have chosen to stick with the shorthand convenience of 'tribe'. Using the local terms, or indeed a combination of them as necessary, avoids the baggage that accompanies the keyword 'tribe'; but on the other hand, it would only convolute the narrative and divert from the main theme, which is the formation of the oil complex. In chapter 3 I have clarified some the key issues regarding landownership and contractual relations of property among the Bakhtiyaris and Khuzestan Arabs' collective claims to territory. For the rest, I have used the term "tribe" conditionally, throughout this text, with the caveats discussed here.

Plan of Chapters:

At first impression chapters 2 and 4 may appear incongruous to a work of social history of labor and oil industry in Khuzestan. However, their purpose should become self-evident after the theoretical explanations provided in the preceding

pages. They are intended to provide the global, historical, and national-political context for the local social history that is being discussed here.

At a global level, the period under study was an era of revolutionary transformations when oil was becoming the new predominant source of energy and the underlying chemical raw material for an emerging global industrial system of mass production and consumption that has been labeled Fordism. As I will argue in chapter 4, the First World War greatly precipitated this transition, which was accompanied by fundamental political, economic, intuitional, and ideational transformations.

Chapter 2 investigates the regional and national reconfiguration of the Persian Gulf and Iran for a global imperial politics that was led by Britain. It discusses the different perspectives of political actors in Iran, London, British India, and locally in Khuzestan, over the long 19th century (through WWI and until 1926). It discusses the changing geopolitics of the region, the consequences of political upheavals, including the Constitutional Revolution, WWI, the 1921 Coup D'état, and the rise of mass politics and nationalism. The establishment of the oil industry in Khuzetan and its impact on local politics and alliances is analyzed within this framework. The chapter shows that in the aftermath of WWI the British state may have appeared as a unitary and powerful political actor, but was in fact riven with tensions, rivalries, and practical limitations as it confronted the possibilities and dangers of Iranian political landscape and the oil complex there. Without a clear understanding of this larger global and regional geopolitical landscape, I will argue that the social history of oil remains curtailed and cannot be properly understood within the context of a Global Labor History

Chapter 3 investigates the local agrarian societies and pastoral landscapes as they were integrated into the global circuits of oil capitalism. The chapter focuses on the politics of property and legal contract as an entry point into understating how local societies were subjugated to oil capitalism. The chapter also links the rural populations, the geographic hinterland, and the physical landscape to the oil complex. The social history of oil and labor is thus not curtailed to the places of industrial production and mining extraction, but also involves the rural world that may appear at first glance as external and irrelevant, but was integral to the consolidation of the oil complex.

Similarly, chapter 4 may first appear as an odd addition to this work. For readers who are more familiar with European and Western History this chapter may initially come across as redundant and perhaps even irrelevant to the central story. On the other hand, approaching this investigation from the perspective of a Global Labor History, my aim was to historicize economic, industrial, governmental, and social managerial practices in order to demonstrate how these were not ready made criteria and practices that were simply diffused and transplanted from Britain and Europe to Iran. WWI was a horrifying and revolutionary watershed, for Britain as for Iran. Most of the practices of social engineering, public policymaking, and industrial management, that became the hallmark of the oil industry in the post war period were being forged during wartime and out of experiences not only in Europe, but also in the colonies, as well as in non-colonial dominions such as Iran. Chapter 4 historicizes these shifts in governmentality, and provides a context for the emergence of what I call 'the social question'. The chapter zooms out of the local context of Khuzestan into the global landscape of the changing regime of accumulation of capital that was ushered in by Fordism, and the political transformations ushered in by the rise of mass politics, changing industrial labor relations, corporate re-organization, the rising power of professional managerial professionals, and the new prominence of social welfare measures that shaped the subsequent approach by APOC to its oil operations in Iran.

Chapters 5 and 6 integrate these insights into a micro-historical analysis of the urban transformation of Abadan in the revolutionary 1920s, when the oil complex was consolidated in Iran. Thus, while chapters 2 and 4 provide a wider global, regional, and national context, chapters 3, 5, and 6 provide detailed micro histories of the social encounters in interconnected rural and urban settings where oil operations were taking place. Chapters 3, 5, and 6, are 'the heart' of the dissertation, as they use primary archival materials to unearth a subaltern history of social change as a result of the consolidation of the oil complex. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are constructed around the micro story of the conflicts surround the construction of the bazaar of Abadan. In the spirit of GLH they aim to show how a seemingly minute and inconsequential event, fought over reshaping the built environment of an oil boomtown in a remote location, encapsulated larger trends on national and world scales.

Chapter 7 provides a conclusion to the social history of Abadan, the province, the oil complex, and the laboring classes in oil through the interwar years, and outlines the direction that I intend to take the final book project on the subject.

Chapter 2

The Historical Geopolitics of Oil in Khuzestan

The Post War Landscape of Unanticipated Outcomes (1918-1926)

In the wake of WWI, for the first time, Britain appeared as the absolute master of the situation in Iran and the Persian Gulf[1]. All its major imperial rivals in the region - the German, Ottoman, and Russian empires - had collapsed, thus eliminating the long maintained anxiety about defending the Indian colony from hostile encroachments. The Royal Navy dominated the Persian Gulf having subjugated the littoral Arab city states as its vassals, and the British Army surrounded the prized oil installations of Khuzestan with more than a half a million troops that continued to be deployed in the Near and Middle East[2].

In Iran the Qajar state was in a position of near total dependence on the good graces of His Majesty's Government. The state finances were good as bankrupt and its outdated bureaucracy was close to total disarray[3]. The fragmented, mal-trained, and small military forces were being paid not out of an empty treasury but from loans obtained with ever more difficulty from the country's only, British owned, Imperial Bank[4]. Given the increasingly desperate state of the country after the Constitutional

---

[1] See Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Abd al-Reza Houshang Mahdavi, *Siyasat-e Khareji-e Iran dar Dowran-e Pahlavi, 1300-1357* (Tehran: Alburz, 2001), 1–52; Abd al-Reza Houshang Mahdavi, *Sahnehayee az Tarikh Mo'aser Iran* (Tehran: Elmi, 1998), 185–204; Houshang Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia, 1918-1925* (London: Frank Cass, 1990); W. Taylor Fain, *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); William J Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I* (London: Frank Cass, 1984); Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran* (London: IB Tauris, 2000); John Marlowe, *The Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 54–122; Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Valentine Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question: Or, Some Political Problems of Indian Defence* (London: J. Murray, 1903); Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 50–130.

[2] Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 171.

[3] Arthur C Millspaugh, *The American Task in Persia* (New York: Century Co., 1925); Mosharrafod-dowleh Hassan Khan Naficy, "L'Impot et la Vie Economique et Sociale en Perse" (PhD Dissertation, Universite de Paris, 1924); Majid Yektayi, *Tarikh-e Darayi-e Iran (History of Iranian Finances)*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Entesharat-e Parviz, 1961); Hossein Khan Moshar-Ghadimi, "Les Finances Publiques de la Perse" (PhD Dissertation, Université de Paris, 1922); Ali Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 49–50; Morgan Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia* (New York: Century Co., 1920); Shaul Bakhash, *Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy and Reform under the Qajars*, St. Anthony's Middle East Monographs 8 (London: Ithaca Press, 1978).

[4] Geoffrey Jones, *Banking and Empire in Iran: Volume 1: The History of the British Bank of the Middle East*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Cronin, *The Army and the*

Revolution and the war time occupation, there was little tax collection and the Royal Court was heavily indebted to Britain and Russia to foot its daily expenses, let alone to invest in any meaningful economic development or relief efforts for the impoverished population[5]. In the south Britain had set up the South Persia Rifles (SPR) under Sir Percy Sykes to combat German and Ottoman incursions, and to subdue local resistance and brigandage[6]. In Khuzestan APOC had consolidated its operations and was planning major expansions there and internationally, relying for protection on British troops in Mesopotamia, as well as its local alliances with the virtually autonomous tribal chieftains[7].

At the global level, the British diplomatic machine was being conducted, for the first time, by a set of politicians who specialized in the so-called "Eastern question" and the newly coined "Middle East" region[8]. With Nathaniel Curzon at the helm of the Foreign Office (FO) successive coalition governments were content to leave strategic decisions to the legendary and cantankerous politician[9] who was viewed, not least by himself, as the ultimate expert on the "Persian Question"[10]. In setting up his Iran policy Curzon was assisted by a succession of equally prominent and highly regarded diplomats acting as Ministers in Tehran, such as Percy Cox (1918-1920), and Percy Loraine (1921-1926)[11], who were crucial in helping to ward off American attempts to gain a foothold there, and preparing the ground for making

---

Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910-1926; Malek al-Sho'ara Bahar, *Tarikh-e Mokhtasar-e Ahzab-e Siasi-ye Iran (History of Iran's Political Parties)*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Jibi, 1978), 46–47.

[5] Moustafa Fateh, *The Economic Position of Persia* (London: P.S.King and Son, 1926), 66–68; Hassan Mojdehi, "Arthur C. Millsapugh's Two Missions to Iran and Their Impact on American Iranian Relations" (Ball State University, 1975), 44–45; Naficy, "L'Impot et la Vie Economique et Sociale en Perse," 54–55; R. M. Burrell, ed., *Iran Political Diaries 1881-1965 14 Volume Set* (London: Archive Editions Ltd, 1997), Vol.7.

[6] Percy Sykes, "South Persia and the Great War," *The Geographical Journal* 58, no. 2 (1921): 101–18; Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910-1926*; Monireh Razi, *Polis-e Jonoub-e Iran (South Persia Rifles)* (Tehran: Markaz-e Asnad-e Enqelab-e Eslami, 2002); Florida Safiri, *Polis-e Jonoub-e Iran- SPR (South Persia Rifles)* (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 1985).

[7] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:274–311.

[8] Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question*; Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 22–50.

[9] On evaluating Curzon's role on Middle East policymaking, see Adelson, *London and the Middle East*; Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*; Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*; Christopher N. B. Ross, "Lord Curzon and E. G. Brown Confront the 'Persian Question,'" *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (May 15, 2009): 385–411.

[10] George Nathaniel Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 vols. (London: Elibron, 2005 [1893]).

[11] John Townsend, *Proconsul to the Middle East: Sir Percy Cox and the End of Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010); Gordon Waterfield, *Professional Diplomat; Sir Percy Loraine of Kirkharle, Bt., 1880-1961.* (London: Murray, 1973); Roberta Pearce, "Cox, Sir Percy," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.lib.depaul.edu/view/article/32604 ; Elizabeth Monroe, "Loraine, Sir Percy Lyham (1880-1961)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.lib.depaul.edu/view/article/34597 .

Iran effectively a British protectorate[12]. Such an outcome would have accomplished the long held dream of securing the western approaches to India[13], and as good as guaranteed the continued monopoly of British control over the oil resources of Iran and the Persian Gulf area.

Under these circumstances the post WWI years ought to have been the golden years of unchallenged British hegemony in Iran. Ironically, this proved not to be the case, and by mid 1920s the whole edifice had been altered beyond recognition. Tremendous internal divisions and disagreements within the sprawling British foreign policy establishment scuttled the hegemonic appearance of monolithic unity in formulating and implementing imperial policies. The eruption of nationalism and mass politics in Iran proved difficult to handle for Victorian and Edwardian politicians who had spent years dismissing any such political agency among the despised "Persians". The paranoia and fear of Bolshevik subversion significantly curtailed the British freedom of unilateral action. By the end of this period the moribund Qajar dynasty had collapsed and was replaced by the aggressively centralizing Pahlavi dynasty under the military strongman Reza Shah, who proceeded to depose the British local tribal protégés Sheikh Khaz'al and the Bakhtiyari Khans, and maneuvered for the newly established national army to take control of the Khuzestan province. The financial leverage that Britain had used effectively to enfeeble the state since late 19th century was also removed as APOC was forced to settle its arrear royalty payments; the crushing national debts to Russia and Britain were alleviated when the Soviets forgave the Tsarist debts to Iran; and Iran managed the opportunity to settle some of its outstanding British debts. By 1929 the British owned Imperial Bank was forced to cede its monopoly over currency issue and financial transactions to the newly established Bank Melli (National Bank).

APOC found itself in similar conundrum in Khuzestan. There was frustration among Company directors at the slow pace of the British Government outlining a global oil strategy following the war, and the lack of clarity over the boundaries of its political interference in the operations and the finances of the Company[14]. In Iran, the Company's expanding operations ran into strategic difficulties with its labor force

---

[12] Mojdehi, "Arthur C. Millsapugh's Two Missions to Iran and Their Impact on American Iranian Relations," 38–41.
[13] George Nathaniel Curzon, *The Place of India in the Empire: Being an Address Delivered before the Philosophical Institute of Edinburgh* (london: J.Murray, 1909) .
[14] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:350–396.

after the end of the War. By the mid-1920s discontent among the indigenous workers, as well as its skilled Indian laborers had reached worrying degrees. The technical, organizational, and commercial transformations of the industry now required a different form of labor discipline and industrial culture that its existing practices simply did not provide adequately. Employee recruitment of European and especially British employees was becoming a major challenge, as were managing the rising frictions with local populations in Khuzestan, especially once the tribal allies who had hitherto mediated these relations to the benefit of the Company had been removed by the central government and replaced by bureaucrats and military officers. The fears of spillover from popular revolts in Iraq and India, and the politicization of workers through communist and nationalist sympathies were constant concerns. The sudden incursion of the Iranian army in 1924, and the establishment of the nascent bureaucracy in Khuzestan unexpectedly curtailed the near total sway of the Company in the management of local provincial affairs. With the British Government reconfiguring its strategy toward Iran, the Oil Company likewise had to find a new modus operandi to continue successfully to expand its operations.

In summary, less than a decade after the end of WWI, Britain was facing a wholly unanticipated new paradigm, not only in Iran and in Khuzestan, but also regionally in Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf, and the Middle East, as well as in home country itself (see chapter 4). It had to adapt itself to the radically new state of affairs beyond its controls, and devise new long-term strategies. The unforeseen circumstances were the result of three factors: first, the fear of the rising Soviet threat and the radicalization of mass politics in Iran; second, the unanticipated vigor of popular resistance and of Iranian nationalism (overlapping with similar uprisings throughout much of its dominions), which itself was in large part a reaction against British proto-colonial policies; and third, the structural economic and strategic weakness of post war Britain, which curtailed the state's range of abilities during a period of severe austerity. All three factors were directly and indirectly tied to the global shifts that will be discussed in chapter 4: the rise of mass politics, the changing role of the state, the coming to prominence of middle class professional elites and intelligentsia, and the structural shifts in capitalism.

The controversy that broke out in 1925-1926 over the new Bazaar of Abadan laid at the center of these transnational, regional, and national shifts and played its part in shaping the new oil habitus that emerged in Khuzestan's oil complex. Chapter

4 investigates the structural and global changes that were precipitated by the WWI, and led to the emergence of the 'social question', with all that it entailed. In this chapter we will telescope into the narrower scales of the national context in Iran, the provincial dynamic in Khuzestan, and the local eye of the storm in Abadan to link together these different scales and to further investigate how the oil complex was assembled in this formative period. I will first discuss the context of British policy toward Iran, as it affected the oil operations. I will then analyze this dynamic from the Iranian perspective, again as they relate to the oil complex. The reverberations of these larger trends in Abadan and the oil producing areas of Khuzestan will be the topic of the next section. In concluding with a discussion of the Bazaar controversy I will attempt to demonstrate how the local struggles of oil workers and the urban population affected the manner in which the oil complex took shape in this formative period.

The Political and Regional Context of Oil in 1920s and Shifting British Policy Toward Iran: From Buffer State to Sphere of Influence to Protectorate to Unwieldy Asset.

British policy toward Iran underwent significant reassessments throughout the 19th and through the first three decades of the 20th centuries, with fundamental repercussions for southern areas bordering the Persian Gulf[15]. Since the subsequent development of the oil complex cannot be understood without this historical context I will briefly outline these developments in the following section to provide the geopolitical backdrop of what transpired in Abadan and the oil areas of Khuzestan during the decisive 1920s.

From the early19th century through the middle of the 20th century the importance of the Persian Gulf increased steadily for British imperial priorities, and with it came an expanded military, naval, and commercial presence[16]. Throughout the 19th century until WWI the Persian Gulf was conceived by Britain within three intertwined but unequal geopolitical parameters: Strategically, it was seen as the first

[15] Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*; Fain, *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region*, 14–16. See note 1 above

[16] Fain, *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region*, 1–17; Marlowe, *The Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century*; Adelson, *London and the Middle East*; Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*; Rose Greaves, "Iranian Relations with Great Britain and British India: 1798-1921," in *Cambridge History of Iran, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 350–73.

line of vital defense of India on its western front[17]. Second, with the establishment of direct telegraph communication between London and India, the maintenance of the control and security of the northern (Persian) coast of the Gulf where the communication lines traversed became an added strategic priority[18]. Expanding commercial interests and securing supplies and outlets for British merchant goods was the third motive behind the increasingly active diplomacy that led to obtaining navigation rights in Karun, Tigris, and Euphrates from Ottoman and Persian governments, and the signing of the so called Trucial agreements with the city states bordering the Persian Gulf. Soon after, a series of ever more comprehensive concessions were granted to Europeans, encompassing mining, industries, banking, railroads, commerce, customs, etc. Curzon summarized these interests as "commercial, political, strategical, and telegraphic"[19]. The 1901 D'Arcy Oil Concession was the last of these controversial agreements, which were one of the targets of the 1906 Constitutional Revolution. Thereafter the granting of such concessions became far more controversial, and every government that attempted to issue a similar concession ran into major frictions with the Majles and the uproar of public opinion that were reflected in the increasingly vocal press.

After 1912 oil was added to the British geopolitical priorities as a major new variable in the calculations of policymaking toward the region, while the deployment of wireless communication gradually began to reduce the importance of the telegraph by late 1920s[20].

Russia's 19th century expansion into Caucasus had led to two wars with Iran, both ending with the latter's defeats (in 1813 and 1828) and resulting in exorbitant treaties that had forced open the Iranian society to Russian commerce and political interference[21]. Britain had withdrawn support from Iran during these conflicts, calculating that the official treaties, while weakening Iran considerably, would force Russia to recognize Iran's territorial integrity and thus stop its southward territorial

---

[17] George Nathaniel Curzon, *The Place of India in the Empire: Being an Address Delivered before the Philosophical Institute of Edinburgh* (london: J.Murray, 1909).
[18] Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 12–13; Marlowe, *The Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century*, 26–27.
[19] Olson, Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I, 11.
[20] Stephen Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East: Its Discovery and Development*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 33–116.
[21] Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914;: A Study in Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Muriel Atkin, *Russia and Iran, 1780-1828* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

expansion toward the Persian Gulf and eventually India. Instead, the situation turned Iran into a rapidly enfeebled and defenseless battleground of the more powerful imperial rivals. As Britain pushed for equal concessions in the south, Iranian economic development was further stunted to serve the priorities of its more powerful neighbors, British India to the southeast, Russia to the north, and Ottomans to the west, who all competed to extract as much as possible, while actively blocking any autonomous development that would threaten their own strategic interests. For example, these ongoing imperial rivalries prevented successive attempts to build a national railroad in Iran on defensive strategic grounds, to the extent that the railroad project became a nationalist obsession that was only carried out in the 1930s as one of Reza Shah's grandest scheme[22]. Likewise, the geographic axis of Iranian trade roots for international commerce were shifted south-north, from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian and the Black Seas, at the expense of the historical east-west trans-Asian Silk Road that was effectively blocked off[23]. Iran's last attempt to re-open its eastern flank by occupying Herat ended in defeat at the Anglo Persian War of 1857, a conflict that established a permanent foothold for Britain throughout southern Iran (see chapter 3).

Trapped among stronger neighbors, playing the imperial adversaries against each other, or banking on the assistance of more distant and supposedly neutral potential allies (France, Germany, the United States) became an integral feature of Iranian politics and political culture, at least until 1953. After the 1857 Indian revolt and the assumption of direct colonial rule by the British Raj the western approaches of the Empire, especially the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iran, came to be treated as India's first line of defense. Iran in particular, was conceptualized in British foreign policy not really as an independent country, but more as an ambiguous " buffer state" against the incursions of other rival big powers toward India[24]. This meant that any

---

[22] Kaveh Ehsani, "Tabar Shenasi-e Tarh-ha-ye Bozorg-e Tose'eh dar Iran-e Mo'aser (Genealogy of large-scale development projects in contemporary Iran)," *Goftogu*, no. 54 (2009): 113–32.
[23] Peter Avery and S. Simmonds, "Persia on a Cross of Silver: 1880-1890," *Middle Eastern Studies* 10 (1974): 259–86.
[24] On Iran as a buffer state in British foreign policy from 1857-1907 see Edward Ingram, "The Defence of India, 1874-1914," *Militärgeschichtliche Mittleilungen* 16, no. 2 (1974): 215–224; George Nathaniel Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, (London: Elibron, 2005 [1892]), Vol.1, Chs.1, 9; Vol.2, Ch. 30; David McLean, *Britain and Her Buffer State: The Collapse of the Persian Empire, 1890-1914* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1979); E. Haward, "India's Defense as an Imperial Problem," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 13, no. 2 (1926): 111–129; Rose Louise Greaves, *Persia and the Defence of India, 1884-1892 : A Study in the Foreign Policy of the Third Marquis of Salisbury.* (London: Athlone Press, 1959); Rose Louise Greaves, "British Policy in Persia, 1892-1903," *Bulletin*

internal development in Iran, economic, social, regional, or political, were viewed and treated by British policymakers primarily through the lens of their own imperial strategic priorities. One fascinating side effect of this situation was the sheer volume of information produced by the British intelligence gathering machinery on Iran. While domestic Iranian documentation and archives about this period are at best scattered and patchy, the amount of detailed and thorough strategic information systematically gathered and preserved by British travelers, diplomats, local consular officials and military attachés, merchants, scientists, archeologists, and adventurers, is simply remarkable by comparison[25]. Olson comments that Iran was far better studied than major colonies such as Australia, South Africa, or Canada, in order to facilitate strategic planning, lines of defense, assured supplies, potential allies and adversaries, manpower, etc.[26]

Debt and Political Culture:

Between 1871 and 1907 the fallout from Britain's buffer state policy had contributed to the significant economic and political deterioration of Iran. The weakness and incompetence of the Qajar state, as well as Russian rapacity, only exacerbated the situation. The travelogues of the highly competent engineer and geographer Najm al-Dowleh to the south, sent there on a mission by Nasser al Din Shah in 1882 and 1889 to repair broken dams, weirs, and bridges on Karun and Karkheh, as well as to report on the state of tax collection and farming, provide detailed accounts of the state of the disrepair that the general economy and infrastructure had fallen into[27].

This period also witnessed the collapse of Iran's silver based currency, the Qran, as a result of the international depression of 1890s and the shift to gold standard as the sole basis of monetary valuation by India and Britain, Iran's imperial

---

of the School of Oriental and African Studies 28, no. Parts 1 & 2 (1965): 34–60; 284–307; T. Holdich, "The Gates of India," *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review* 33, no. 65/66 (1912): 62–79.

[25] This is equally true for the city-states of the Persian Gulf. See for example the astonishing Lorimer, *GPG*. On Iran see for example Burrell, *IPD*; Edmonds, *East and West of Zagros*; Wilson, *SW Persia*; Layard, *Early Adventures in Persia*; Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*.

[26] Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 13.

[27] Haj Mirza Abd-al Ghaffar Najm-al Molk, *Safarnameh Khuzestan beh Zamimeh Ketabcheh Dastour-e Ma'muriat-e Khouzestan va Gozaresh-e Barresiha-ye Ân Saman* (Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar va Mafakher-e Farhangi, 2006); Abd-al Ghaffar ibn-e Ali Mohammad Najm-al Dowleh, *Safarnameh Dovvom-e Najm-al Dowleh be Khouzestan; beh Peyvast-e Ketabcheh-ye Dastour-al Amal-e Nasser-al Din Shah dar Khosous-e Safar-e Aval beh Khouzestan* (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2007).

neighbors[28]. As gold bullion had flown out of Iran and the country failed to adapt to the transnational changes that were taking place as a result of monetary actions by the Sherman Act of the US Congress (1893), the value of the national currency collapsed. A brief improvement in the 1880s saw Iranian merchants invest heavily in international commerce by drawing credit abroad. But the subsequent collapse of the value of silver left the Iranian merchants heavily in debt and unable to adapt to rapidly rising inflation. The Court's attempt to draw in foreign capital by handing out a series of remarkable monopoly concessions first to Julius Reuter (1872) over a vast array of economic activities and resources, such as all mining, industrial, customs, and so on; and soon after to G. Talbot (1890), another British national, for the monopoly of all tobacco production and consumption, were met with furious protests by the public, as well as by Russian statesmen and merchants who felt left out[29].

Forced to retreat and compensate Reuter and Talbot when those concessions were annulled in response to the uproar, Nasser al Din Shah had to begin resorting to foreign loans to cover the mounting state deficit, thus beginning a cycle of chronic indebtedness that bedeviled the Iranian economy well into the 1920s. Foreign debt began to be used systematically by Iran's Imperial creditors and neighbors as a policy tool to influence and control the actions of the government for the next three decades. Previously relatively free of debt, the state was now forced to borrow £500 thousand from the Imperial Bank of Persia (British owned) in 1892 to compensate the cancellation of the Tobacco Reggie. On the eve of WWI in 1914 national debts had risen to £7 million (of which £2.6 million were owed to Britain, the rest mostly to Russia); and nearly £11 million in 1919[30].

The consequences of these trends, coupled with a rising spread of democratic and reformist ideas from across the region and the world, contributed to a gathering cycle of popular discontent that eventually erupted in the Constitutional Revolution, that dragged on from 1906 to 1911. However, it is important to step back and situate this formative period also within a larger context, as an era of both regional as well as global significance. The global context of changes occurring in the regime of capital

[28] See the account of the impact of international monetary changes on the Iranian economy after the American civil war by Avery and Simmonds, "Persia on a Cross of Silver: 1880-1890." On the global impact of the depression of the 1890s see chapter 4.
[29] Nikki Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protests of 1891-92* (London: Frank Cass, 1966).
[30] Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 370–372; Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran*, 192; Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 12–15.

accumulation as a result of the second industrial revolution, the crisis of laissez faire liberalism, the scramble for empires among European powers, and the political fallout of the Paris Commune are discussed in some detail in chapter 4. Russia's defeat against Japan and the subsequent Russian Revolution of 1905 made a huge impression in Iran, and especially among the thousands of migrant Iranian workers in the Caucasus. In the Middle East, the cycles of popular protests following economic crises, famines, epidemics, and a rising tide of mass poverty as a result of imperial policies spread across the region, from Egypt (the 1906 Dishaway revolt), to the Ottoman Empire (1908 Young Turks), and Iran (1890 Tobacco Movement, and the 1906-11 Constitutional Revolution), to inaugurate what Joel Beinin sees as "the rise of mass politics"[31], of nationalism led by professional middle class modernizers and other reformers (effendiyah in Ottoman territories, monavar al-fekran in Iran), as well as the initial steps of labor movement and peasant resistances[32].

The great transformations taking place in the global economy were leading to ever faster and increasingly irresistible changes in economies, politics, as well as in material and cultural life, and the social modes of organization[33]. In the Middle East mass immiseration was causing vast movements of populations. Between 1884 and WWI more than 200 thousand people emigrated from Syria and Lebanon to the Americas, and up to an estimated 250 thousand Iranians sought work in the southern regions of Russia, in the Baku oilfields and the railroads and road works of Central

---

[31] Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 71–93. See also Chakrabarty, "Labor History and the Politics of Theory"; James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 88–223; Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 58–121. On the political transformations in Iran and the rise of popular politics during this period see Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*; Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests: Iranian Subalterns on the Margins of the Tsarist Empire," in *The State and the Subaltern*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 31–52; Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy & the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashrouteh Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1951); Houchang Chehabi and Vanessa Martin, eds., *Iran's Constitutional Revolution: Popular Politics, Cultural Transformations and Transnational Connections* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

[32] See Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Ideolojy-e Nehzat-e Mashroutiyat-e Iran* (Tehran: Payam, 1976); Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Fekr-e Democrasi-e Ejtema'i dar Nehzat-e Mashruṭiyat-e Iran* (Tehran: Payam, 1976); Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*; Vanessa Martin, *The Qajar Pact: Bargaining, Protest and the State in Nineteenth-Century Persia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Touraj Atabaki and Kaveh Ehsani, "Shifting Governmentality in the Shadow of Labor Activism: Revisiting the Roots and Impact of the 1929 Abadan Oil Workers' Strike," in *Middle East Studies Association* (presented at the Annual conference, New Orleans, 2013).

[33] Joseph Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 759–780; Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 177–194, 211–239.

Asia[34]. The movement of capital and of new ideas accompanied the accelerated movement of people. In Iran the British firm of Lynch Brothers managed to extract a reluctant permission from Nasser al Din Shah to establish steam navigation on Karun and to build a road across Zagros from Ahvaz to Esfahan and Tehran[35] (see chapter 3). The 1901 D'Arcy Oil Concession was the next and last such major and sweeping concession granted by a Qajar Shah to a foreign subject, before popular outrage at the increasingly blatant terms of these royal grants foreclosed the possibility of further such agreements.

The political shockwaves of mass movements inaugurated significant political rearrangements although, as we shall see, the Victorian colonial politicians formulating Iran policy were far too reluctant to acknowledge the significance of the new circumstances until the mid 1920s, with momentous repercussions. The new mass politics erupting throughout the Middle East, very much like the concurrent trends in Britain (see chapter 4), re-conceptualized ordinary people as citizens rather than uncouth rabble (*ra'yat*). This change had also very much to do with the rise of the formally educated middle classes, many of whom came from more humble background than the landed aristocracies or tribal elites. The expansion of the printed press, of political ideas about constitutionalism, notions of national progress as a result of individual enlightenment, and the ideas of universal education as the basis of enlightenment and material progress had begun to catch the popular imagination (see chapter 4)[36]. Analyzing the rise of mass nationalism during the turn of the century in Egypt Zachary Lockman summarizes the situation as: "the discursive articulation of the nations as legitimate political communities led nationalist intellectuals throughout the Middle East to revalorize peasants and workers as fully human subjects. The masses are thereby endowed with potential for political agency which can be

---

[34] Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests: Iranian Subalterns on the Margins of the Tsarist Empire"; Hassan Hakimian, "Wage Labor and Migration: Persian Workers in Southern Russia, 1880-1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 4 (1985): 443–62; Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*, 71–72.

[35] Shahbaz Shahnavaz, *Britain and the Opening of South-West Persia 1880-1914* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005).

[36] Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky, *What Is to Be Done?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Nikolai Chernyshevsky, "Nikolai Chernyshevskii: Selected Writings," in *Late Marx and the Russian Road*, ed. Theodor Shanin (New York: Montly Review Press, 1983), 181–203; Carl Schorske, *Fin-De-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1980); Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*; Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*; Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

mobilized by the nationalist movements, and their interests and demands can be subsumed within the national struggle"[37].

However, the entry of popular classes into the political arena of the Middle East took on different forms, according to national and local circumstances. "Popular conceptions of the boundaries of political communities, the collective interests, and the capacity to realize them, were formed and reformed through experience in specific political and economic contexts"[38]. In Iran, Avery and Simmonds claim that the social response to the near total financial dependence and economic malaise that occurred after 1893 marked this period as the beginning of "the era of bread riots"[39], an apt observation especially in the case of the nascent labor movement.

From the turn of the twentieth century, labor struggles in Iran were organized mostly among urban craftsmen, fisherman, menial wage workers, cobblers, bakers, etc. who increasingly protested the betrayals of 'the moral economy', such as food hoarding, the adulteration of bread, or corruption of governors and employers who sought to make a profit by misusing state provided provisions in times of famine and distress[40]. Urban crowds were also becoming more concerned with similar issues. For example, the first eruptions of constitutionalism in 1906 occurred when a corrupt governor wrongly accused a pious merchant in Kashan of hoarding sugar and had him bastinadoed in public[41]. Mass protests ensued and spread to other towns and cities because people held corrupt government officials responsible for inflation and food shortages. As we shall see, the increasingly virulent popular protests against threats to the moral economy by the rise of oil capitalism in Khuzestan were to play an important role in the frictions and conflicts that characterized the development of Abadan and the oil industry in the period under study.

1907: From Buffer State to Sphere of Influence:

The success of the Tobacco Revolt of the 1890s and the assassination of Nasser al Din Shah had changed the political map prior to the Constitutional revolution. To these were added the fallouts in 1905 from the Russo Japanese War

[37] Zachary Lockman, "Imagining the working class: culture, nationalism, and class formation in Egypt, 1899-1914," *Poetics Today* 15, no. 2 (1994): 181.
[38] Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*, 77.
[39] Avery and Simmonds, "Persia on a Cross of Silver: 1880-1890," 279.
[40] Atabaki and Ehsani, "Shifting Governmentality in the Shadow of Labor Activism: Revisiting the Roots and Impact of the 1929 Abadan Oil Workers' Strike."
[41] Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashrouteh Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1951).

and the Russian Revolution, which shook the hated Tsarist power and made a direct impression on the tens of thousands of Iranian oil workers in the Caucasus. However, while Iran was in the throes of the Constitutional Revolution, in 1907 Britain radically changed tack in its Iran policy from considering it a buffer state against Russia, to making an alliance with Russia to divide Iran into mutual spheres of influence, in order to turn it into a bastion against the rising power of Germany and its influence in Ottoman territories. This shift corresponded roughly with the discovery of oil in Khuzestan (1908) and the beginning of the establishment of the oil industry in southern Iran. It had significant repercussions for the way British diplomats acted on behalf of the Oil Company to strike deals with local magnates such as the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheikh Khaz'al in complete defiance of the central government's approval (see chapter 3). The lasting resentment from these developments later on would give impetus to the widespread nationalist support for the brutal centralization programs of Reza Shah after 1921. It would also affect the manner in which the oil complex evolved after the end of WWI, as we shall see later in this chapter.

Britain's buffer state policy had required a unified country under the control of a weak and dependent central government. Dividing Iran into spheres of influence effectively meant the further loss of that nominal sovereignty by the central government, and the division of the country into a southern protectorate of Britain (ruled through the Government of India), a Northern Russian sphere of influence, and an ineffective "neutral" central region nominally still under the control of Tehran. The main reason behind this Accord was the newfound fear of German militarization and its aggressive moves toward the region. German banks had struck an agreement with Istanbul to build railroads in Turkey and extend a line to Baghdad, with further plans to extend it all the way to the Persian Gulf (Kuwait)[42].

The 1907 Anglo Russian Convention had significant and far-reaching repercussions in Tehran, within Britain, and especially in Southern Iran and the Persian Gulf. In Tehran it outraged Constitutionalists and nationalists who previously had considered the parliamentary and liberal Britain as a potential supporter of their

[42] Marlowe, *The Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century*, 38–40; Nikki Keddie and Mehrdad Amanat, "Iran under the Late Qajars," in *Cambridge History of Iran, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 174–213; Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*.

cause[43]. When Russia and Britain bullied and blackmailed the not-so-reluctant Mohammad Ali Shah to sign the Anglo Russian agreement in order to get further loans and financial support[44] the popular reaction revealed an intense sense of betrayal, and it planted within Iranian political culture a deep and lasting mistrust of British intents, and an exaggerated view of its duplicity and conspiratorial ability to corrupt political figures to manipulate its desired outcomes at the expense of Iranian national interests. As a result, most British policies and actions began to be viewed by a growing majority of Iranian nationalists as harmful to national interests, and none more so than Britain's operations in its sphere of influence in the south, and especially in the expanding oil operations in Khuzestan. Britain's local allies among magnates in the south, such as Sheikh Khaz'al, the Bakhtiyari Khans, or Qavam al Mulk, the head of the Khamseh tribal confederation in Fars, began to be perceived as puppets and disloyal to national integrity. The same held true for a number of prominent national politicians who, probably more out of pragmatism than mercenary ethics, reasoned that a weak country in the midst of ruthless neighbors needed to adopt a strong patron and chose to side with England as the better available option, began to be perceived as little better than paid agents. Figures such as Prince Abdolhossein Farmanfarma, his son Prince Firouz, Vosough al-Dowleh the Premier in 1919, and eventually Reza Shah himself who, as we shall see, ascended power in 1921 through the reluctant consent of British military and diplomatic commanders, have all been branded as pawns of Britain by much of the conventional nationalist political historiography[45].

---

[43] Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashrouteh Iran*; Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*; Keddie and Amanat, "Iran under the Late Qajars"; Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*; Marlowe, *The Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century*, 32; Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 18.

[44] Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 13; Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*.

[45] The perception of the ever-present British conspiracies in Iranian politics has lasted until the present. During the 1979 revolution it became particularly pronounced among the opponents of Ayatollah Khomeini who believed the BBC broadcasts had manipulated a secular society to support the Shi'a clergy who were acting as the reactionary agents of British interests! The topic became the source of one of the most brilliant literary farces of the pre-revolution era, Īraj Pezeshkzad, *My Uncle Napoleon*, trans. Dick Davis (Bethesda: Mage Publishers, 1996). For the period under consideration the literature is replete with a range of assessments of the Anglo Iranian relations. For an extremist interpretation of the nefarious British conspiracy see Mohammad Gholi Majd, *The Great Famine and Genocide in Persia, 1917-1919* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2003). For a measured and insightful assessment of whether Iranian political figures of this period and their actions can be evaluated through the lens of national betrayal and acting as agents of Britain see Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran*; although I must confess that I disagree with Katouzian's rather untenable theory of Iranian state defined by a repetitive and cyclical arbitrary rule and "false modernity". For a contemporary assessment of the alliances made with different imperial powers by various political figures at the time

The 1907 Accord also divided British opinion to an unprecedented degree. Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary who made the decision to reverse the long held policy of adversity with Russia in favor of allying with it against the greater threat of Germany, had prioritized global and especially European British interests against the more "local" interests in southern and western Asia. These long established priorities had been most energetically articulated by George Curzon, then Viceroy of India, who staunchly upheld the defense of India as the main concern of British foreign policy and absolutely integral to the maintenance of the Empire itself[46]. In Britain the debates surrounding the 1907 Anglo Russian Accord were acrimonious, with the Fabians, radical liberals, and academic scholars of Iran such as Edward Brown raging against the decision[47].

There were even more significant repercussions from the 1907 Accord for the long held status quo in British geopolitical approach to the region. The newly coined label "Middle East", as distinct from the Near East, was first coined in 1903 as a strategic designation of the Persian Gulf region, as the last line of defense of India[48]. In the first decades of the new century Britain moved more energetically to consolidate its undisputed authority over navigation, commerce, and diplomacy by designating the entire Persian Gulf an extension of the Government of India (see above)[49]. The British Consulate in Bushehr had served as the official seat of British policy in the Persian Gulf, but now it became effectively the center of regional governance throughout the region[50].

---

see Mahmoud Afshar, "Nokati Chand Piramoun-e 'Alat-e Fe'l Shodan-e Taqizadeh dar Tajdid-e Qarardad-e Naft, 'Pul Gereftan-e' Modaress az Alman-ha dar Jang-e Jahani-ye Avval, va 'Reshveh Gereftan-e' Vosouq al-Dowleh va Shoraka az Engelis dar Qarardad-e 1919," *Yaqma*, no. 352 (January 1978): 588–96.

[46] Curzon, *The Place of India in the Empire*.

[47] Ross, "Lord Curzon and E. G. Brown Confront the 'Persian Question'"; Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 60–66; Keddie and Amanat, "Iran under the Late Qajars"; Greaves, *Persia and the Defence of India, 1884-1892*; Greaves, "Iranian Relations with Great Britain and British India: 1798-1921."

[48] Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 22–26; Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question*. See also Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 95–99; Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Ezekiel Gasper, eds., *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 36–55.

[49] Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*.

[50] Important accounts of British diplomats and military personnel in southern Iran during this period can be found in Townsend, *Proconsul to the Middle East*; Ella Sykes, "Persian Family Life," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 1, no. 2 (1914): 3–11; Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*; Marlowe, *Late Victorian*; Percy Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia: Or, Eight Years in Iran* (London: John Murray, 1902); Waterfield, *Professional Diplomat; Sir Percy Loraine of*

An indication of the changing significance of the Persian Gulf was the dramatic rise in the number of Foreign Office staff handling policy for the region from 40 in mid 19th century to 150 by 1914, with the number of annual dispatches they handled increasing from 30 thousand to 110 thousand[51]. In this process, the British attitudes toward Iranian politics further deteriorated significantly, with an ever more derogatory and dismissive tone coloring every assessment of Iranian events; and the motives, actions, and behavior of politicians, personalities, and parliamentarians, without acknowledging the irony that British policy was a prime cause of the political problems plaguing the polity.

This era also witnessed significant administrative change throughout the chain of British regional policymaking. So long as Iran had been treated as a unified buffer state the Minister (or ambassador) in Tehran had been directly responsible for policies dictated from London. Once the Anglo Russian Treaty divided the country and the south became designated as a sphere of British influence, despite Iran's nominal independence and territorial integrity, the Resident for the Persian Gulf, posted at the Iranian port of Bushehr, gained a much greater leeway and status in making decisions and setting policy throughout the south of the country[52]. Percy Cox who held that post for most of this period (with the interlude in 1918-1920 when he served as Minister in Tehran) carried tremendous authority, and was eventually appointed High Commissioner for Iraq in 1920[53]. Since the Chief Resident in Bushehr, as well as the numerous consuls in the south, including those assigned to Khuzestan's cities of Mohamereh, Dezful, Shushtar, and Ahvaz, were all appointed by the Government of India, a situation arose where political priorities of India came into potential conflict with those of London, and the Minister in Tehran. British diplomatic and military officers in the south were colonial officers, steeped in the distinct culture of the Raj. India supplied the main body of the British army and paid for it out of Indian taxes[54]. The view from Delhi or Simla often differed from those formulated in London and Tehran. After WWI, the chain of British decision-making regarding the region became even more convoluted with Cairo becoming yet another competing center of

---

Kirkharle, Bt., 1880-1961.; Dennis Wright, *The English Among the Persians: Imperial Lives in 19th Century Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001).

[51] Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 56.

[52] Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971*, See chapter 1.

[53] Pearce, "Cox, Sir Percy."

[54] On the role of Government of India in supplying troops and financing the Wartime British military in the Middle East see Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, Ch.5, 109–129.

policymaking for the region, with its own set of priorities and urgent concerns[55]. In London, the India Office was under the direct control of the Prime Minister, with appointments approved by the Parliament, but their headquarters were housed in the Foreign Office, and its lines of jurisdiction and autonomy often clashed with various other Ministries responsible for Colonial Affairs and War[56]. As a result, British policy toward Iran became beset with significant contradictory priorities and frictions that, at first glance, may not be evident under the veneer of a global superpower implementing a coherent unilateral approach to a region and country under its effective domination.

Soon after the 1907 Accord the oil industry in Khuzestan emerged as a new vital component in the geopolitics of the region[57]. The circumstances under which the oil complex developed after WWI were directly affected by the geopolitical situation discussed in this section, as well as the global transformations analyzed in the previous chapter.

WWI and its Aftermath: From Sphere of Influence to Failed Attempts to Establish a Protectorate

The fallout from the civil conflicts ensuing from the Constitutional Revolution, and the increasingly brazen interference of Russia and Britain, had made the Qajar state effectively unable to govern. The short-lived attempt in 1911 to resort to American financial advisers led by Morgan Shuster, to assist in reforming the finances of the country was vetoed by Britain and Russia once it became clear that Shuster's sympathies lay with the Constitutionalists, and his attempts to establish an effective tax collection system and an independent gendarmerie would challenge the sway of the two imperial powers [58]. When WWI broke out Iran declared its neutrality, but soon its territory became the battleground of rival Russian, British, and German armies and saboteurs (see chapter 3). The effects were devastating as chronic

[55] Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971*.
[56] Adelson, *London and the Middle East*.
[57] According to Marion Kent for Britain in the interwar years "oil and defense came into a symbiotic relationship in the Middle East". Marion Kent, *Moguls and Mandarins: Oil, Imperialism and the Middle East in British Foreign Policy 1900-1940* (London: Franc Cass, 1993), 155. However, this seems an exaggerated assessment, as oil interests were on occasion sacrificed for greater strategic priorities. For example, it can be argued that maintaining the territorial unity of Iran, as well as engineering that of Iraq, were alternatives chosen over carving out independent territories in oil rich Basra and Khuzestan, similar to what had been done in Kuwait.
[58] Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*.

insecurity, famine, epidemics, runaway inflation, and rising poverty decimating urban and rural populations[59]. Regular and vociferous bread riots broke out in cities such as Qazvin, Anzali, Qom, Tehran, Shiraz, Manjil, Mashhad, Esfahan, and elsewhere; marauding armies confiscated food and draft animals; warlordism became a blight on settled populations of towns and villages; brigandage and raids disrupted trade, transport, and agriculture. During the war staple food prices grew beyond the means of ordinary people, with wheat prices rising sevenfold, barley fourfold, legumes eightfold, rice sixfold, fodder tenfold, and sugar by 54%[60]. The apparatus of tax collection, such as it was, broke down and the empty treasury was unable to pay troops to collect arrears or to ensure the safety of tax assessors and collectors[61]. Labor struggles during this period were often mobilized in objection to food hoarding, bread adulteration, and unpaid wages[62].

Amir Afkhami, who studied the devastating impact of the 1918-1920 influenza pandemic in Iran concluded that the severe hardships caused by the war had especially devastating effects: "Ironically, Iran a neutral power in the war, lost as many citizens to war-related catastrophes as belligerent countries lost in the trenches"[63]. He estimates that between 900 thousand to 2.4 million people, or between 10-22 percent of the overall population perished as a result of food shortages, famine, and disease caused by the war related devastation and the political breakdown[64]. In the south especially, the British military activities of the South Persia Rifles (SPR) contributed to scarcity, due to their long-term contracts for grain provision with large landlords to feed their troops[65]. There existed no official or systematic means of keeping records of mortality or births at the time, until the Tehran municipality began

[59] Mohammad Tamadon, *Oza'e Iran dar Jang Jahani-e Aval* (Tehran: Tamadon, 1971); Afshin Parto, "Khizesh-e Fars dar Jang-e Jahani-ye Aval," *Ettela'at-e Siasi-Eqtesadi*, no. 135/136 (January 1999): 70–87; Morteza Dehqan Nejad and Zarifeh Kazemi, "Avamel-e Moaser dar Feqdan-e Tose'eh Rah-ha-ye Tejari Fars az Aghaz-e Jang-e Jahani-e Aval ta Payan'e Jang-e Jahani-ye Dovom," *Tarikh-e Ravabet-e Khareji* 12, no. 46 (2010): 27–52; L. C. Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce* (London: Naval and Military Press, 2009), 102–117; Maj. M. H. Donohoe, *With The Persian Expedition* (London: Naval and Military Press, 2009), 113–131; Edmonds, *East and West of Zagros: Travel, War and Politics in Persia and Iraq 1913-1921*; Majd, *The Great Famine and Genocide in Persia, 1917-1919*.

[60] Soheila Torabi, "Negahi beh Vaz'iyat-e Arzagh dar Iran dar Salha-ye Jang-e Jahani-e Aval (A Look at the State of Food Provision in Iran during the WWI Years)," *Ganjineh Asnad*, no. 3/4 (1991): 26.

[61] Ibid., 28.

[62] Atabaki and Ehsani, "Shifting Governmentality in the Shadow of Labor Activism: Revisiting the Roots and Impact of the 1929 Abadan Oil Workers' Strike."

[63] Amir Afkhami, "Compromised Constitutions: The Iranian Experience with the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 77 (2003): 371.

[64] Ibid., 383–384.

[65] Ibid., 372–373.

in 1922 to demand body washers in cemeteries to record deaths and their causes[66]; but there are harrowing accounts by Europeans soldiers and travelers of the hardships suffered by the general population. Forbes-Leith, an officer on expedition in Western Iran recalled the famine in the west of the country:

> " The country was in a terrible state and the peasantry was in the last stages of starvation. Every time I was forced to stop my car, I was surrounded by hundreds of near-skeletons who screamed and fought for such scraps as I was able to spare. In a single day's journey of fifty-six miles between the towns of Kirind and Kermanshah, I counted twenty-seven corpses by the roadside, most of them those of women and children, and the general condition of life amongst the peasants was so frightful that I was ashamed to eat my simple rations in their presence"[67].

In 1915 hostile tribes (mostly Arab Bawis) in alliance with German operatives, sabotaged APOC's pipelines north of Abadan[68]. The Oil Company suspended royalty payments to the Treasury, accusing the hapless central government of reneging on its obligation to protect oil operations[69]. By 1917 the government could no longer pay its daily expenses and it had to rely on further foreign loans to continue minimal operations[70]. To maintain security the British set up the South Persia Rifles, made of Iranian recruits under the leadership of Indian cavalry and British officers, to enforce security of British interests (see above)[71].

At the end of the war Iran's attempt to gain access to the Versailles peace conference to voice its grievances was blocked by Curzon. Iran claimed to be a non-belligerent whose sovereign territory had been violated by invading armies and unjust collusion between imperial powers. Despite President Wilson's support of Iran's

---

[66] A.R. Neligan, "Public Health in Persia; 1914-24. Part 1," *The Lancet* 207, no. 5351 (March 20, 1926): 636.
[67] F. A. C. Forbes-Leith, *Checkmate; Fighting Tradition in Central Persia,* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 20.
[68] Pierre Oberling, *The Qashqai Nomads of Fars* (Hague: Mouton, 1974); Christopher Sykes, *Wassmuss, "the German Lawrence"* (New York: Longmans, 1936).
[69] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:359.
[70] Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 14; Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6, 354–358.
[71] Bahar, *Tarikh-e Mokhtasar-e Ahzab-e Siasi-ye Iran (History of Iran's Political Parties)*, 1:47; Safiri, *Polis-e Jonoub-e Iran- SPR (South Persia Rifles)*; Sykes, "South Persia and the Great War"; Sykes, *Wassmuss, 'the German Lawrence'*.

claim Curzon succeeded in blocking its entrance[72]. There were several motives behind this maneuver. As the supremo in the Foreign Office Curzon had become the paramount policy setter for the region and he intended to engineer a shift back to making Iran a buffer state for India and the Persian Gulf against the new Soviet threat. In the following years Britain sent military forces into Russian territory in a futile attempt to defeat the Soviets' attempts to control their southern flanks in the Caucasus. Britain also machinated and helped to establish a ring of anti communist states to surround Russia in the Balkans, the Baltics, Turkey, Central Europe, the Near East, and Iraq. Iran was the last piece in the puzzle. Allowing Iran access to the peace conference would have put it formally on a par with Britain, as a fellow member state. If belligerents, including Britain were recognized at fault for having invaded a neutral country, and were forced by the League to pay compensation for war damages they had caused, this could have potentially weaned Iran of its debilitating dependence on British financial handouts, and set a bad precedence with other aggrieved nations.

An even more pressing concern had to do with the 1901 D'Arcy Oil Concession, and all the other lopsided agreements and concessions Iran had signed with Britain or British subjects under dubious circumstances. The fear was that if Iran were to gain access as a nominally equal participant to an international forum which claimed to establish an ethical set of laws to govern international relations it would unveil long held grievances which would undermine British domination there and force it to be held accountable. In a letter to Curzon, the Minister in Tehran Percy Cox listed the "dangerous" grievances and demands that Iran could potentially raise and gain a sympathetic audience[73]. These included the murky relations between APOC and the Government of Britain, the dubious calculation of royalties by APOC, the withholding of oil royalties by APOC since 1915; the forced terms of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Accord; the operations of the South Persia Rifles in Iranian territories; the agreement between the Bakhtiyari Khans and APOC hammered out through the mediation of British diplomats; the protectorate set up in Khuzestan with Sheikh Khaz'al; the objectionable drawing of boundaries with Iraq, Afghanistan, and India (now Pakistan) under British, Ottoman, and Russian duress; the continued foreign

[72] *Persia, Annual Review 1922*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6, 359–360.
[73] Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 219–220.

control of Persian finances, etc[74].(See chapters 3 & 5 for further discussion of these issues)

The question of oil royalties (chapter 3), was particularly onerous and overtime became the main flashpoint between the two countries, and eventually led to the nationalization of oil in 1951. Since 1912 Britain had become increasingly dependent on oil[75], and it wanted to prevent as much as possible the intrusion of rivals, especially the US, in its sphere of influence in the Persian Gulf with its proven rich petroleum deposits. Furthermore, the fear of rising Soviet influence and growing nationalism throughout the region was becoming a paramount concern. In 1919 Curzon and Percy Cox, as his trusted envoy to Tehran, devised a policy that scuttled the highly controversial 1907 Anglo Russian Accord and aimed to turn Iran effectively into an informal British protectorate, somewhat similar to the Egyptian model[76]. They drew a secret agreement in 1919 with a number of leading anglophile Iranian politicians, led by the premier Vosough al Dowleh, effectively to allow Britain the exclusive control of the country's financial, military and bureaucratic administrations in exchange for a loan of £2 million, on 7% fixed interest. To "grease the wheels", as they put it, they advanced 10% of the loan personally to Vosough al Dowleh and his two principle allies[77]. The accord would have forced Iran to deal directly with Britain without the interference of the League of Nations, to settle all outstanding claims regarding reparations, royalties, borders, etc. The protection of APOC and the oil operations in Khuzestan was one the priorities behind this plan. The 1919 agreement would have allowed Britain to prioritize its own interests in approving or blocking any development that would be taking place in Iran. For

---

[74] See also Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 134–199; Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 219–233; Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*; Ali Farahmand Araqi, "Vakonesh-e Iran beh Naghz-e Bitarafi dar Jang-e Jahani-e Avval (Iran's Reaction to the Violation of Its Neutrality in WWI)," *Tarikh-e Ravabet-e Khareji* 4, no. 1 (2003): 167–99; Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:350–371; Marlowe, *The Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century*, 56–57. On the question of boundaries see Keith McLachlan, ed., *The Boundaries of Modern Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

[75] Britain's overall petroleum imports from the Middle East (effectively only Iran at this period) were limited, with Mexico and Venezuela being the main suppliers for Britain in Europe. However, the Royal Navy, the Army stationed in Mesopotamia, and the Government of India, were highly dependent on refined oil from Burma, as well as Abadan. Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971*.

[76] Mahdavi, *Siyasat-e Khareji-e Iran dar Dowran-e Pahlavi, 1300-1357*, 4–8; Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 230.

[77] The 1919 agreement has been extensively analyzed. Here I merely provide a context for explaining how these events affected the oil operations in the coming years. See Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran*.

example, Cox and Curzon conceived a strategy to continue vetoing the construction of any railroads that could be potentially used by rival armies, and to consolidate their continued support of Sheikh Khaz'al as a protected vassal in Khuzestan[78].

In a short interlude between 1919-1921, a deal that had appeared as a masterstroke to its architects backfired spectacularly, leaving Curzon's Persian Gulf and Iran policies in tatters. In the following years Britain, as well as APOC, had to scurry continuously to keep up with a rapidly changing landscape in Iran, and accept drastic changes to the balance of power there. This reversal also had major repercussions for the oil complex in Khuzestan as we shall discuss in the following chapters. Several factors contributed to the demise of the 1919 Anglo Persian Accord:

First, the unexpected stiffening of resistance by Iranian politicians and nationalists once the terms of the secret accord were revealed. The Iranian government had been in a state of chronic instability since 1907, and especially after the war had started. Between 1914 and 1919 there had been 16 cabinets; but all shared the common goals of ending foreign interference, assuring financial stability and autonomy, securing international guarantees of independence and sovereignty, developing a unified national army, and establishing an effective administrative machinery of governance[79]. Since the outbreak of the war many politicians had received support, strategic and sometimes financial, from rival foreign powers. When following the incursion of belligerent foreign militaries in 1915 the ruling cabinet fled the advancing Russian army in 1915 and established a government in exile in Kermanshah, it accepted financial assistance from the Germans to continue operating. Many prominent nationalists, such as Taqizadeh, Kazemzadeh Iranshahr, etc. had settled in Berlin and conducted their political and cultural activities there with the support of the German government. Britain likewise had supported its allies such as Prince Farmafarma, Qavam al Mulk, Sheikh Khaz'al, and even Ahmad Shah with soft loans, allowances, and handouts. In 1916 it had set up the South Persia Rifles to impose its order in the south of the country, in collaboration with sympathetic local magnates there. Against this background, the stigma of direct British payment to Vosough al Dowleh and his cohort to get the controversial accord approved created

---

[78] Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 219–222.
[79] Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century*, 40–48; Bahar, *Tarikh-e Mokhtasar-e Ahzab-e Siasi-ye Iran*; Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran*; Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 236; Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*.

such an outrage that any such future dealings became far more risky[80]. The 1919 Accord had to be approved by the Majles to gain the veneer of legality. But instead of finding its way there quickly as Curzon frantically kept insisting, it was delayed for more than a year by reluctant politicians who were fearful of the consequences of the popular backlash, and eventually the Majles rejected it out of hand. Curzon blamed the incompetence of the new Minister Herman Norman and the reviled corrupt Persians who did not recognize the benevolence of the deal on offer, but the fact was that the Accord had virtually no supporters in Iran[81].

The second reason for the collapse of the policy was the deteriorating state of affairs in Iran and throughout the region. British military incursions against the Soviet Union into Central Asia and the Caucasus backfired spectacularly in 1918. The so-called Dunsterforce expedition from Iraq to Baku through Iran collapsed in 1918[82] and the subsequent Norperforce (North Persian Force) expedition to shore up resistance against the advancing Red Army was equally stalled (1918-1920)[83]. Radical regional movements in Northern Iran, in Gilan and Azarbaijan and Khorasan were gaining a foothold and the rag tag Persian military, especially the Cossack Corps, led by Russian officers, was unable to impose its authority, partly because it could not even pay its troops and had to rely on loans from the Imperial Bank to maintain minimal operations. Ironically, the Bank was under orders from Curzon to refuse any further funding of the Persian Government in order to force them into signing the 1919 Accord. In this case, the Bank procrastinated and continued funding the troops[84] until the tide turned by 1920, Soviet Troops withdrew from the northern territories they had occupied, and the regional movements were defeated by a combination of Cossacks and British forces. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union discarded the long held Russian policy toward Iran and forgave the substantial outstanding loans in exchange for an

---

[80] See Mahmoud Afshar's reflections on the topic, claiming that foreign assistance from Germans to Taqizadeh or Modaress was unfortunate but ultimately understandable, in part because those politicians owned up to it publicly, and did not enrich themselves personally, but instead used the funds to advance nationalist political agendas under dire circumstances. Vosough al Dowleh and other Anglophile politicians, on the other hand, continued to be duplicitous and were more inclined to benefit personally from their alliance with Britain. See Afshar, "Nokati Chand Piramoun-e 'Alat-e Fe'l' Shodan-e Taqizadeh".

[81] Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran*.

[82] Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*; Donohoe, *With The Persian Expedition*; Edmonds, *East and West of Zagros: Travel, War and Politics in Persia and Iraq 1913-1921*; Wilson, *Loyalties; Mesopotamia*.

[83] Edmund Ironside, *High Road to Command: The Diaries of Major-General Sir Edmund Ironside, 1920-1922;* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972).

[84] Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 151.

agreement that would guarantee the absence of any forces hostile to Soviet Union on Persian territory.

The Majles approved the treaty with the Soviet Union, leaving the 1919 Accord standing out as conspicuously predatory toward Iran. The proponents of the 1919 agreement at the Foreign Office had been arguing that the situation in Iran was a zero sum game, with any gain made by the Soviets being a net loss to British influence and a direct threat to India's security. However, that alarmist argument failed to be convincing once Reza Khan, who was given the title of Sardar Sepah (Commander of the Army) by Ahmad Shah, had taken charge of imposing a vigorous project of centralization and modern nation building, and with the Soviet Union content to support his ascent as a 'progressive modernizer' standing against the reactionary feudal aristocracy. The subsequent developments proved that if there was a zero sum game in Iran it was between Reza Khan and Britain over sovereignty in Iran, and in particular, in Khuzestan's oil areas as we shall see below.

The third reason was the chronic weakness of the British economy in the post war era (see chapter 4) and its inability to maintain an extravagant and increasingly costly foreign policy in the region. The damage to the British economy by the devastating costs of the war was not as severe as other European powers, but it had left it significantly weakened in comparison with emerging rivals such as the United States and Japan. Between 1913-1929 the average annual growth of the real GDP of Britain increased a mere 0.7%, compared to the defeated Germany (1.2%), or the US (3.1%) and Japan (3.7%)[85]. The US, in particular, had quickly turned from a war ally to a major creditor and economic competitor as soon as the conflict ended[86]. Britain itself had changed from the largest international creditor prior to the war to the largest debtor by 1918 (see chapter 4). It had lent heavily to its war allies, but in order to continue financing the exorbitant costs of the war it had also resorted to borrowing heavily from the US. British debt dependency to the US grew from £62million in 1915-16 to over £1billion in 1918-19. In the same period overall state deficits expanded from £340million to £1.6 billion[87]. As I have discussed in some detail in chapter 4, the overall ability of the British state had come under severe strain due to

[85] C. H. Feinstein, Peter Temin, and Gianni Toniolo, *The European Economy Between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17.
[86] Ibid., 35–37; Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 134–137.
[87] Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 136.

severe economic malaise after 1918, the rising unemployment among returning soldiers, the collapse of the massive industrial demand for military supplies, and the new pressures for social reforms and welfare economy that had become impossible to ignore in the radical era of mass politics.

As Britain had shifted to a total war economy the state had been forced to take direct control of significant segments of the national economy. Prior to the War in 1913 military expenditures were 4% of the net national product, but during the conflict this had raised tenfold, to nearly 40%[88], with some war related ministries, such as the Munitions directly owning and operating some 200 war related industrial plants and employing a significant labor force[89]. The aftereffects of the war "… dealt the British overseas trade a savage blow from which it never recovered. In 1920 the volume of British exports of all kind was only 30% of what it had been in 1913"[90]. This crisis was especially acute for the British manufacturing that depended heavily on international trade for nearly half of its products, especially in textiles, machinery, steel, and shipbuilding.

Under the circumstances maintaining a heavy military presence in Mesopotamia and Iran was proving beyond the means of the ailing empire. John Maynard Keynes who was acting for the Treasury at the time, objected that the £2.5 million monthly costs of maintaining the Iran policy, not counting the military stores being bought inside Persia, was simply not justifiable by the meager results[91]. The escalating clashes of popular discontent throughout the region, in Iraq, Syria, India, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, as well as other parts of the Empire, such as Ireland were adding to the complexity of the situation[92]; as were the rising demands of welfare and political reform in Britain itself (see chapter 4). The result was a forced 'imperial adjustment', which left Curzon's policy in a precarious situation from which it could not recover.

The fourth reason was the unprecedented discord within the sprawling and increasingly dissonant British foreign policy administration. Despite his enormous personal prestige, Curzon's Iran policy was being subtly and sometimes openly

---

[88] Feinstein, Temin, and Toniolo, *The European Economy Between the Wars*, 22, 25–29.
[89] Ibid., 22.
[90] Ibid., 61.
[91] Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 233; Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 187–199.
[92] Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*.

resisted and opposed from all quarters. Aside from the Treasury's concern for the costs; the War Office which had to supply troops and oversee the implementation of the Accord was strongly opposed on financial and strategic grounds[93]; as was the Government of India, which wanted a policy of conciliation to win back Persian confidence and convince them that Britain was not trying to replace Russian domination with its own. More interestingly, Herman Norman the Minister who had replaced Percy Cox in Tehran became the target of Curzon's ire because he was unable to strong-arm the approval of the Accord in the Majles, nor did he seem to be fully convinced that under the existing circumstances the Accord was practicable, or the ideal way to move forward.

In 1921 the Cossacks carried out a coup d'état, and in the process ended any illusion that anglophile politicians could get the Majles to approve the 1919 Accord. Reza Khan, the coup leader soon deposed his co-conspirator, the anglophile journalist Seyyed Zia alDin Tabatabaei. By 1923 Reza Khan was Prime Minister, in 1925 the Majles voted to end the Qajar dynasty and in 1926 he ascended the throne as the first Shah of the new Pahlavi Monarchy. While there is still some controversy over the degree of British collusion with the Coup there is little doubt that General Ironside the commander of the British forces in Iran at least knew about it beforehand if he had not actually instigated it in the first place; that Norman effectively approved it after it had happened; and Churchill the Secretary of War used the occasion as the final excuse to evacuate the remaining British troops from Iran as a way of reducing the costs as well as the danger of unwanted military embroilment with the Soviets. In Olson's summary "British interests in Iran survived the war, yet not a single policy employed between 1914 and 1919 worked as expected, few worked at all, and some made matters worse"[94]. Effectively, the different layers of British administration had colluded to undermine the master plan of Curzon, Britain's greatest colonial Victorian authority on "the Persian Question", in order to accept, if not actively precipitate, the rapidly changing situation in Iran[95].

---

[93] Mahdavi, *Sahnehayee az Tarikh Mo'aser Iran*.
[94] Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 250.
[95] Katouzian interestingly argues that General Ironside's personal records of his involvement with the coup are barred from public scrutiny, even today, and his published memoirs offer only a fraction of what he had noted down. See Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran*, 195–196; Ironside, *High Road to Command*; Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 151–157; Bahar, *Tarikh-e Mokhtasar-e Ahzab-e Siasi-ye Iran (History of Iran's Political Parties)*, 1:61–87; Mahdavi, *Sahnehayee az Tarikh Mo'aser Iran*, 187–203.

The last factor to consider is APOC's position and the Company's reaction to the deteriorating situation after the war, and how it would affect the Company's long-term interests. By 1918 APOC directors had grown increasingly frustrated at the apparent lack of any long-term British Government oil policy[96]. There was intense wrangling over the necessity of further capital investments to expand operations and improve facilities, and the nature and the extent of government intervention in new concessions in Iraq and other potential and promising locations. Lloyd George, the wily and pragmatic Liberal prime minister, ironically was insisting that all further expansion of oil operations ought to be controlled and subjected to government and national priorities and not to private interests, whereas the Company insisted on its own commercial focus and its responsibilities to its shareholders, and demanded freedom from any government interference in its operations. At issue was whether the main concern of APOC should be making profits or insuring the advance of geopolitical strategy according to government policies[97]. Of course, the ultimate irony was that the government was the Company's majority shareholder, and when the Company had been in dire financial straights in 1912-14 it had actively sought government investment by presenting itself as an exclusively British enterprise, in service of national interests[98]. But such double standards held little importance in the emerging post war era of cutthroat global oil and multi national corporate giants (see chapter 4).

In addition, the Oil Company had begun to read the writing on the wall and realized that the question of royalties and the terms of the D'Arcy Concession would become a major threat once the Iranian government had managed to put its house in order. The details of the protracted negotiations with the Iranian Government between 1918-1920 have been covered in the published literature extensively[99] and it is not necessary to repeat them here in detail. The main points of contention were the suspended royalties since 1915; the highly questionable accounting practices of the

---

[96] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:350–396.
[97] Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 98–100; Kent, *Oil and Empire*.
[98] Jack, "The Purchase of the British Government's Shares in the British Petroleum Company 1912-1914."
[99] Laurence Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.* (London: Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), 1938), 1–17; Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:358–371; Shafiee, "A Petro-Formula and Its World"; Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle*; Movahed, *Nafte-e Ma va Masa'el-e Hoquqi-e An*; Nakhai, *Le Pétrole en Iran*; L.P. Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955).

Company which were unveiled by independent consultants[100]; the fact that the concession specified Iran's royalties as 16% of the net profits of the Company at fair market rates while APOC had been supplying the Royal Navy and Army enormous volumes of products at guaranteed preset prices; effectively meaning at highly subsidized rates[101]; and that the Company's subsidiaries outside Iran were being excluded from the calculation even though the Concession had made no such allowance. The Company's attempt to settle the differences and reach a final accord with the Iranian government while the latter was in a position of weakness and unable to negotiate effectively became a bone of contention with the Foreign Office, which wanted to use all possible coercive financial leverage against Iran to force the Majles to sign the 1919 Agreement. The payment of a lump sum by the Oil Company to Iran would have undermined White Hall's position by giving the Iranian government some urgently needed cash, while failing to do so would have put the Oil Company in danger of seeing the entire Concession put to question by the Iranian Government. As it were, the Company reached a final agreement with the Government of Iran in December 1920 and paid a lump sum of £1million as to settle outstanding claims[102]. While the Company was initially convinced that the matter had been settled, the Iranian Majles never ratified the agreement, and the bitter question of royalties and the terms of the concession remained unresolved, and became the major issue in recurring crises that rocked the relations of the Oil Company to the Iranian government in 1929-1933 and 1951-1953.

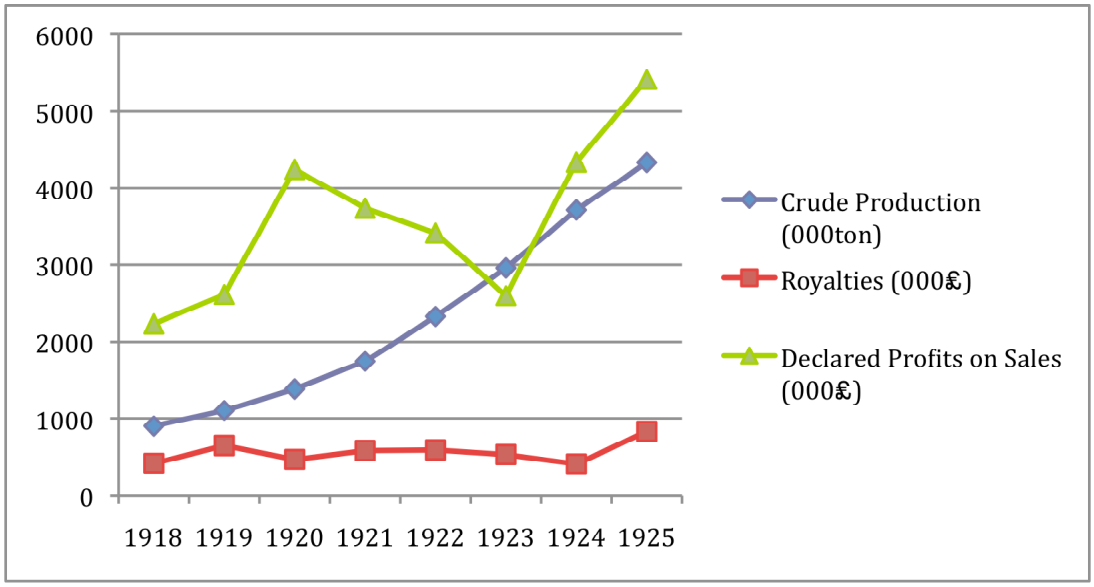
---

[100] Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 6–7. William McLintock an expert accountant was hired to look into the Company's accounts in the process of arbitration with Iran to determine what ought to be included in the calculation of the 16% net profit. He was given access to the books related to operations in Iran, but none of the subsidiaries. This was before any agreement was reached about the status of these subsidiaries that Iran believed would have been a natural outgrowth of the operations in Iran and therefore ought to have been included. McLintock discovered at least 7 major discrepancies in the Company's accounts. He concluded that the Company was hiding behind interpretive subtleties in order to pay less royalty. See Nakhai, *Le Pétrole En Iran*, 50–52.

[101] The 1914 agreement with the Admiralty stipulated that the Company would deliver 6mt of fuel oil over a 20 year period at 30s/ton at Abadan. In case of war the Admiralty would have first option on all production. The volume and prices were effectively not determined by any market rates or supply and demand. The prodigious demand during wartime and the guaranteed purchase by the admiralty made the Company hugely profitable and assured its survival among more established competitors. Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:288–290.

[102] Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 11.

Figure 1: APOC Crude Production, Profits, and Royalties Paid to the Iranian Governnment



Source: Ferrier (1982), 370, 234, 474

The changing political landscape and the transformation of the oil complex (1921-1926):

By the end of 1921 the situation in Iran had changed drastically, culminating in a ruthless drive toward centralization and state building spearheaded by Reza Sardar Sepah and his military followers and civilian allies. Once the momentum had been set, this process came to be widely supported, albeit with significant reservations regarding Reza's authoritarianism, by Iranian nationalists, as well as by most but not all of the locally posted British diplomats, a significant section of White Hall, the Government of India, the Soviet government, and even APOC. They all saw in Reza Khan the alternative to what they all feared most – chaos, and what they had come to desire above all – order!

Percy Lorraine, who had replaced Norman as Minister in Tehran, sent a sober assessment to Curzon, which set the tone of British diplomacy toward Iran for the following five years. In his summary, which is worth quoting at some length, Loraine stated that upon his arrival in Tehran at the end of 1921 the ruling cabinet, headed by Qavam al Saltaneh, with Reza Khan as Minister of War, was beset by lack of funds to conduct daily operations. He had found all Iranian politicians irresolute, cowardly,

and corrupt, except for Reza Khan, whose success in suppressing regional revolts in Khorasan, Gilan, and Azarbaijan had secured vital provinces bordering the Soviet Union. However, worryingly, he had found "America to be the latest craze" among the,

> "Volatile people of this country, who seem incapable of realizing facts unless those happen to accord with their own opinions and desires, that salvation was coming from America; that America, in a spirit of disinterested altruism, was going to develop Persian resources to the immediate and enduring profit of Persia and the Persians; that American advisers would come and reorganize the country and make mincemeat of the grasping British and other rapacious foreigners"[103].

Loraine went on to outline the backlash among Iranians to the "obnoxious" 1907 and 1919 Accords, while being dismissive of those objections, and the positive effects of Woodrow Wilson's unsuccessful attempt to admit Iran to the Versailles peace conference. He warned that Britain now faced a completely new situation:

> "In former days, when England was fighting an uphill battle against Russian penetration into Persia, a battle which the safety of our Indian Empire and the preservation of our general interests and influence in Asia imperiously dictated, the struggle had at least the characteristics of a duel between two gentlemen who had necessarily some community of instinct and tradition…[However] While Great Britain stands for the preservation of order and for political and economic stability, Bolshevik Russia cares for none of these things, and indeed disorder, unrest, and poverty are the most fruitful soil for the seed of communist gospel."[104]

The Minister's greatest worry was the rising tide of nationalism: On the one hand there is positive aspect to nationalism, "the cry for education and the efforts of the government, however feeble to satisfy it… the craving for western learning and technical instruction", and the negative effects this modernization has on the Shi'a clergy. But there was another more ominous side to nationalism, which he feared:

---

[103] Loraine to Curzon, May 7, 1922, in Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6; Pp. 345–351.
[104] Ibid.

> "Besides the Russian activities we have to contend with the intrigues of Kemalists, Afghans, pan-Islamists and pan-Turanians, all directed against Great Britain… In the south, from the vast Indian possessions of the British Crown, the stronghold of the whole British position in Asia, where before the war the British rule was supreme and unquestioned, the Persian hears tales of rebellion, revolution, and riot, of Swaraj, non-cooperation and Gandhism; tags of inflammatory literature reach her, and are eagerly reprinted in her gutter press, crying out against 'British oppression', inciting the Indian 'nation' to rise and throw off its British chains…No account is taken of the peace and prosperity that British rule has brought to India… In the southwest, the British efforts to create an autonomous Arab state in Irak are represented as a further British attempt to enslave a Moslem population, and Baghdad is regarded as a fresh British outpost of colonization which aims at the absorption of Persia and the destruction of her independence"[105].

Loraine noted that "social nationalism has always existed in Persia: what is significant is the rebirth of a political nationalism". He concluded by a positive note: "It is my conviction that in this country, there is no fundamental animosity toward Great Britain…Our position in Persia is so inherently strong, and our interest in the country so demonstrably legitimate, that I am unable to believe that the temporary eclipse that we have suffered in prestige and influence can be of more than transient nature"[106].

British diplomatic assessments began to praise the personal qualities of Reza Khan and portrayed him as uniquely qualified to transform the situation in Iran[107]. Loraine's approach turned out to be a radical departure for long held British approach to Iranian politics, as he suggested Britain to adopt a low profile and to avoid direct exposure and visible entanglement in Iranian affairs as a public relations measure[108].

In the following year the situation became more worrisome as the consequences of the centralization drive of the new government were becoming more evident. A military column sent in 1922 to Khuzestan was attacked and destroyed by

---

[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] "*Annual Report 1922*", August 1922, in Ibid., Vol.6: 353–419, Section 11, 405–407.
[108] Ibid.

Kuhkiluyeh tribesmen in Shalil. The reaction in Tehran was immense, and the humiliating incident tarnished Britain and its allies, Sheikh Khaz'al and the Bakhtiyari khans, who were believed as somehow responsible for the outrage[109]. As a result, Loraine began to realize that sitting on the fence was no longer an option, and he leaned toward convincing his superiors of the necessity of throwing Britain's support more decisively behind Reza Khan. In a key report to Curzon in May 1923, Loraine pointed out the dangerous situation in the south, in the vicinity of APOC's operations:

> "The preoccupations of the central government [has left] the Lurs, Bakhtiyari, the Kashkai under Soulet-Dowleh, the Khamseh Arabs under Kawam al Mulk, the Sheikh of Mohammareh and all the petty tribal organizations in the hinterland of the Gulf ports in a state, if not of actual insubordination, but at all events of practical independence…This state of affairs was seriously aggravated by an intense Bolshevik propaganda…aiming at the destruction of British influence in Persia, and the acquisition of a dominant position for Russia through a process of disintegration of Persia". The increasing imposition of military authority in the southwest after the Shalil incident has been a significant development. It "…is in my opinion incontestable that the result of these changes has been so far uniformly beneficial to British interests. The Persian government as such deserves no credit for what has been achieved; it has been entirely the work of one man, Reza Khan, the Minister for War…there is a very genuine element of patriotism underlying all that Reza Khan does"[110].

Loraine argued that Reza's motives were altruistic, and that his aim was to lift Iran out of morass that the drifting and corrupt political establishment had gotten it into. Reza had the ability to close the Majles and overthrow the Qajars, but he refrained from a power grab because he was not driven by personal ambitions. Furthermore, "he has never shown indifference to established British interests". He went on to summarize Reza Khan's agenda as follows:

---

[109] Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6, p.384–385.; "*Annual Report 1923*" March 1923, Ibid., Vol.6, 690–692.
[110] Loraine to Curzon, 21 May 1923, in Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6, 657–660.

> "Persia will never be really independent and orderly until the whole country is brought under a single and unquestioned authority, which must necessarily be that of the National Government, and until civilian population has been disarmed, so that all physical power rests in the hands of the State. The State and not local chieftains &c. must assume the responsibility for protecting foreigners and their enterprises… [The State also demands absolute loyalty from its national citizens and rejects interference from all foreign enterprises] … In the end Great Britain will find it much more easy to and satisfactory to deal with an organized Central Government having effective control of the country, than with a number of petty local potentates", who are unable to resist the new military without foreign support. The ominous conclusion being that "it would be a calamity if Great Britain opposed the logical extension of the policy in the south, and such opposition would seem totally unnecessary as the [Iranian] Imperial Government does not desire to interfere with existing British interests"[111].

Loraine concluded his pivotal assessment by acknowledging that British diplomacy faced a fork in the road: "I still incline, however to the opinion that sooner or later we shall have to decide whether to oppose the policy of centralization, implying the necessity of opposing it by force in the last resort; or to support it and endeavor to guide it into safe channels by the judicious use of our support. I am myself strongly in favor of the latter course. *It is clear that the whole crux of the situation lies in [Khuzestan], and that the test case is the Sheikh of Mohammerah*" [my emphasis added]. The British Minister then outlined a scenario where if the central government were to press Khaz'al for his arrear land taxes and demand his future submission, but the latter were to resist, then the current "tranquil" state of Khuzestan would be engulfed in military conflict affecting APOC negatively. In that case either tribal mobilization against the central government would lead to warfare, or Britain would have to step in directly to prevent the military's incursion into Khuzestan, both "calamitous" scenarios.

> "My general conclusions are these: Reza Khan's policy, if carried out without unnecessary friction or disturbance, would relieve us of many responsibilities

[111] Ibid.

> which we have hitherto borne, and make Persia an altogether more comfortable neighbor; the only thing we need be really anxious about are the safety of the oil-fields and the special position of the Sheikh of Mohammerah".[112]

Thereafter the events moved very fast. After the Shalil incident the writing was on the wall. APOC tasked Dr. M. Young, the Company physician, who had often played the crucial role of negotiator (see chapter 3) with various Iranians in the past, to visit Tehran in the summer of 1922 to meet Reza Khan in order to evaluate the situation and make a recommendation. Young sided with Loraine's assessment that the Company was better off to cast its lot with the central government and rely on its protection[113]. A year after the coup the central government had informed APOC that it considered all its agreements with local magnates null and void[114]. In November 1922 Reza Khan had a meeting in Bushehr with T.L. Jacks and Arnold Wilson, who was now Company's director in Mohammareh after having served as acting High Commissioner in Iraq, and left them in no doubt that he intended to impose Tehran's authority on Khuzestan. Wilson replied that APOC was only interested in its own operations and not in local politics and so long as its security was assured it would stay out of power struggles[115].

APOC and British diplomats were still convinced that the status quo in Khuzestan was fairly secure, since Khaz'al was assessed to have the command of a tribal force of an estimated 30 thousand men, far more than anything the central government could muster. Khaz'al attempted to create a coalition of Bakhtiyari, Arab, Qashqai and Lur forces to resist the military's southward incursions. Khaz'al extended to Ahmad Shah who had grown uneasy with Reza's ambitions. He constantly reminded APOC and the British envoys of their obligations to him which had been renewed in 1903, 1908, 1909, 1910, and 1914, on each occasion pledging him their support against the central government (see chapter 3)[116]. He counted on the belief that reneging on those public pledges would irrevocably harm British prestige

---

[112] Loraine to Curzon, 21 May 1923, in Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6, 657–660.
[113] Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 162.
[114] Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 12–14.
[115] Ibid., 14–15; Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:390–394.
[116] Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 160; L.P. Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955), 20–21; Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle*, 12–15.

across the Persian Gulf where numerous Arab magnates and sheikhs had entered into similar "trucial" agreements since the 19th century, and he appealed to opposition parliamentarians in Tehran in the name of Constitutionalism and against Reza's brazenly authoritarian behavior[117].

Despite desperate British attempts to mediate, a confrontation became inevitable when Khaz'al defied the central government's demand for the speedy payment of his belated taxes, and the added affront of calling into question some of the royal land grants bestowed upon him by the late Muzzafar al Din Shah. Apprehensive of the outcome Loraine kept asking the Government of India and White Hall to commit troops and battleships to Basra as an intimidating show of force to deter the Iranian army, but his superiors remained wary of the costs and the risk of a potential confrontation until it was too late. In 1924 Iranian army troops broke the resistance of Lur tribes and poured into Khuzestan from the north, as well as from the south. Reza visited Ahvaz at the head of his troops and Khaz'al went there a broken man to submit to his authority. Khaz'al was promised immunity, but soon after he was arrested and deported to Tehran to die a few years later in poverty and under suspect circumstances [118]. His properties were seized and his political court was disbanded[119]. The province was put, for the first time, under the military rule of an ambitious officer, Fazlullah Khan (later Zahedi), the army general that later led the 1953 coup against Mossadeq. Army garrisons totaling nearly 10 thousand troops were

---

[117] Bahar, *Tarikh-e Mokhtasar-e Ahzab-e Siasi-ye Iran*, 1:103–104; Seyyed Hassa Taqizadeh, *Zendegi-ye Toufani; Khaterat-e Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh*, Ganjineh Iran va Iranian (Los Angeles: Mohammad Ali Elmi, 1990), 344–347; Yousefi, *Tarikh-e Khorramshahr*, 192–219; Ahmad Latifpour, *Dezful dar Gozar-e Zaman* (Tehran: Farhang-e Maktoub, 2008), 153–156. On 21st November 1914 Sir Percy Cox, Resident of the Persian Gulf, gave the following written assurance to Khaz'al: "I am now authorized to assure your Excellency…that whatever change may take place in the form of the Government of Persia…His Majesty's Government will be prepared to afford you the support necessary for obtaining a solution satisfactory both to yourself and to us in the event of any encroachment by the Persian Government on your jurisdiction and recognized rights or on your property in Persia…These assurances…shall hold good so long as you…continue to be guided by by the advise of his Majesty's Government and to maintain an attitude satisfactory to that Government vis-a-vis the Persian Government we shall do our best to maintain your Excellency in your present state of local autonomy", *Persia- Annual Report, 1926* in Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 571.

[118] "*Persia - Annual Report 1924"*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 194–195, 231–232; Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 15–17; Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 159–182; Mostafa Ansari, "The History of Khuzistan, 1878-1925: A Study in Provincial Autonomy and Change" (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974), 321–380; William Strunk, "Britain, Persia, and Shaykh Khaz'al: The Genesis of a 'Special Relationship,'" in *Islamic and Middle Eastern Societies*, ed. Roger Olson (Vermont: Amana Books, 1987); Mohammadi Yousefi, *Tarikh-e Khorramshahr* (Tehran: Nil, 1971), 192–219; Michael Zirinski, "Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and The Rise of Reza Shah 1921-26," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 4 (1992): 639–663.

[119] *Persia- Annual Report 1925,* Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 387–391.

posted throughout the province although, significantly, the majority were stationed in the north and the west and well away from Company areas, with 5000 garrisoned in Shushtar, 3500 in Ramhormoz, but only 130 in Ahvaz, 100 in Mohammareh, and a mere 30 in Abadan. The Oil Company's official record states "Reza Khan achieves success without harm to APOC"[120]. A diplomatic report from Mohammareh to the Foreign Office in London stated "The Oil Company is no longer concerned with the safety of their operations in the area. The local manager reported that he no longer sees any dangers to the pipelines and the oilfields [from tribal forces attempting to sabotage them in response to the army's incursion] as Reza Khan's army was about to bring the tribes under its control"[121]

While the changes to the status quo, such as the unceremonious abandonment of the old ally Khaz'al, were accepted as the best possible option under the circumstances[122] nevertheless, there was the cold realization that APOC was now for the first time directly subject to the authority of the central government. Given the fluctuating political situation in Iran and the region, the fear of the consequences of a shift in the central government's political orientation against Britain and for the Soviet Union now suddenly took on a different dimension[123]. Nevertheless, this risk was considered worthwhile by Britain if there was the assurance that the economically and geopolitically overstretched Empire could now rely on the authority of the Iranian central state to maintain road and transport security, to curtail anti British propaganda in the press and the Majles, to impose security on the western frontiers of India, and to guarantee labor discipline and general safety in the oil areas[124].

By 1925 Reza Khan's victory in the south seemed complete, at least against Khaz'al and the Bakhtiyari Khans, as well as against any residual British unease over the radical changes in the balance of power and their long cultivated relations. This was a major achievement and he made the most of it in a bombastic style[125], and used the occasion, literally, as a crowning victory. The same year the Majles deposed

---

[120] "*Persia- Annual Report 1924"*,Ibid., Vol.7, 232; Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 16.
[121] Quoted in Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 248.
[122] *Persia- Annual Report 1925,* Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 387–391.
[123] Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 172.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Reza Shah Pahlavi, *Safarameh Khuzestan* (Tehran: Markaz-e Pajouhesh va Nashr-e Farhang-e Siasi-e Dowran-e Pahlavi, 1924).

Ahmad Shah, and Reza prepared to be crowned as the head of the new Pahlavi dynasty in April 1926[126]. The Oil Company rushed to prepare the ground for the dynastic change and a possible royal visit to Khuzestan. But this was to be no ordinary official function. A new era was about to begin for the oil complex and everyone was acutely aware and apprehensive about the fact that they were stepping into an unpredictable and indeed a new and revolutionary situation. APOC went into a yearlong preparation to review all aspects of Company operations culminating with a planned visit by John Cadman, the Company's acting chair, to attend the royal coronation and to hold direct discussions with the new government about the future of Company-State relations.

Iranian statesmen similarly began energetically to lay the ground for extending the fledgling government's administrative authority over Khuzestan, a province that hitherto had lain virtually beyond the direct control of the central government since the 18th century[127]. These included establishing new administrative institutions such as municipalities, police, gendarmeries, border guards, offices for the registration of property, contracts, and personal data; and new social services such as public schools, and public health and sanitations.

Very quickly, the circumstances changed and relations between the Oil Company, the new Iranian central government and its local representatives, and the British government began to sour and deteriorate. Sir Robert Clive who had replaced Sir Percy Loraine as the new Minister in Tehran (Clive served in Iran from 1926-1931; replacing Loraine who had served from 1921-1926) began his Annual Report to the new Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain with words that became all too frequently repeated in diplomatic reports over the next 15 years: "The year 1926 has proved a disappointment. So much was hoped of it, so little has been achieved. Our main disillusion has been centered around the character of Reza Shah"[128].

Clive's narrative painted an altogether different portrait from the one presented by his predecessor: It turned out Reza was not 'enlightened' as Loraine had stressed, but a boor, an opium addict, a military tyrant in the making, an ingrate. He

---

[126] *Persia - Annual Report 1925*", Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 357–362.
[127] Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Pansad Saleh Khouzestan* (Tehran: Gothenberg, 1951); Mohammad Ali Emam Shushtari, *Tarikh-e Joghrafiyayi-e Khuzestan* (Tehran: NP, 1952); Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of 19th Century Iran*; Ansari, "History of Khuzistan"; Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*; Shahnavaz, *Britain and the Opening of South-West Persia 1880-1914*.
[128] *Persia- Annual Report 1926*", 27 January 1927, R. Clive to Austen Chamberlain, in Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 543–606.

had been ungracious in snubbing Loraine who left the country after years of service during which he had proved himself to be "one of the staunchest friends that Persia ever possessed". Iranians had also ignored other gracious acts of British goodwill, such as withdrawal of troops from the Persian Gulf. "The internal condition of Persia during 1926 has been characterized by friction in almost every organ of the State". There had been several tribal uprisings in the north and western provinces; there was constant squabble between the Majles, the Court, and the cabinet, as well as between military and civilian provincial governors[129]. Nevertheless, Clive felt that probably this was the best that Britain could hope for since, even if her position and her interests had not been strengthened, the Soviets had not made any noticeable gains either. Nor had the fearful disintegration of Iran come about. "It is true that the Shah has proved a disappointment, but at least he is still there: he may possibly improve; in any case he is better than the Kajars, infinitely better than a republic…Although the Persians much dislike us, they are still sufficiently afraid of us not to go too far. They have attempted a few pinpricks, but they have not seriously endeavored to attack our vital interests, the Imperial Bank, the telegraphs, the Anglo Persian Oil Company have prospered exceedingly…So long as our essential interests can be maintained there seems no real reason why HMG (as distinct from His Majesty's Legation) need be unduly disturbed by the conditions in Persia"[130].

Thus, by 1927 Britain seemed in a relatively favorable situation. Its main rivals in Iran and the region had had setbacks. The Soviets had blocked commerce with Iran after it had refused the request to grant them exclusive privileges for the fisheries on the shared Caspian Sea. The US attempt to gain a foothold in oil exploration in the central and northern parts of Iran had also ended in a disappointment, as the American combine Sinclair Oil withdrew in 1924 after vociferous resistance from APOC and the British Government. The suspicious murder of an American military attaché, Major Imbrie, by a mob in Tehran had served as final excuse for the Americans to extricate themselves claiming fears for their safety[131].

---

[129] Ibid. 545
[130] Ibid. 547
[131] *Persia Annual Report, 1924*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 178–179; Michael P Zirinsky, "Blood, Power, and Hypocrisy: The Murder of Robert Imbrie and American Relations with Pehlavi Iran, 1924", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18, no. 03 (1986): 275–92

Another inconvenient rival, Arthur Millspaugh the American financial adviser who had been in charge of reforming Iran's financial machinery, was by this stage in a weak position as his contract was coming to an end, and his heavy handed and uncompromising manners had managed to alienate the Iranian elites as well as Reza Shah. The political elite initially had counted on Millspaugh to attract American investment to Iran as a way of reducing the chronic historic dependence on loans and financing by British and the Russians/Soviets; and to spur on the much desired economic development and industrialization. Instead, Millspaugh had insisted on balancing the books and forcing the government to live within its means[132].

This approach did not sit well in an impoverished country that had been enduring chronic hardships, famine, epidemics, and violence; with an empty treasury, and an elite who saw modernization and financial independence as the only practical salvation. The food crises of 1922 and 1925 further tarnished the image of both the American advisers, but also the English diplomats and oilmen. Severe hardships had not ended with the war, and severe droughts in 1922 and especially in 1925 had a ruinous effect on crops and food supplies. This was due to a dearth of pack animals that were practically the only means of transportation on unsafe roads that were in horrible condition[133]. Famine devastated the countryside in areas affected by the drought, and seriously jeopardized the security of cities.

The 1925 drought and famine were especially severe and affected Tehran, Semnan, Kashan, Qom, Qazvin, and Hamadan. When it became clear that sufficient food had not been stored in the cities the population panicked and reacted with fury. Food security fell under the purview of the Finance Ministry, which controlled grain purchases and regulated imports as a way of balancing the budget. As British diplomats gleefully reported, the food crisis reflected badly on the American advisers. But the glee was misplaced. The 1922 famine had coincided with Curzon pressuring the Imperial Bank against extending any credit to Iran to force the Majles to ratify the

---

[132] Millspaugh, *The American Task in Persia*; Mojdehi, "Arthur C. Millsapugh's Two Missions to Iran and their Impact on American Iranian Relations," 38–77; Amin Banani, *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 116–117; Naficy, "L'Impot et la Vie Economique et Sociale en Perse."

[133] On the state of roads and transportation at the time see Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914*, 157–160, 195–205; A. S. Sventitiski, "Transport Routes in Persia," *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 14, no. 2 (1927): 203–22. For an over-optimistic and inadequate assessment that does not reflect the severity of the situation after WWI see Alexander Melamid, "Communications, Transport, Retail Trade and Services," in *Cambridge History of Iran; the Land of Iran*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 532–533, 554–557.

1919 Accord. In that case, with "the danger of the complete collapse of Persia into anarchy for ready want of money…and the particularly urgent of money to purchase grain to avert a famine in Tehran [had] provided a compelling reason to relax the embargo"[134]. But the resentment against British blackmail had only served to further embitter relations.

The more severe famine of 1925 reflected badly on Millspaugh, but it also tarnished the image of APOC and increased resentment about the relative affluence and the facilities that were available in Company areas compared to the rest of the country, and later on became another grievance held against the Company. To deal with the food crisis of 1925 the government decided to import some 250 trucks and transport vehicles from abroad, in order to speed up emergency food delivery from the India[135]. The costs were high, at 18million Qran, or 8% of government revenues that year. In the process, the undeveloped state of roads and transport infrastructure and fuel provision throughout the country was made adamantly clear[136]. In that instance Britain managed to project a more positive image through the sale of grain from India and agreeing to extend emergency credit through the Imperial Bank. However, the fact that APOC operated some 600 vehicles in its Khuzestan operations, and that motor fuel from Iranian oil was amply available there and at the disposal of the British military but not in the rest of the country reflected poorly on the claim that the oil industry was benefiting ordinary Iranians.

Millspaugh's efforts at financial reform also caused friction with the landed and commercial elite who resented the newly imposed taxes, or the vociferous demands from them to pay their arrear taxes to balance the government budget[137]. In particular, the modern military that Reza Shah was building was devouring around 40 percent of the annual budgets, compared to a meager 6 percent for the Ministry of Interior and 3 percent for the Ministry of Education[138]. Millspaugh helped devise a

---

[134] *Persia, Annual Report 1922,* Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6, 381.
[135] *Persia, Annual report 1925,* Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 384
[136] *Persia, Annual Report 1926, ,* Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 581-582
[137] The new machinery of record keeping and taxation was a double-edged sword. It was used against regional established magnates, such as Sheikh Khaz'al and the Bakhtiyari Khans with great effect. Millspaugh tried to establish an apolitical technocracy in the financial administration, but of course that proved impossible and unrealistic under the circumstances. By late 1920s a new landed class of urban origin had emerged from among the military officers and close associates of the government who had used preferential treatment during the sale of state lands (Khalesehjat) after much of the customarily held territories of the various ashayer (tribes) were declared government property. See chapter 3, and Ann K S Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia* (London: IB Tauris, 1991).
[138] *Persia, Annual Report 1925*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 383.

consumer tax on tea and sugar, both vital items of popular consumption especially among the poor, as an alternative means of financing the historically desired transnational railway scheme[139]. This scheme placed the burden of the hugely expensive transnational railroad project on the poor for whom sugar and tea were staple foods and a major source of energy in their meager daily diets[140]. Needless to say the measure did not endear the American advisers to the public, but was approved by the Majles in 1925. However, the days of American financial advisers were coming to a close. By 1927 Millspaugh was offered a renewed contract with substantially reduced powers, which he refused to accept.

Meanwhile, Iranian debts to Britain had been once again on the rise, and had reached £4.5 million by 1924[141]. As Cox had predicted, once the situation in Tehran became relatively more stable after the 1921 coup, the Iranian government began, at first cautiously but then with increasing confidence, to suggest that it intended to review all existing foreign concessions. The government's argument was that Qajar rulers had granted these concessions during the period of arbitrary rule, but after the Constitutional Revolution the Majles had not subsequently approved them to bestow constitutional and legislative legitimacy. In other cases the terms of the concession had not been honored since the resources had remained undeveloped within the agreed timeframe. Although the Iranians assured APOC and British diplomats that these legal measures were not aimed at them, nevertheless Britain did not hesitate to make counter bluffs about collecting arrear debts, and tried to use a mixture of carrot and stick to forestall any such future threat. To appease matters Britain offered to reduce Iran's overall debt by almost half, on the condition that Iran would guarantee debt repayments by linking it with its most steady sources of revenue, the oil royalties or customs revenues[142]. This would have meant that any move to question the terms of the oil concession would have triggered a demand for immediate repayment of loans and blocked the government's main sources of foreign currency. The issue was temporarily postponed, but disagreements remained and mutual resentments kept building up around a number of vexing matters that remained unresolved, mainly the

---

[139] *Persia, Annual Report 1924*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 191-193; *Annual Report* 1925, 381-382; *Annual Report 1926*; 557

[140] Patrick Clawson, "Knitting Iran Together: The Land Transport Revolution 1920-40," *Iranian Studies* 26, no. 3–4 (1993): 235–50.

[141] *Persia, Annual Report 1924*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 407, 413

[142] See *Persia- Annual Reports 1926,* Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 545–557,572–573.

nature and amount of oil royalties, debt dependence, border issues aggravated by Britain's relations with the vassal states and protectorates it had carved out in Mesopotamia (Iraq) and set up in the Persian Gulf (Kuwait, Bahrain, and the city state sheikhdoms), as well as its allies in southern Iran, especially the Bakhtiyari Khans and Shykh Khaz'al.

Conclusion: The National Context of the Oil Complex in the Post WWI Era

The revolutionary years following WWI witnessed an international trend initially toward greater demand for the expansion of political representation and social justice (see chapter 4). These shifts were manifested sometimes through radical revolts, but more often through expanded franchise, parliamentarianism, and trade unions. What the rise of mass politics, and especially the labor movements, managed to accomplish was to put "the social question" on the political map in a manner that could not be ignored by elites and governments. However, by the middle of the decade the trend toward pluralism had been blunted, if not reversed by a new inclination toward embracing centralization and authoritarianism in the name of law and order[143] was manifested internationally. In Britain this reaction came to a head following the 1926 general strike. However, the reluctant movement toward the establishment of welfare state institutions continued there after the Labor Party and trade unions had reached a political compromise (chapter 4). In Iran, as we have discussed in this chapter, the complex geopolitical calculations, and perhaps an exaggerated fear of 'chaos' in the form of regional autonomous movements, laid the ground for the widespread support among the elite of Reza Shah's authoritarian centralism.

In postwar Britain, the state moved toward relative accommodation with subaltern classes, but this flexibility at home did not carry over to her colonial dominions and her spheres of influence, at least not until 1929 and the passage of the Colonial Development Act[144]. In the Middle East different authoritarian nationalist regimes emerged almost simultaneously in Saudi Arabia (1926), Turkey (1923-1924),

[143] Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton University Press, 2011).
[144] After 1929 the notion of (economic) 'development' was articulated as a new set of policies and approach to non-European dominions. See George C. Abbott, "A Re-Examination of the 1929 Colonial Development Act," *Economic History Review* 24, no. 1 (1971): 68–81; Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)," Introduction", 1–44 .

and Iran (1921-1926); or were assembled out of the fragments of the Ottoman Empire under the proto-colonial patronage of the League of Nations, like Iraq, Jordan, and Syria. These 'new' nation-states shared similar agendas in ensuring territorial integrity, building the institutions of the modern nation-state, embracing programs of bureaucratic centralization backed by a unified military apparatus[145].

As a result, Britain had few qualms in abandoning its local allies and long held arrangements in southern Iran in favor of supporting Reza Shah's ruthless centralization because it considered the alternatives to be worse and, as we have discussed in this chapter, it found its own ability to engineer events and situations unexpectedly limited by the strength of the popular and elite resistance in Iran; its own economic and strategic weakness; and by the surprising extent of discord and disagreement within the ranks of its own policymakers. While the official argument was that the unsavory alternatives to Reza Shah were chaos, disintegration, and Soviet victory; nationalism, radical egalitarianism, and mass politics were seen as equally threatening to British interests. These counter-imperial movements were especially worriesome as they seemed to cross-fertilize across borders and contaminate the subject populations in the far corners of the empire[146]. Furthermore, after the establishment of the League of Nations and the principle of national self-determination, a strategic and ideological predilection had emerged among the big powers toward the establishment of large scale "viable nation states" under the tutelage of colonial powers[147]. As a result, British foreign policy was relatively at ease abandoning its erstwhile regional allies, and committing itself to nationalist

---

[145]Touraj Atabaki and Erik Jan Zürcher, eds., *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910-1926*; Stephanie Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41* (London: Routledge, 2007); Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*; Banani, *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941*; Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*; Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*.

[146] Alan Lester, "Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geogroahies of British Empire," *History Compass* 4, no. 1 (2006): 124–41.

[147] Iraq was the case in point, where the three disparate Velayets of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra were stitched together to shape a kingdom for Faisal after he had been expelled from Syria. See Reidar Visser, *Basra, the Failed Gulf State : Separatism and Nationalism in Southern Iraq* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2005); Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–74; Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes & The Revolutionary Movement In Iraq* (Saqi Books, 2004), Part 1; Reidar Visser and Gareth Stansfield, eds., *An Iraq of Its Regions: Cornerstones of a Federal Democracy?* (Columbia University Press, 2007); Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 171–205; William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 4th ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2008), Chs.9–12.

centralizing elites so long as they were anti-communist, and even if they were mildly anti British.

This shift toward supporting authoritarian centralization had significant repercussions for the local society in Khuzestan, and affected the oil operations there. Before a decade has passed after the end of the war the local magnates, the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheikh Khaz'al, who had been closely allied to APOC and the British Government were either removed by the central government or had witnessed their political sway begin to decline permanently. However, the change was not limited to the removal of individual members of the local elite, but had far reaching and fundamental repercussions for the social and economic life in southern Iran. The pastoralist and tribal social relations and the political economies that were structured around these magnates had already been severely undermined by the devastations caused by the war and its aftermath. The removal of the tribal leadership, the increasing sway of oil capitalism and market relations, and the aggressive bureaucratization of everyday life as the central government began to take hold of the province, further accelerated the process of decline of pastoral and agrarian tribal societies. The institutions and practices of the modern nation state and extractive capitalism created new geographic and political economic webs that further connected southern Iran to larger national and global flows of capital and the upheavals that accompanied it, such as the massive movements of populations, increasingly marketized economic life, new administrative and institutional exercises of power, not to mention unfamiliar and novel scientific, political, and cultural ideas and practices. However, this integration came at the expense of the closure and violent demise of existing social and economic connections and indigenous modes of collective life.

The historical and revolutionary changes discussed in this chapter contributed to the transformation of the built environment of Abadan, and fundamentally altered the spatial and social relations between the Oil Company, its employees and oil workers, the diverse local population, government bureaucrats, and British diplomats. By the mid 1920s APOC suddenly found itself confronted directly with the central government instead of Sheikh Khaz'al. Likewise, British diplomats saw their sway over southern Iran suddenly challenged by the bureaucracy and military representatives of Tehran. The populations in the fast growing oil areas such as Abadan were a mixture of indigenous people as well as migrants coming there pulled by the attraction of wage labor and a commodified economy, or pushed there by

destitution and the destruction of their former modes of life. The urban built environment of oil in Abadan was ultimately shaped by the practices and the frictions between these social actors, which took place in the shadow of larger global and national currents during this formative period.

Chapter 3

The Oil Encounter in Khuzestan (1908-1921)

Enclosures and the Assembling of the Oil Industry in Khuzestan:

The Anglo Persian Oil Company (APOC) was a commercial enterprise; its primary purpose was to discover, produce, and sell oil and its byproducts to make a profit for its shareholders. As such it had little inclination to be tangled in a thick web of social and political obligations to local populations, its employees, or anyone else for that matter. Nevertheless, as is always the case with the accumulation of capital of any kind, the utopia of a laissez faire operation of purely technical and economic nature was just that. While in the 1908-1921 period the Company was making alliances with local magnates for protection and for access to territory for oil extraction and building infrastructure, the dynamic changed significantly in the next decade as the central government cast its authority over the province. Thereafter, APOC found it inevitable to become engaged in a widening web of social projects, ranging from education to sanitation, housing, and municipal reform, that were part of a protracted process of transformative social engineering with profound, and indeed revolutionary consequences for local society in Khuzestan. But before the emergence of what I call the reluctant paternalism that characterized APOC's reorganization in the 1920s can be discussed (see chapter 5), we need to analyze the earlier period, when no such sense of social entanglements were felt by the oil prospectors and imperial agents that were busy revolutionizing the social and physical landscape of rural Khuzestan. This chapter revisits the early oil encounter between the agents of oil capitalism, and the local society in Khuzestan, especially the Bakhtiyari pastoralists of Masjed Soleyman and the tribal Arab society of Abadan.

When the British government became an APOC majority shareholder on the eve of WWI, inevitably the Company became integral to the geopolitics of the British Empire[1]. The sway of its power in Khuzestan, coupled with the severe weakness of

---

[1] On the long-term geopolitical connection of AIOC to the British Government and the role of oil in shoring up the financial system and Sterling's global prominence see Steven Galpern, *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East: Sterling and Postwar Imperialism, 1944-1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). APOC emerged as a consolidated company in 1909, having gone through intricate deals to combine the D'Arcy Concession, the Burma Oil Company, the Bakhtiyari Oil Company, and the First Exploration Oil Company. The British Government purchased 53 percent share in 1914. The two government-appointed directors to the board were nominally non-directing. In effect,

the Iranian central government, made APOC virtually behave like a sovereign authority well into the 1920s (chapter 2). The brazen proto-colonial exercise of power was exacerbated by the constant concern over German or Ottoman sabotage during the War, or by the mounting resistance of local populations. According to the Company's official historian, APOC had imposed a "veiled protectorate in Southwest Persia"[2], and its operations could not be described as anything but a process of creative destruction of the existing local society and geography[3]. By the end of WWI, Curzon acknowledged that "the allies had floated to victory on a sea of oil"; petroleum had become an unthinkably important strategic resource[4], and the Abadan refinery had become a key supplier of petroleum products for the British military and economy, especially in the critical theaters of Middle East and Indian Ocean[5].

Table 1: Oil Production in Iran (000 barrels)

1912	1914	1916	1918	1920	1922	1924	1926	1928	1930	1932	1934
2.5	8.0	12.2	23.6	33.4	61.0	88.5	98.2	118.7	125.6	135.2	158.5

Source: Alexander Melamid, "The Geographical Patterns of Iranian Oil Development," *Economic Geography* 35, no. 3 (1959): 201

---

the British state was assured long term, and unlimited supplies of oil at preferential rates. On the original sale of APOC shares to the British government and the boardroom and subsequent corporate dynamics see Ronald Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 97–113, 158–201; Marian (Kent) Jack, "The Purchase of the British Government's Shares in the British Petroleum Company 1912-1914," *Past and Present*, no. 39 (April 1968): 139–68.

[2] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:116.

[3] The term "creative destruction" was coined by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, and was later on popularized in mainstream economic theory by Josef Schumpeter. See Karl Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848: Political Writings, Vol. 1* (London: Penguin Classics, 1993); Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008), Part 1. The revolutionary political and socio-economic changes that affected southwestern Iran during this period are outlined and analyzed in, notably, Roger Olson, "Persian Gulf Trade and the Agricultural Economy of Southern Iran in the 19h Century," in *Modern Iran*, ed. Eric Hooglund and Nikki Keddie (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 173–190; Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41*; Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of 19th Century Iran*; Ansari, "History of Khuzistan"; Gene R. Garthwaite, "The Bakhtiyari Khans, the Government of Iran, and the British, 1846-1915," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 1972): 24–44; Alireza Abtahi, *Naft va Bakhtiyari-ha* (Tehran: Moassesseh Motale'at Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran, 1985).

[4] *Times,* 22 November 1918.

[5] Abadan's output had increased tenfold to nine hundred thousand tons annually. But in the wake of the Russian Revolution and forecasting post war global expansion, the Company planned to increase production to 1.2 million ton annually and expand ports, jetties, storage facilities, and pipelines. For supply of petroleum products from Abadan to the British military, 1914-1920, see Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:289.

Oil had not been the first force of modern commercial capitalism to penetrate rural Khuzestan. Prior to the discovery of oil southwest Iran had been undergoing more than half a century of increasingly intrusive penetration of global political-economic global forces, both commercial and proto-colonial[6]. The Anglo-Persian war of 1856-57 was fought over Afghanistan and coincided with the great Indian Mutiny, but it had long lasting repercussions in Khuzestan. To fight Iran's claim to Herat the British military invaded Bushehr and Mohammareh under the command of General James Outram, who soon after returned to India to take charge of crushing the rebellion there. The Indian uprising of 1857 precipitated a change in British colonial policy and modes of governance, as the government established direct rule over a formal colony replacing the indirect commercial sovereignty of the East India Company. In Khuzestan, the superior number of Persian artillery and troops consisting of soldiers and local tribal levies under the command of Ehtesham al Saltaneh, Nasser al Din Shah's senior uncle collapsed ignominiously due to the cowardice of their royal commander. The humiliation was followed by the lack of punishment of the commander by the Shah significantly undermined the loyalty of local tribal leaders to Tehran and the Court. The subsequent establishment of direct British military presence and dominance in the Persian Gulf shifted the balance of power, giving Britain a commanding voice in shaping the local politics of Southern Iran.[7]

From about the 1880s to the 1920s the British Government of India treated the Persian Gulf and southern Iran as the natural extensions and integral parts of the Empire, and primarily as a buffer zone against incursions by rival colonial powers (chapter 2). Under relentless British pressure, the local social and economic structures and relations of southern Iran had been increasingly undermined and reshaped by the opening up of the Karun river to commercial steam navigation and merchant ships,

[6] 'Proto-colonial' because Iran was never a formal colony or protectorate, but, as chapter 2 has shown, it was very much treated as such by its more powerful imperial neighbors.
[7] Ahmad Kasravi, *Maqalat-e Kasravi*, ed. Yahya Zaka (Tehran: Ṭahouri, 1956); Lorimer, *GPG*; Ansari, "History of Khuzistan"; Manouchehr Ehteshami, ed., *Khouzestan va Lorestan dar Ahd-e Naseri (Khuzestan and Luristan in Nasser Al Din Shah's Era)* (Tehran: Mo'assesseh Motale'at Tarikh Mo'aser Iran, 2004).

and the Zagros mountain passes were made more accessible for trade with the interior plateau after the construction of a mule tracks trade by the Lynch Brothers Company[8].

These were important economic and social developments: In and around Mohammareh (later renamed Khorramshahr) and the river island of Abadan the growing flow of money and commerce led to shifts in agricultural patterns and the choice of crops. There was a steady growth in cash crops for export, such as palm dates, wool (mostly around Ramhormuz), rice (around Howayzeh and Maydavood), and opium (Dezful)[9]. The pastoralists of the mountainous regions of southwestern Iran became important suppliers of mules, drafts animals, and horses to British India, especially the colonial military there. The rather decrepit village of Ahvaz on the Karun river, once a thriving city until constant warfare and the collapse of dams and irrigation works, first in the 9th and 10th centuries[10], and further in the 17th and 18th Centuries led to its demise (see further discussion below), began to once again expand as a result of growing river commerce after the introduction of commercial steamship navigation, the establishment of the river port of Nasseri to its immediate south, and the completion of the Lynch road linking Ahvaz with Isfahan[11]. Raising cash crops for export to Basra, India, the Persian Gulf, primarily for British troops and navy; and to the Persian interior via the Lynch road had spurred the expansion of a money economy, and consequently some degree of independence from the patriarchal tribal order by individuals who could take advantage of the growing market activities. Farmers leasing land to produce cash crops for sale were hard pressed, but they were not as dependent as herders and cash croppers who were much more at the mercy of

---

[8] Shahbaz. Shahnavaz, *Britain and the Opening of South-West Persia 1880-1914* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005); Ansari, "History of Khuzistan"; Kaveh Ehsani, "Ideh," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Indiana: Encyclopeadia Iranica Foundation, 2008), http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ideh.

[9] Lorimer, *GPG*; Haj Mirza Abd-al Ghaffar Najm-al Molk, *Safarnameh Khuzestan beh Zamimeh Ketabcheh Dastour-e Ma'muriat-e Khouzestan va Gozaresh-e Barresiha-ye Ân Saman* (Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar va Mafakher-e Farhangi, 1962); Ansari, "History of Khuzistan"; Shahnavaz, *Britain and the Opening of South-West Persia 1880-1914*; Reidar Visser, *Basra, the Failed Gulf State : Separatism and Nationalism in Southern Iraq* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2005).

[10] Alexandre Popović, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999).

[11] Emam Shushtari, *Tarikh-e Joghrafiyayi-e Khuzestan*; Najm-al Molk, *Safarnameh Khuzestan beh Zamimeh Ketabcheh Dastour-e Ma'muriat-e Khouzestan va Gozaresh-e Barresiha-ye Ân Saman*; Ahmad Kasravi, *Zendegani-e Man: Dah Sal dar 'Adliyeh va Chera az 'Adliyeh Birun Amadam* (Tehran: N/P, 1944); Lorimer, *GPG*; Ansari, "History of Khuzistan"; Shahnavaz, *Britain and the Opening of South-West Persia 1880-1914*; George Nathaniel Curzon, "The Karun River and the Commercial Geography of Southwest Persia," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 12 (1890): 509–32; W.F. Ainsworth, *The River Karun* (London, 1888); Henry Blosse Lynch, "Notes on the Present State of the Karun River, between Shuster and the Shatel-Arab," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 13, no. 10 (1891): 592–510.

Sheikhs and landlords. At the same time, with prices being determined by an international market, and the subsequent reduction of food crops, farmers and local society had become far more vulnerable to price fluctuations. The increasing export of food crops from the region curtailed the available surplus, and contributed to famines during droughts or other crises that affected agriculture. Amidst these developments Khuzestan remained a desperately poor area. The relatively high dependence on fragile and decrepit irrigation infrastructure that needed high investment and organized maintenance imposed limits on commercial expansion. As a result the region was especially vulnerable to harsh climatic fluctuations, natural disasters, and devastating epidemics (see chapter 6).

However, significant as they were, none of these earlier events had as transformative a role as the 1908 discovery of oil in Masjed Soleyman, an event that roughly overlapped with the 1906 advent of the Constitutional Revolution, and the ensuing political turmoil that was further exacerbated by ravages of the WWI (chapters 2, 5, 6)[12]. At the turn of the century oil had been an important, but not vital global resource. Its principle uses were for lighting and lubricants (chapter 4)[13]. As often happens in history war was the midwife of a new international political economic order, creating a demand for oil that has never been quenched since. As a result, Britain's strategic position toward Iran shifted gradually but significantly, from considering the weak and impoverished country as a buffer state for its Indian empire, to a strategic asset of immense importance (chapters 2, 4, 5)[14].

Political turmoil across the region and in neighboring countries, and the political energies released in the wake of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, had created multiple centers of power among competing groups, ideologies, and provincial regions[15]. The disruptions of existing pastoralist and agrarian political

---

[12] See the first hand accounts of British political agents in the area: C. J. Edmonds, *East and West of Zagros Travel, War and Politics in Persia and Iraq 1913-1921*, ed. Yann Richard (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Arnold T Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941).

[13] Bruce Podobnik, *Global Energy Shifts: Fostering Sustainability in a Turbulent Age* (Temple University Press, 2005), 68–110; Morgan Downey, *Oil 101* (Wooden Table Press, 2009), 1–30; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power*, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 2008), 19–113; Martin Raymond and William Leffler, *Oil and Gas Production* (Tulsa: PennWell Corp., 2006), 1–21.

[14] Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

[15] Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashrouteh Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1951); Touraj Atabaki, ed., *Iran and the First World War* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2006); Houchang Chehabi and Vanessa Martin, eds.,

economies of the southwest by the penetration of commerce, oil capitalism, invading foreign armies, feckless and predatory khans, sheikhs, and governors, were compounded by drought, famine, and epidemics, to heap untold misery upon the ordinary population (chapters 2, 5, 6). As a result, brigandage, raids, and general violence had become prevalent. Arnold Wilson warned of the deteriorating situation in Khuzestan in 1908,

> "Sixty years ago or so there was regular traffic from Dizful to Hamadan and central Persia. Now tribal feuds have made traffic impossible and goods for central Persia must go either via the Bakhtiyari road to Isfahan, or via Baghdad and Kermanshah."[16]

This insecurity was posing a constant threat to the oil operations during a critical period where secure and growing supply lines had to be constructed and maintained, while the refinery and the shipping and export facilities were being established. To maintain the security of its operations in Khuzestan APOC, with the help of political British agents, made important alliances with local potentates, the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheikh Khaz'al of Mohammareh. By the early 1920s, APOC and the British government were running Khuzestan as a virtually independent region, a situation that began to cause increasing apprehension among urban Iranian nationalists. The perception of national impotence and mounting resentment over the declining effectiveness of the administrative apparatus of the state flamed resentment

---

Iran's Constitutional Revolution: Popular Politics, Cultural Transformations and Transnational Connections (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010); Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy & the Origins of Feminism*, The History and Society of the Modern Middle East (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[16] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 72. Arnold Wilson was a political officer in Khuzestan during this period, and later led the Boundary Commission setting the borders of Iran and Ottoman Iraq. During the war he served in Iraq, rapidly rising to act effectively pro-consul there, before becoming the co-director of APOC in Mohammareh (later renamed Khorramshahr) until late 1920s. See chapter 1

For the general situation in southwest Iran during this period Gene Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiyari Tribe in Iran* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 96–144; Pierre Oberling, *The Qashqai Nomads of Fars* (Hague: Mouton, 1974), 128–141; Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41*; Ansari, "History of Khuzistan," 203–216; Edmonds, *East and West of Zagros Travel, War and Politics in Persia and Iraq 1913-1921*; and also Yann Richard's highly informative introduction to Edmonds' book. The steady reports of mounting insecurity in British Embassy's monthly *Intelligence Summaries* regarding southwest Iran for the years 1908-1921 are quite instructive. Here I will simply note the page references relevant to matters of "security" and "tribal unrest" in Khuzestan, and areas of Fars, Esfahan, Lorestan, and Kohkiluyeh that are relevant to this story, without citing dates and occasions in order to avoid cluttering the narrative. The point is the regularity of urgent reports about these unrests in the British diplomatic narrative: R. M. Burrell, ed., *Iran Political Diaries 1881-1965* (London: Archive Editions Ltd, 1997), Volume 5, pp. 28, 66–67, 70, 80–82, 314, 329–336, 525. (Henceforth *IPD,* followed by volume and page number)

among nationalist elites, prompting a search to identify the causes of what they perceived as the chronic weakness of 'the nation'. Thus anything associated with the putatively constructed notion of 'the traditional' – such as religion/Islam, the clergy/ulama, pastoral tribes, etc. – was identified as a causal problem, and seen as the regressive elements of society and of 'culture' that were acting as obstacles to scientific modernization along the progressive model of the modern nation state[17].

This notion was articulated unabashedly by Hassan Taqizadeh, one of the most prominent constitutionalist leaders and intellectuals, himself a former religious seminary student from Azarbaijan, who ended up advocating an unconditional acceptance of European models of education, science, and economic and social norms and practices: "Iran must become Europeanized, in appearance and in essence, physically and spiritually"[18]. On the other hand, establishing a powerful and effective modern central state came to be seen as the solution, and a necessary instrument of modernizing the nation and overcoming these weaknesses and resisting exploitation by colonial powers or internal enemies[19].

Land, Property, and Social Relations in the Bakhtiyari:

According to Kaveh Bayat and Stephanie Cronin, the period after the Constitutional Revolution through WWI and the fall of the Qajar dynasty in 1925 was the juncture where pastoral nomads who at the time formed more than a quarter of the total population of the country were framed by modernizing nationalists and urban Iranians as a 'problem' and one of the main obstacles to the progress of the country; one that the nationalists believed could be resolved only through confrontation, since the tribes were mobile and military forces with a high sense of political entitlement. This sense of entitlement was rooted in a political history where the vast majority of the royal dynasties that had ruled had pastoralist origins, or relied in some form on the

[17] This was a common feature of nationalism in North Africa, and Western and Southern Asia. See for example Rashid Khalidi et al., eds., *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton University Press, 1993); Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004); James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 111-205. In Iran Ahmad Kasravi was one of the more prominent and articulate advocates of these views.

[18] Quoted in Ali Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 41.

[19] Ibid., 13–60.

tribal military coalitions to consolidate and enforce their rules[20]. The solution required the eventual elimination of tribes, perhaps not as a population but as social and military units, to pave the way for the effective monopoly of coercion in the hands of the central state, whose ultimate project was to forge a modern nation state out of the heterogeneous population of Iran[21].

The emergence of "the tribal question" and "the tribal problem" (see chapter 1 for the clarification of the term "tribal"), and the alliance of various tribal leaders with Britain and APOC were among the key motivations for the support that Reza Khan received from modernist nationalists in the 1920s (chapters 2, 5,6,7). The close relationships, contractual deals, and controversial alliances between the Bakhtiyari Khans, Sheikh Khaz'al, and APOC have been well covered by other scholars, so I will refrain from repeating all the details and simply provide a brief sketch[22]. However, I will engage in a more detailed discussion of the collective relations of production and social reproduction between the Bakhtiyaris and the tribal Arabs of Mohammareh and Abadan with the land and their physical geography, and how the rise of oil capitalism and the changing property relations that were ushered in after 1909 affected these.

The contractual deals between APOC and the Bakhtiyari Khans were centered on land transfers in Masjed Soleyman and the Bakhtiyari highlands, and for the provision of unskilled labor, as well as guards for the armed protection for pipelines

---

[20] Richard Tapper, "The Tribes in 18th and 19th Century Iran," in *Cambridge History of Iran, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, vol. 7, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 606–541; Ann K. S. Lambton, "Ilat," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Leonard Helfgott, "Tribalism as a Socioeconomic Formation in Iranian History," *Iranian Studies* 10, no. 1–2 (1977): 36–61; Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, eds., *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Gene Garthwaite, "Tribes, Confederation and the State : An Historical Overview of the Bakhtiyari and Iran," *Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, 1983.

[21] Kaveh Bayat, "Riza Shah and the Tribes," in *The Making of Modern Iran*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London: Routledge, 2003), 213–19; Stephanie Cronin, "Re-Interpreting Modern Iran: Tribe and State in the Twentieth Century," *Iranian Studies* 42, no. 3 (June 2009): 357–88; Jean Pierre Digard, "Les Nomades et l'Etat Central en Iran: Quelques Enséignements d'un Long Passé d'Hostilité Reglementée'," *Peuples Méditerranéens*, no. 7 (1979): 37–53.

[22] See Alireza Abtahi, *Naft va Bakhtiyari-ha* (Tehran: Moassesseh Motale'at Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran, 1985); Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiyari Tribe in Iran*; Stephanie Cronin, *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society Under Riza Shah, 1921-41* (London: Routledge, 2003); Arnold T Wilson, *A Precis of the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes and Shaikhs of Arabistan*, 1911; Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 226.

The archival records of British Petroleum at University of Warwick contain the following files which detail the land negotiations, the agreements between the Khans and the APOC, contracts, assessments of land measurements, and the analysis of long term consequences and mutual expectations of the parties involved: BP 69830, BP 71691; BP 70335; BP 70895; BP 70297; BP 71694.

and other Oil Company facilities. In exchange, four senior khans were allocated a three percent share in the newly established Bakhtiyari Oil Company, along with a series of negotiated cash payments and loans, in addition to assurances given to them regarding British support for the maintenance of their personal autonomy against the central government after the war[23]. No provision or guarantee from either party was made to insure that the sale and privatization of the collective tribal land should benefit the entire tribe, and not only the khans and their closest allies and clients. When in 1926, during re-negotiations with the central government Arnold Wilson, then Company Director in Mohammareh, was asked about the dispossession of rank and file Bakhtiyari as a result of this agreement, he replied that back in 1911 the central government had been weak and the khans strong. The D'Arcy Concession had given some questionable and fuzzy freedom of action to the Oil Company to enter negotiations with the Khans, which it had on at least seven occasions between 1905 and 1925[24]. Not making any distinction between the British government and the private Oil Company (after all the key negotiations had taken place interchangeably by government agents speaking and acting for the Company), Wilson displayed no sentimental loyalty to the erstwhile allies:

> "We had to adapt ourselves to the situation, and pay the khans, but this does not negate the government's claim to the land. Second, our agreement with the khans makes them directly responsible to the tribes. If they have not paid them it is their fault. We could only negotiate with the khans, not with the entire tribe. The Ilkhan and the Ilbeg were in turn responsible to pay the other khans"[25].

Although the land leased in Masjed Soleyman from the Bakhtiyaris was formally "only" 20 square miles of supposedly waterless and arid scrub situated in the rugged highlands of Zagros, nevertheless it had a vital role to play in the Bakhtiyari collective and pastoral political economy. The adventurer and intelligence gatherer Henri Layard, who travelled to the region in disguise in mid 19th century, and whose romantic travelogue inspired successive generations of Victorian and colonial visitors, wrote of Masjed Soleyman, "There is no spot in Khuzistan [in the original] to which

---

[23] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:114–128. See also previous footnote
[24] The text of the D'Arcy concession is available in Ibid., 1:640–646.
[25] BP 71183, A.T. Wilson "Bakhtiyari Relations and Land Purchases", February 24, 1926

so many legends attach as to the Musjedi-Suleiman, and it is looked upon by the Lurs as a place of peculiar sanctity"[26]. Nor was the land as desolate and barren as the prospecting oilmen wanted it to be. A brief analysis of the social and legal structure of the *Il* can provide an insight into the frictions that ensued between the Oil Company, the Bakhtiyari Khans, and the rank and file women and men of the *Il*.

Migrating pastoralists were organized in clans and sub-clans; in the case of the Bakhtiyari these were called *Tayefeh, Tireh, Tosh*; each under white beards (*Rish Sefid*), headman (*Kadkhoda*), chief (*Kalantar*), and higher Khans[27]. Since the 19th century the Qajar central state, which was itself of Turkoman tribal origin, was increasingly feeble and unable to project authority across its territory. As a solution it had adopted and continued the medieval practice of *Iqta'*, or the bestowal and the farming out (pending on the period and context) of territories and regional governorships in exchange for tax collection and military levies[28]. It had also continued the Safavid practice of organizing the tribes into confederacies and, in the case of Bakhtiyaris, claiming the right to appoint the *Ilkhan* and the *Ilbeg* the two paramount chieftains, as the means of ruling through proxy by confirming leaders who were from among the tribal aristocracy, but through their appointment by the state became go betweens, and effectively dependent on it for their status; a situation that made them vulnerable to manipulation and internal rivalries fostered by Tehran[29].

---

[26] Austen Henry Layard, *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, Including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes Before the Discovery of Nineveh* (London: J. Murray, 1887), V.2, 265–269.

[27] On the general social and political structures of Iranian *Ilat* and *Ashayer* see Javad Safinejad, "Il-e Bakhtiyari," *Kayhan-e Farhangi*, no. 264/265 (November 2008): 30–37; Sekandar Amanollahi Baharvand, "Nezam-e Ejetma'i-Siasi Il-e Baharvand va Taghir va Tahavol-e An," in *Ketab-e Agah: Ilat va Ashayer* (Tehran: Agah, 1984), 102–29; T. Firouzan, "Dar Bareh Tarkib va Sazman-e Ilat va Ashayer-e Iran," in *Ketab-e Agah: Ilat va Ashayer* (Tehran: Agah, 1984), 7–62; Lambton, "Ilat".

[28] Ahmad Naqibzadeh, *Dowlat-e Reza Shah va Nezam-e Ili* (Tehran: Markaz-e Asnad-e Enqelab-e Eslami, 2000); Ann K S Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia* (London: IB Tauris, 1991); Claude Cahen, "L'Evolution de l'Iqta' du IXe Au XIIIe Siècle: Contribution a une Histoire Comparée des Sociétés Médiévales," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 1953): 25–52; Ilya Petroshevskii, *Keshavarzi va Monasebat-e Arzi dar Iran-e Ahd-e Moghol [Agriculture and Landownership in Iran during the Mongol Reign]*, ed. and transl. Karim Keshavarz (Tehran: Mo'assesseh-ye Motale'at va Tahqiqat-e Ejtema'i, 1965).

[29] Lambton, "Ilat"; Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiyari Tribe in Iran*; Oberling, *The Qashqai Nomads of Fars*; Fredrik Barth, *Nomads of South Persia* (Boston: Little Brown, 1961); Jacob Black-Michaud, *Sheep and Land : the Economics of Power in a Tribal Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Tapper, "The Tribes in 18th and 19th Century Iran"; Richard Tapper, *Pasture and Politics: Economics, Conflict, and Ritual Among Shahsevan Nomads of Northwestern Iran* (New York: Academic Press, 1979); Digard, "Les Nomades et l'Etat Central en Iran: Quelques Enséignements d'un Long Passé d'Hostilité Reglementée'."

Regarding access to land and territory, the Bakhtiyari system operated along a collective system of reciprocity and mutual access to pasture that had significant internal variations and geographic flexibility and fluidity built into it. Ilya Petroshevsky, the Soviet orientalist who studied medieval land tenure systems under the Mongol Ilkhans, describes the system as essentially a hybrid of feudal rules and collective patriarchal arrangements where,

> "…Legally pasture, or '*yurt*' was collectively owned by the tribe and its leaders. The use of pasture was collective… migration and pasturing of livestock were collective activities. Although the Amir (leader) of the tribe, his immediate entourage and lieutenants, and the elders of the *Il* controlled pasture land and exercised authority over it and led the seasonal migration, nevertheless they did not dare prohibit their followers from using pastureland, or to sell the pasture, or in one way or another transfer its ownership to outsiders. These lands were transferred together with the office and the title of the leader of the tribe, clans, and sub-sections… this type of feudal landownership was integral to the military and political structure, and the social organization of the pastoralists. It was also conditional on their reciprocal obligations to supply military levies and the performance of other *Iqta'* duties [to the hierarchy of the *Il* and also to the central state]"[30]

In other words, within this general system, which had considerable historical and regional variations, the Khans performed a double function, as intermediaries between the tribal confederacy (*Il*) and the central state, as well as a vital role of internal leadership and coordination within a heterogeneous and highly diverse, martial, and mobile population. The relationship of ordinary Bakhtiyaris with their khans was one of mutual dependence, not of pure hierarchy[31]. At least until the period under study the power of the khans depended, especially when it came to internal tribal relations and rivalries, on the support they could garner among the rank and file[32].

---

[30]Petroshevskii, *Keshavarzi va Monasebat-e Arzi dar Iran-e Ahd-e Moghol*, v.1,77–80 .
[31] Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, 283–285, 288–289.
[32] See for example Layard's description of the charismatic popularity of Mohammad Taqi Khan; Wilson's discussion of the importance of Samsam al Saltaneh's recognized leadership qualities; or Sepehr's analysis of the vital role that was played by prominent Khans in stirring the Confederacy through challenging historical junctures. SeeLesan al Saltaneh Sepehr, *Tarikh-e Bakhtiyari* (Tehran:

> "I went to see the Bakhtiyari Khans at Ab-bid on the Karun River above Shushtar. Big men with big escorts and small minds – but able as no one else to keep the tribes they govern from fighting with each other or, to any considerable extent, with their neighbors. Their faults are many, but they have made it possible for the Oil Company to develop their Oilfield at Masjid Sulaiman without a day's interruption of work. That would have been quite impossible anywhere else in Persia, except, of course, Arabistan [Khouzestan], where the Shaikh of Mohammerah [Khaz'al] is supreme. My only fear is that their ambitions may lead them into courses which they have not the strength or inward unity to pursue to a successful conclusion"[33]

While the Bakhtiyaris were the subject of extensive orientalist studies by successive British political agents and scholars from mid 19th century to the 1920s; recent ethnographies and historical anthropologies by more critical post-colonial scholars, as well as a number of social histories written by the leaders and scholars from among the *Il* itself, have recast the complex internal social relations of the *Il* into a less instrumental and more historical framework[34]. A brief summary of the findings from this more recent scholarship provides a better general picture of the social conditions of the *Il* when the oil encounter with APOC took place in the first decades of the 20th century.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Bakhtiyaris were divided into two major branches, *Haft Lang* and *Chahar Lang*, that together constituted the largest tribal confederacy in Iran in terms of population. Predominantly pastoralists, they were inclined to shun all trades and crafts, nor in general would they inter-marry with outsiders engaged in commerce, industry, or urban economic activities. Highly

---

Yasavoli, 1982); Austen Henry Layard, *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, Including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh* (London: J. Murray, 1887); Arnold T Wilson, "The Bakhtiyaris," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 3 (1926): 205–23.

[33] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 226.

[34] Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41*; Jean Pierre Digard, *Techniques Des Nomades Baxtyâri d'Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Jean-Pierre Digard and Asqar Karimi, "Amalkard-e Sakhtar-e Enshe'abi va Sakhtar-e Qodrat dar Jame'eh-e Ili va Kouchneshin-e Bakhtiyari," *Tahqiqat-e Joghrafiyaii*, no. 15 (1990): 182–253; Asqar Karimi, "Nezam-e Malekiyat-e Arzi dar Il-e Bakhtiyari," *Honar va Mardom*, no. 189/190 (August 1978): 67–83; Asqar Karimi, "Damdari dar Il-e Bakhtiyari," *Honar va Mardom*, no. 129/130 (1973): 42–55; Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiyari Tribe in Iran*; Sepehr, *Tarikh-e Bakhtiyari*; Danesh Abbasi-Shahni, *Tarikh-e Masjed Soleyman* (Tehran, 1995); Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of 19th Century Iran* .

mobile and migratory, their economy depended on trade of wool and meat in exchange for other necessities, making it a symbiotic relationship with townspeople and settled villagers. This did not mean that Bakhtiyaris did not engage in agriculture, as many cultivated separate plots of land in their winter and summer quarters. However, since the rhythm of sowing and harvest did not always correspond with those of pastures and livestock grazing, agriculture was kept limited, in order not to compromise the priority of mobile animal husbandry.

This pattern changed dramatically under the impact of three major historical events: First came the intrusion of oil capitalism from 1909, which privatized substantial pastoral territories, undermined and delegitimized the vital coordinating role of the Khans in settling disputes and organizing migrations, and created an urban wage labor market that increasingly monetized economic relations to the detriment of the pastoral economy. Second, came the increasing intrusion of the central government, especially after 1922 (see chapter 2), and the subsequent imposition of universal military conscription, and the registration of all tribal territory as *khaleseh* or state land. This process culminated in the violent forced settlement of tribes in villages after 1933[35]. Last, came the nationalization of all pastures during the White Revolution of the 1960s, which effectively forced the remaining pastoralists to register their livestock and obtain government permits, a process that excluded those members of the *Il* who had meanwhile settled into permanent agriculture. Meanwhile, the developments in transportation, and increased security imposed by the military and gendarmerie, had led to the effective disarmament of the *Il* and a reduction of their ability to control territory and their seasonal migratory movements. The expansion of an urban economy also posed heavy pressure on their pastoral economies as imported meat and wool products forced many to either revert to permanent agriculture as a supplement for subsistence, or to seek wage labor or urban employment as alternative means of existence[36].

Thus Bakhtiyari economy and society were always influenced by and had to adapt to the flow of external factors, and were never as insular as portrayed by many orientalists, colonial scholars, and romantic writers of the period. However, this still

---

[35] Nader Afshar Naderi, "Eskan-e Ashayer va Asar-e Ejtemaii va Eqtesadi-e an," in *Ketab-e Agah: Ilat va Ashayer* (Tehran: Agah, 1984), 328–51.
[36] Ibid.; Sekandar Amanollahi Baharvand, "Zaval-e Kouchneshini dar Iran: Yekjaneshini Ilat va Ashayer," *Motale'at-e Melli* 5, no. 17 (2004): 155–83; Aziz Kiavand, *Hokumat, Siasat, Ashayer* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Ashayeri, 1989).

begs the question of the internal relations of property and economic activity within the *Il*[37]. The Bakhtiyaris had strict internal rules in place to regulate the number of livestock, the use of pasture, and the maintenance of an intricate balance of power among various groups and individuals when it came to overgrazing or intrusions upon adjoining territories. The role of clan, section, and tribal leaders were essential in maintaining political equilibrium, managing disputes, coordinating intricate migrations and geographic movements, and preventing frictions from breaking into open conflict in a spatially fluid social system.

During the early years after the discovery of oil APOC officials and British diplomats were hard at work trying to determine land ownership patterns and units of land measurement to evaluate property prices around the *Fields* (this was the general Company designation for all areas under its control outside Abadan) for oil wells, Company buildings and facilities, pipeline routes, pumping stations, telegraph and telephone lines, road networks, and a Company railroad, in order to draw up separate agreements with the Bakhtiyaris. The *Il*, on the other hand, had an intricate system of property designation in place that did not correspond to the liberal private property laws, but nevertheless was integral to the operation of its economy. In 1973 the anthropologist Asqar Karimi was granted a rare access to study old property deeds and land transfer contracts (*Qabalehjat, Bonchaq*) in the Bakhtiyari, some dating back to the 17th century, that had been the basis of landholdings by groups and property transfers between individuals. These contracts are written on paper (not a widely available material among the mobile pastoralists), and cite the names of the seller and the buyer (first name and the name of the father), clarify the free will of the seller in voluntarily undertaking the sale or the transfer, define the characteristics of the land (orchard, building, irrigated plot, dry land, fallow, mountain land, pasture, etc.), its specific boundaries[38], and its size (variable according to local units of measurement)[39].

---

[37] This section is mostly beholden to the ethnographic work of Asqar Karimi and Jean Pierre Digard. See the footnote 35 for references.

[38] See Karimi, "Nezam-e Malekiyat-e Arzi dar Il-e Bakhtiyari. "

[39] For example *jarib*, *dang* (1/6 of a total unit), *habbeh,* in winter territories (*sardsir*); and *man* (equivalent to 30 kgs of seed), or *khish* ('plow', a labor-based unit of land measurement calculated locally as the area that can be plowed in one day, usually with an oxen or other draft animals) in summer territories (*garmsir*). It is clear that summer agricultural land is measured by units of labor, while winter land is measured by area. These forms of property measurement were common throughout Iran, but also in Feudal Europe in different variations. See Javad Safinejad, *Boneh dar Iran*, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1988); Witold Kula, *Measures and Men* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). I have discussed the problems of property relations in agriculture and urban economy in post land reform era in Kaveh Ehsani, "Rural Society and Agricultural Development in Post-

The price of land, and the extent of authority over its further disposal are specified ("the buyer can sell at will, or retain the property, he [assuming the buyers were male] is sovereign"); and each contract is dated and sealed by a *mirza* (professional notary or secretary) or whoever had drawn the contract; as well as the buyer, the seller, and the witnesses.

Of course the notion of "specific boundaries" are very different in various legal regimes of property. The present day prevalent Lockean liberal notion of absolute private property, based on cadastral surveys, registered deeds, and the precise designation of specific and finite boundaries, is very different from the far more flexible, yet equally enforced and legally binding, notions of property used in non-capitalist agrarian or pastoralist systems[40]. Here is an example from a property title (*Qabaleh*) issued in 1602 by Ilkhan Imamqoli Khan Bakhtiyari to the sub-clan (*Tosh*) Sadeqi of the Hasanvand clan (*Tireh*) of the Mouri tribe (*Tayefeh*) who, at the time, did not possess their own pasture:

> "The first boundary is from the outflow of the *Water Springs*. From there proceed from [mountain] ridge to ridge until you reach the *Snowline* on to *Tent Pitch Ridge*, from there veer right until you reach the trail to the *Edged Ridge*, from there proceed from ridge to ridge until you reach the highland of *Cotton Planting under Sunlight*, from there follow ridge to ridge until you reach *Do Shouran Sachmeh-ha* (where the pellets are double washed [?]). [This territory] I am granting for pasture and feeding of livestock to the price of 30 Touman. They [the grantees] can sell it or keep it as they wish; the proprietor is sovereign"[41].

In other words, the locally recognizable and individually named natural characteristics of the landscape, especially the more permanent features that are less

---

Revolution Iran: The First Two Decades.," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006); Kaveh Ehsani, "The Politics of Property in Post-Revolution Iran," in *The Rule of Law, Islam, and Constitutional Politics in Egypt and Iran*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand and Nathan Brown (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2013), 153–78.

[40] For the transition and conflict between different regimes of property see R. J. P Kain and Elizabeth Baigent, *The Cadastral Map in the Service of the State: A History of Property Mapping* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (Yale University Press, 1999), 11-52, 181-305; William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

[41] Karimi, "Nezam-e Malekiyat-e Arzi dar Il-e Bakhtiyari," 80.

prone to quick shifts with climatic or ecological change, set the boundaries of property claims, and not the geometrically surveyed, mapped, fenced, and visibly demarcated straight lines of the cadastral survey that characterize the outlines of the contemporary private property of the industrial era. However, the point to emphasize is that *the Il as a collective claimed the entire Bakhtiyari territory*:

> "In both winter (*sardsir*) and summer (*garmsir*) territories each tribe (*qabileh*) has its own specific pastures, and pitches its tents there. The boundaries of each section have been demarcated with white stones from ancient times, and according to established customs moving the stones are prohibited…The entire Bakhtiyari territory is demarcated and subdivided among sections, and each section has further divided its territory among its members. Usually, the owner of specific plots is the person who has brought irrigation and water there at his own expense"[42].

Contrary to pasture, which was open land that was collectively subdivided but had not been improved by human labor, specific plots could become individual properties once human labor and capital investment had been expended on their improvement, especially by bringing water there. This system of landownership was neither permanent nor a-historical, as property relations had been changing incessantly through warfare, inheritance, land grants and redistributions, marriage alliances, as well as monetary negotiations and exchanges. The relative power of individual khans or clans at various historical junctures played an important role in a spatially fluid system that was often open to coercive redistribution of claims to territory. According to Jafar Qoli Khan Rostami, the clan patriarch (*Kalantar*) of the Babayii tribe (*Tayefeh*) in the 1970s:

> "From the easternmost winter region (*sardsir*) of the Bakhtiyari to its westernmost summer territory (*garmsir*) there is not a single "hand-width" (*vajab*) of land without its own property deed (*bonchaq*), and whose ownership is uncertain"[43]

[42] Ibid., 69–70.
[43] Ibid., 70.

Thus, while on the surface and in the gaze of oil prospectors the Bakhtiyari territory seemed desolate, empty, and a wasteland, its boundaries fuzzy or non-existent, its ownership questionable, and its price nominal at best, in fact this was a highly demarcated territory that operated along its own intricate rules and laws of property. The territory of each section belonged to the entire section. Within each section individuals had claims to specific pieces of territory, which they could trade or sell with neighbors and other members of the section, but not to outsiders, unless *written permission* had been obtained from all section members. In other words, any transfer of property to outsiders was a collective decision that was documented within an established legal framework. Further intricate rules governed internal exchanges of land, which were not necessarily based on money changing hands. If someone wanted to use another's pasture they had to obtain formal permission for a specific duration. When crossing other sections' territory during migration the maximum right of stay on pasture was a day and a night. In case of emergencies, such as disputes, raids, theft, or illness, a migrating group could linger for 2 days and nights, or for one week to allow time for the sick to get well. To build a house on somebody else's land a pledge of alliance and cooperative labor was demanded. The redistribution of land to those with not enough was common, and was undertaken sometimes in exchange for money, other times for a share of the grain, or other arrangements. In the Kouhrang region whoever had irrigated land had the right to claim an equivalent measure of dry land to go with it[44]. The permutations were many, the flexibility considerable, but the intricate rules and regulations were in place, binding everyone from the tip of the social power pyramid to its base.

Enclosures and Oil Capitalism in the Bakhtiyariland:

The creative destruction that was ushered in with oil capitalism, and the construction of the modern nation-state undermined these mutual and collective, but also hierarchical, patriarchal, and unequal relations of property, and the balance of political power that underlined their continuation. It allowed the senior most khans to benefit personally from the privatization of the collective land and resources of the tribe, effectively at the expense of their followers. During the reign of Reza Shah

[44] Karimi, "Nezam-e Malekiyat-e Arzi dar Il-e Bakhtiyari"; Digard, *Techniques Des Nomades Baxtyâri d'Iran*; Digard and Karimi, "Amalkard-e Sakhtar-e Enshe'abi va Sakhtar-e Qodrat dar Jame'eh-ye Ili va Kouchneshin-e Bakhtiyari."

some of the Khans were physically eliminated in the 1930s as part of the strategy of centralization by destroying competing regional centers of power; but most, and their descendants, became ordinary landlords or joined the rising urban bourgeoisie.[45]

The right of different clans to specific pastures, and especially the migration routes and passages allotted to families and specific clans (*tireh*) were vital components of an intricate, collective, and martial social system that had adapted itself to a harsh climate and terrain, by using the land seasonally. In the plains of Masjed Soleyman oil fields sprawled across spring pastures and the migratory routes of several clans. The pipelines and access roads cut across and disrupted territories that were used seasonally. The agreement with the Oil Company called for hiring of Bakhtiyari guards to effectively police their fellow tribesmen from resisting or disrupting Company operations that were undermining the pastoral economy and social structures. At the same time, the employment of wage laborers from among male tribesmen began depriving clans at critical times of the year of the manpower vitally necessary for seasonal sowing, shepherding, or other seasonal agrarian, pastoral, or martial duties (more on this in chapter 7)[46]. This issue became more pressing especially after 1926, when the Company began the long-term push to replace casual, anonymous, and temporary hires with permanent and more technically trained workers (see chapters 5, 6).

The privatization of collective Bakhtiyari territory dispossessed the rank and file pastoralists, immiserated many, and undermined the Confederacy's collective social structures. A similar story unfolded with other pastoralists of southern Zagros, such as the Bahmayii, Kohkiluyeh, Mamasani, etc. who did not have a contract with Oil Company, but whose economies and social military structures were also quickly affected by the devastations of WWI; the growing impact of money and market relations throughout southern Iran caused by rising demand for opium, pack animals,

---

[45] Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, 283–289.

[46] Ibid., 283–285, 241–293; Jean Pierre Digard, "Histoire et Anthropologie des Sociétés Nomades; le Cas d'un Tribu d'Iran," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 28, no. 6 (1973): 1423–35; Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of 19th Century Iran*; Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41* .

For the similar experience of native Americans confronted by different and permanent notions of property imposed by European settlers see Cronon, *Changes in the Land*. On Iran and the conceptualization of land by governmental political power, drawing parallels with the American frontier experience see Firouzeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions* (Princeton: Princeton, 2006).

and grain[47]; and eventually the incursion of the central state. In the Bakhtiyari territories some *kalantars* (chieftains) emerged as established landlords, or consolidated their position by joining the Oil Company as recruiters and labor contractors. Others settled, either voluntarily or coercively, became farmers, or joined the bureaucracy. A few have continued the pastoral ways to the present. But most were proletarianized and flooded into oil towns (Aghajari, Gachsaran, Naft-e Sefid, Haftgel), ports (Khorramshahr/Mohammareh, Mahshahr), administrative cities (Ahvaz), railroad towns (Andimeshk, Doroud). Many joined the oil company as unskilled laborers, guards, and domestic servants swelling the population of Abadan and other oil company towns.

This process was already clear to British agents stationed in Khuzestan at the time, like Arnold Wilson, or to insightful Oil Company employees like Dr. M. Young, the famous Company doctor, who were instrumental in finalizing the land agreements with the Bakhtiyari[48]. In 1911 Wilson described the pastoral world of Fars and Zagros as a fragmented geography where "every valley is a social unit with its own leaders and headmen, its own reserves of grain, its own traditions. Civilization here is of ancient antiquity", but he went on to predict its demise. In Fars,

> "The Qavam family [of the Khamseh Confederacy] were no longer in control of the Arabs, the day would come when Saulat [Dowleh, the Ilkhan] would no longer control the Qashqai. Both tribes were well-armed and not easy to control except at the expense of a third party, viz. the villagers. Government by tribes and by great families was at an end: the system had broken down. What was needed was government by a government – the Persian Government."

Wilson went on to repeat the trope about pastoralists being little better than bandits, but in the process captured in his usual incisive way something of the political reality that had engulfed southern Iran during the first decades of the new century:

---

[47] Olson, "Persian Gulf Trade and the Agricultural Economy of Southern Iran in the 19h Century."
[48] For Dr. Young's analysis of the protracted Bakhtiyari land negotiations from 1912-1915, in the success of which he was instrumental see his correspondence in BP 70335, BP 70297, and BP 69830

"Life for a tribesman was hard and getting harder: Their leaders robbed them and were in turn fleeced by more rapacious governors; the tribesmen robbed each other, or villagers, travelers or merchants. No one cared to build, or even to sow more than he needed, lest he be deprived of the fruits of his labor... In Modern Persia the rifle is a scepter and every rifleman is a Shah"[49].

Establishing Masjed Soleyman as a Company Mining Town

From the beginning of the oil industry in 1908, the access and control over "the Fields", which included the proto urban zones and settlements that grew around oil wells, pumping stations, and service centers for pipelines and transport and communication lines servicing the oil industry, were treated jealously by the Oil Company, sometimes to the point of paranoia. When Wilhelm Wassmus, the German consul at Bushehr went for an unannounced visit to Masjed Soleyman in 1910 he was stopped by the Company's Bakhtiyari guards, and expelled from the region "looking very disconsolate"[50]. The entire region surrounding Masjed Soleyman was treated as simply off limit to anyone, and assiduously guarded as a protected enclave by APOC. By the onset of WWI the entire gepgraphy of the region had been transformed at breakneck speed:

> "In July 1915 I …visited the oilfields after an absence of a year. I did 60 miles by car, a new experience, and the last 30 through the hills on horseback. The changes made in a year are astonishing, even to me: the great 8-inch pipeline runs over two ranges of hills; a motor road will soon be complete. The cart track is far better than before. Houses are being built and store rooms, workshops, and new rigs…my friend Dr Young is more than ever the presiding genius, with a larger hospital and some good subordinates"[51]

The agreement with the Bakhtiyaris had been difficult to reach and fraught with discord. There were intense internal feuds within the various branches of the Bakhtiyari threatening any unified agreement that may be reached[52]. A number of maverick khans who felt left out, objected to the whole deal and resorted to eventual sabotage. Parviz Khan Gondozlu who owned the land around Dar Khazineh near the landing jetties on the upper Karun,

---

[49] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 184, 187, 189.
[50] FO, "Persia Summaries; Minister's Reviews", January 1910, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.5, 393.
[51] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 124.
[52] *Persia, Annual Report 1910*, "Inter tribal disputes", Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.5, 123.

> "Prevented the Company from importing grain and straw, requiring them to buy from him at exorbitant price. He demanded 80 krans a month for guards, which the other Bakhtiyari Khans were prepared to provide for 60 krans, and when theft occurred in his district and under the noses of his guards he invariably repudiated responsibility"[53].

Nor was the deal entirely amenable to APOC and the British government, who felt they could have done better. George Reynolds, the head engineer who had discovered the fields of Masjed Soleyman, had conducted the initial negotiations in 1905, during which he had signed an agreement committing the Company to pay for "uncultivated land", despite the terms of the D'Arcy Concession, which made all such land freely available. At the time of his prospecting, Reynolds had had very little choice, but now he was being blamed for committing the Company to pay more than it should have, and he was eventually fired from his position[54]. Company directors in London, and British diplomats in Tehran, who had not been present in Khuzestan when the difficult explorations were going on, now that oil had been discovered against all odds and amidst great challenges, felt that Reynolds had been criminally negligent and naïve by obligating the Company to pay twice the royalties, to the Bakhtiyari landowners as well as to the Iranian government[55].

The greatest frictions came with the central government in Tehran, which from the onset rejected the separate deals mediated by Percy Loraine on behalf of the British Government between the Bakhtyari Khans and APOC; but it had been simply too powerless to do anything about it. Aside from rejecting the legitimacy of the Bakhtiyari Oil Company and the land deal between the Company and the Bakhtiyari Khans, there was a distinct sense in Tehran that Masjed Soleyman had become effectively an occupied territory where APOC was running its mysterious affairs with open impunity, and with the collusion of the local magnates[56]. This resentment colored most official reports by the *Kargozars* (local attachés of the Foreign Ministry,

---

[53] FO, *Persia, Annual Report 1910*, "Parviz Khan", Ibid., Vol.5, 121.
[54] Ibid., 122-123
[55] Laurence Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.* (London: Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), 1938).
[56] "Report on Company activities in Masjed Soleyman and the ownership of land required by the said Company by Bakhtiyari Tribes and the Sushtar Arabs", INA, "Official Telegraphic Correspondence Regarding Labor Relations and Other Issues Concerning the Anglo Iranian Oil Company's Operations in the Province of Khuzestan (1908-1937)" (Iran National Archives, 1937 1908), May or June 1909, Serial # 144/145.

under whose jurisdiction APOC affairs were placed) to their superiors in Tehran regarding the goings on in the oil fields; and it left a lasting imprint on how relations developed between the Company and the state administration in Khuzestan. For example, in 1911 the Kargozar reported to the Foreign Ministry "The Company is installing telephone and telegraph pylons in Masjed Soleyman and Braim. It has hired more than 300 Ottoman and Indian workers…it is building roads and a railroad *and confiscating state land as well as the private properties* of Qiri Sadats [emphasis added]"[57]. In 1923 the provincial governor Entezam al-Saltaneh reported to his superiors in the Interior Ministry that the Company was acting like a sovereign state, controlling who comes and goes to the area: "A number of people from Shiraz have asked to be allowed to work and do business in Masjed Soleyman, but the Company has refused"[58]. Five years later, in 1928, the situation hadn't changed, and the Company simply refused to allow freedom of passage to the fields for anyone it disapproved[59].

A major controversy erupted in July 1926 when 500 local shopkeepers and business owners in Masjed Suleiman brought a formal complaint against APOC to the Majles for having set fire to the town's bazaar. This coincided with similar waves of violent evictions instigated by the Company in Abadan during the same period as it was trying to build a modern and sanitary bazaar there (chapter 6). The plaintiffs claimed the Company had ordered them to evict the area before starting the fire, which had destroyed 51 shops and caused 150 thousand Touman damage. The attorney for the victims had to plead with the Foreign Ministry to coerce the Company to submit to Iranian judiciary rules regarding compensation[60].

Effectively the Company treated Masjed Soleyam as its exclusive enclave, and referred to the terms of the D'Arcy concession to justify its claim[61]. The army's

---

[57] Ibid., 8 February 1911, # 174–176.
[58] Ibid., (1923) 17 (month illegible) 1302, Serial # 192–195.
[59] Ibid., Iran Consulate in Basra to Governor of Khuzestan and the Foreign Ministry, 3 April 1928, #128–130.
[60] Ibid., From the Majles to Foreign Ministry, 7 July 1926; From Attorney for the fire victims of Masjed Soleyman to the Foreign Minstry, 30 December 1926, #360003386. Thus far I have been unable to find any further reference to this significant event in the BP archives or the Iranian National Archives.
[61] Article 3 of the D'Arcy Concession stated: "The Imperial Government [Iran] grants *gratuitously* to the Concessionaire *all uncultivated lands belonging to the State* which the Concessionaire's engineers may deem necessary for the construction of the whole or any part of the above mentioned works. *As for cultivated lands belonging to the state*, the Concessionaire may purchase *them at the fair and current price* of the Province. The Government also grants the *Concessionaire the right of acquiring all and*

incursion in 1924 sparked momentary concern regarding the fate of the land contracts that had been established between the Company and the Bakhtiyaris and Sheikh Khaz'al; but Reza Khan alleviated those fears, at least for the time being. It turned out Khaz'al had moved all his *Farmans* (royal decrees) to Basra for safekeeping. The Company obtained copies and made sure they were all in order.

> "The government made no attempt to interfere with the Company's title to its lands, and it was arranged later in 1925 that all rents that were payable to the Sheikh should be paid in future direct to the Ministry of Finance…Reza Khan's visit to Masjid-i-Sulaiman and Abadan in December 1924 was a complete success and he was much impressed with the Company's achievements and prospects. While at Fields he gave orders for adequate security measures to be taken for the Company's geological parties in the Qilab and Khalafabad areas."[62]

After its ascendance in the 1920s, and the elimination of the local magnates, the central government left the control of security and administration of Masjed Soleyman to the Company; although their arrangements with the Bakhtiyaris for labor procurement and guard duty was gradually undermined, first by the appointment of army officers as security supervisors, and eventually by transferring the entire security and policing operations out of Bakhtiyari hands and under the control of the military. In March 1926, amidst mounting tensions caused by the resistance of local populations to the municipal changes being imposed by the Company in Abadan, the central government sent a fact finding mission to Khuzestan headed by an envoy, Mr. Nasr, to report on the goings on in the oil areas (see chapter 6):

> " In Masjed Soleyman some 200 oil wells have been sunk, but only 14-16 work. There is water nearby, but [a powerful merchant] Hajji Moin alTujjar claims ownership - I have not seen his Royal Grant (*Farman*) to that effect - and has made an agreement [to lease right of passage] with the company. Masjed Soleyman has ten districts [provides a list] and there are 20 thousand Lur and Bakhtiyari workmen. The Company has laid the ground and provides

---

any other lands or buildings necessary for the said purpose, with the consent of the proprietors, on such conditions as may be arranged between him and them *without their being allowed to make demands of a nature to surcharge the prices ordinarily current for lands situated in their respective localities*". Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:640. [My emphasis added]

[62] Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 16–17, 69.

> all necessities and stores. In addition there are also two peddling shops that belong to an Armenian and an Indian. There is a hospital nearby. The paved road is also leased from Moin al-Tujjar."[63]

Nasr was alarmed by the state of affairs in Masjed Soleyman and at the extent of the Company's autonomy, and became suspicious of the collusion of local merchants and the Bakhtiyaris with APOC. Regarding the Bakhtiyari guards he reported,

> "The Governor of Masjed Soleyman is a Bakhtiyari named Sardar Khan who has 50 armed foot soldiers and cavalry, and receives a monthly stipend of 10,054 Qrans. The Bakhtiyari Ilkhani and Ilbeigi receive annually £2,100 form the Oil Company for maintaining order. In my opinion these funds should be paid directly to the central government now that it is strong enough to safeguard the installations of the Company. The Policemen are also Bakhtiyari… In addition APOC pays tax to Britain [but not to Iran]"[64]

After the 1921 coup d'état the Bakhtiyari khans became increasingly apprehensive about the growing incursions of the central government and the objections it was raising to the dividends they were receiving from the joint oil company they had established with APOC and the annual £3,000 the Company paid for Bahtiyari guards to protect the Fields. The Company paid £900 of this sum directly to the Head Guard at Masjed Soleyman, the rest was divided among the senior Khans with the implicit understanding that its further distribution among the tribe was their responsibility. The four major Khans who were signatories of the original contracts with APOC were politically at odds with each other, and all were heavily in debt. They had used the revenue from the Bakhtiyari Oil Company to establish themselves as urban landlords, thus incurring the resentment and wrath of the of the Confederacy and the rank and file members of the Il. Furthermore they were old men, and the changing political situation did not bode well for an effective generational transition in a highly fragmented and personalized political system.

---

[63] "Report of Mr. Nasr, Chief of Mission to Khuzestan, to Mr. Homan, Provincial Director of Finance, Concerning APOC", 3 March 1926, INA 240029099
[64] Ibid.

APOC began changing the terms of its contracts with the Bakhtiyaris by using the leverage of the heavy debts that the Khans had incurred. It obtained their consent to integrate the Bakhtiyari Oil Company within the APOC, thus ending its nominal legal status. It then forced the Khans to pledge their company shares as well as their dividends as security for receiving further loans. The expenses the Khans were incurring for providing lavish gifts for the upcoming coronation of Reza Shah in 1926 further reduced their bargaining ability. Between 1925 and 1937 the combination of arrear taxes, escalating debts, new national laws that declared all customary tribal land as state property, and the elimination of the offices of Ilkhan and Ilbeg by the new government, which eliminated the authority of the Khans to sell collective tribal land to the Company, significantly reduced their remaining authority. In 1933-1934 Reza Shah moved to physically eliminate all the senior khans, including those who had allied with him and were serving his government[65]. By then, however, the political and economic structures of the tribal social order had been so hollowed out that the *Il* could no longer muster any effective collective and unified resistance, although local insurrections and regional clashes persisted even after the WW2.

As for the important function of guard duty for the Oil Company that had been a fief of the Bakhtiyaris and integral to the *Il*'s relation with the Oil Company from the onset, for a while both APOC and the Government thread more carefully. For the time being APOC kept paying the Khans the annual £3,000 for maintaining guards at Masjed Soleyman. The Government also did not stir the waters too much, although it made its presence unmistakably felt. The 1925 Reza Khan's visit to the Fields was soon followed by the new military governor, Sartip Fazlullah Khan [Zahedi, the future leader of the 1953 coup d'état] who appointed his nephew as "military observer", under strict orders not to interfere with the guarding arrangements of the Bakhtiyaris. Nevertheless, the nephew proceeded to do exactly that, and in the

---

[65] Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41*; Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiyari Tribe in Iran*; Ghaffar Pourbakhtiyar, "Bakhtiyariha, Naft va Dowlat-e Engelis [Bakhtiyaris, Oil, and the English Government]," *Motale'at-e Tarikhi* 5, no. 22 (2008): 83–96; Arnold T Wilson, "The Bakhtiyaris," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 3 (1926): 205–23; Rudi Matthee, "Transforming Dangerous Nomads into Useful Artisans, Technicians, Agriculturalists: Education in the Reza Shah Period," in *The Making of Modern Iran*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London: Routledge, 2003), 123–45; Touraj Atabaki, "From 'Amaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker): Recruitment, Work Discipline and Making of the Working Class in the Persian/Iranian Oil Industry," *International Labor and Working Class History* 84 (Fall 2013): 159–75; Arash Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 70–76.

process "incurred the animosity of the Bakhtiyari Head Guard as he prevented him from extorting money from shopkeepers and others". The outraged Khans appealed to Reza Khan, who assured them that "no change was contemplated 'at present'. The Military Representative at Fields was there merely to support the tribal authorities"[66].

However, soon the situation began to change. As the remarkably productive oil fields of Masjed Soleyman began to decline in productivity, newly discovered oil fields, also located in the highlands of the Bakhtiyari country, were brought online at Haftgel and Gachsaran in 1928, and Aghajari in 1938[67]. Guard duty for these new lucrative fields was no longer assigned to the Bakhtiyaris, but to the military. However, the army was instructed to hire as many local guards from among the Bakhtiyari as it saw fit, although under the command of army officers[68]. "In 1927, the fortunes of the Khans were decidedly on the decline"[69] and the Government had assumed direct control of all provincial affairs, including in Bakhtiyari territory. The Company tried to mediate a working solution, especially regarding Masjed Soleyman.

> "During the period of Company activity in Masjed Soleyman the security of the area has been entrusted to the Bakhtiyari Ilkhani. A Head Guard from the Bakhtiyari Tribe, who resides in Masjed Soleyman, hired local guards from various local clans of the Tribe for guard duty, and the Company paid their salaries. In the past three years a junior army officer along with a few soldiers have also been stationed there, although thus far the said officer has not been responsible for the security of the Company operations. Since recently the Government has appointed a governor for Masjed Soleyman, and the area is now under the direct control of the Central Government, which has expressed its decision to eradicate Bakhtiyari rule in Masjed Soleyman, the issue of the security of the region must be reviewed. We prose either of two solutions. Either the Government should appoint a Military Governor and take direct

---

[66] Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 69.
[67] Melamid, "The Geographical Patterns of Iranian Oil Development," 208–209; James Bamberg, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
[68] "Ministry of Court to Governor of Khuzestan: Regarding His Majesty's Agreement with the Request of the Oil Company for the Appointment of Military Officers for the Protection of Haftgel Area", 2 January 1929, *Naft dar Doereh-e Reza Shah; Asnadi az Tajdid-e Nazar dar Emtiaznameh D'Arcy 1933 (Oil During Reza Shah's Reign; Documents from the Renegotiated D'Arcy Concession)*, Historical Archives 2 (Tehran: Printing and Publishing Organization of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic GuidanceHouse of the, 1999), 66–67.
[69] Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 74.

> responsibility for security, or a civilian official should be appointed under the Provincial Governor. In either case, *it is still necessary to continue the employment of tribal guards from various local clans who have the right of pasture* [emphasis added]*"*[70].

To my knowledge this is the first instance in the archival materials I have investigated where the Company relations with the Bakhtiyaris are acknowledged not as contracts between two clearly designated individual parties, as in liberal contract laws; but where one of the parties is recognized as a collective entity with customary rights to space and to the productive economic activity predicated on that territory. However, the dispossession of the Bakhtiyari collective economy had been already under way since the initial deals that their Khans had begun making with the oil prospectors and the British Government from 1909.

Later that year (1929) a major tribal insurrection erupted across southern and western Iran, which was eventually suppressed by the army[71]. In 1932 further strife occurred among the Bakhtiyaris against their khans who "had failed to pass onto other beneficiaries the sums to which they were entitled". In 1934, after having eliminated their paramount leaders, the government abolished the posts of Ilkhani and Ilbeigi (the paramount positions within the tribal confederacy), and appointed its own choice Morteza Qoli Khan as the Governor of Bakhtiyari. There ensued minor skirmishes between the army and rank and file Bakhtiyaris, and in the process some of the Company's installations were sabotaged. In reaction to these developments,

> "The Head Guard [in Masjed Soleyman] was dismissed and the armed Bakhtiyari Guards were replaced by a detachment of the *Amniyeh* [security police or Gendarmerie]. This detachment was placed under Jahanshah Khan, the son of Morteza Qoli Khan". Thereafter the Company stopped paying the annual £900 for the Guards, although it continued its payment to the descendants of the Khans as before[72].

---

[70] T.L.Jacks, Resident Director APOC, to Teymourtash, Minister of Court, 27 January 1929, *Naft dar Doereh-e Reza Shah*, 75–77.
[71] Kaveh Bayat, *Shuresh-e Ashayer-e Fars: 1307-1309* (Tehran: Noqreh, 1986); Oberling, *The Qashqai Nomads of Fars*, 155–162; Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41*.
[72] Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 74–75.

Oil capitalism and the consolidation of a centralized modern nation state transformed the Bakhtiyari society and the geography of the Zagros highlands. The accumulation of capital in oil was predicated on the production of a new built environment on the ruins of the dispossessed Bakhtiyari society. The process was carried out through alliances and contractual deals between the Bahtiyari leadership, Oil Company experts, and British diplomats. In the next section we will discuss the role of these agents of social and political-economic change before exploring their changing position within a global framework of the transformation of capitalism during the interwar years in chapter 4.

Photograph 1: Bakhtiyari Man Transporting Oil Drums in Abadan (Circa 1910)



Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Iran

Photograph 2



Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Iran

Photograph 3



Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Iran

Preparing the Ground in Abadan: The 'Contract" as Instrument of Dispossession

While the land agreements with the Bakhtiyaris were being drawn in Masjed Soleyman the Oil Company was also engaged in making a similar arrangement with Sheikh Khaz'al the Arab ruler of Mohammareh (Khorramshahr), for leasing a strip of land for a refinery on the Island of Abadan. Initially conducted by the Company chief engineer George Reynolds in 1908, they became more successful when Sir Percy Cox, the foremost British diplomat in the Persian Gulf, entered the process and concluded the contract in 1909, once again showing the symbiosis that had been established between the British state and the private Oil Company from the onset[73]. The Company leased an area with a 200-yard frontage on Shatt al Arab, with a strip of land connecting it to Bahmanshir River on the east, and further strips for pipelines, storage, and pumping stations. They obtained from Khaz'al the right to erect buildings and shape the built environment within their leased territories, as they pleased. The annual rent was agreed at £650, paid in ten-year installments, so the Company paid the *Ashayer* (Tribes) £6,500. In addition, the Company also agreed to pay Khaz'al personally £10,000 nominally as a loan, and to hire local guards. Khaz'al in turn gained the endorsement of the tribal elders, and the contract was signed[74].

Throughout its dealings in Iran the Oil Company was obsessed with contracts. Its relations with all those it encountered were always contractual. When objections were raised contracts were brought out and waived. "The contract" was the legal instrument that paved the way for the oil complex to be established in Khuzestan. Of course, it was always backed up with the threat of force, implied or explicit, military or economic. As we have discussed, Bakhtiyari property relations were also meticulously contractual, as they were in the tribal Arab areas of the province's southwest[75]. Similar to the Bakhtiyari territories the boundaries of contractual property relationships in these predominantly Arab tribal societies were not as absolute and individualized as they were in liberal private property laws. The physical boundaries were fuzzy and in line with ecological characteristics of the landscape, seasonal variations, and specific and often multiple land uses by different social actors. The rights of alienation and sales were highly curtailed and conditional. Even

---

[73] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:118–146.
[74] *Persia Annual Report 1909*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.4, 427–428.
[75] Ansari, "History of Khuzistan."

the abilities of the Sheikhs and Khans to distribute land and resources were not absolute or arbitrary, but an extension of their ceremonial and mediating functions and their official social role in the collective. As Polanyi would say, these were property contracts embedded within an intricate web of redistributive priorities and reciprocal social obligations[76]. Land and territory were on occasion, and within specific bounds exchangeable through monetary transactions. They were considered a vital economic resource, but tribal lands and pastoral territories were not fully commodified or privatized, and nor were they alienable through open market exchange.

Photograph 4



Source: Minsitry of Petroleum, Iran

The property transfer contracts pursued by the Company were fundamentally different. For one, these contracts were meant to clearly define the boundaries of the Company's absolute sovereignty and clarify the range of activities it could engage legally (see chapter 6). Even more significantly, the contracts with APOC served as a

[76] Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*.

prohibitive instrument: They were ultimately used to exclude and deny alternative claims to land, to time and labor exchanged for money, and to loyalties. Enormous efforts were devoted to draw out contracts, and particular care was taken to make sure the other party understood the content, in order to avoid any future claim of dishonesty. Arnold Wilson's description of the negotiations and the signing of the contract with Khaz'al are instructive: In May 1909 Cox sailed up the Shatt al Arab to Mohammareh in a British gunboat.

> " He exercised from the onset great influence on the Sheikh of Mohamarah but was careful not to press him unduly…It was my first experience of this kind of negotiation and of the manner in which high British officials did business. Cox was content to sit like the Shaikh on cushions on the floor, with his devoted oriental secretary Mirza Mohammad by his side. He attached great importance in devising forms of words which should not give rise to disputes and invariably drafted a clause in Persian or Arabic, and discussed it in that form…His ideal was that the Persian text should prevail, being that of the weaker party"[77]

Seemingly impeccably fair, courteous in appearance, and procedurally meticulous as this approach may have been within the classic liberal legal framework, where property is defined as a natural right and integral to human liberty and sovereignty[78], the process overlooked and simply ignored the profoundly different notions of property that existed on the ground. Property is a social and historical relationship that, among other things, regulates, facilitates, or curtails access to land and resources by individuals and collectives. Fundamentally, property is a relationship of power and as such is always open to contestation[79]. Social relations of production and reproduction are organized through and around property relations that, as a result, come in various overlapping and often contradictory forms. The legal

---

[77] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 92–93.
[78] John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (London: Hackett Pub Co, 1980).
[79] Ehsani, "The Politics of Property in Post-Revolution Iran"; Katherine Verdery and Caroline Humphrey, eds. *Property in Question: Value Transformation in the Global Economy* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2004), especially "Introduction: Raising Questions about Property" ; Douglas Hay, "Property, Authority, and the Criminal Law," in *Albion's Fatal Tree,* ed. Douglas Hay, et.al. (New York: Pantheon, 1976), 17–64; E. P. Thompson, "Customs, Law, and Common Rights," in *Customs in Common* (New York: The New Press, 1993), 97–184; Alan Ryan, *Property and Political Theory* (New York: Blackwell Publishers, 1984); Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Revised (London: Penguin Classics, 2010) .

systems upholding various property claims may include customary, religious, or secular judicial laws. These legal systems may be more or less flexible, institutionalized, or open to negotiations and interpretation, but often they are not compatible. Jesse Ribot and Nancy Peluso who have studied the enclosure of indigenous forest rights in West Africa and Southeast Asia analyze these clashes as conflicts of different claims of access to physical resources[80]. Some of these claims are "rights based" (property claims), others are based on relational and collective mechanisms of access, or altogether reject claims of legality. But each is predicated on sets of social relationships that are historically defined, and require their own mechanisms of administration, enforcement, and knowledge (of boundaries, limits, and selective inclusions or exclusions). Exclusive private property, for example, in principle requires formal records as proof of claim, absolute and enforceable boundaries, and universally applied sets of standard rules administered by a single authority[81].

Tribal territories in Abadan or Masjid Soleyman were not personal assets belonging to individuals to be disposed of as private property by the local magnates. As the legal scholar Carole Rose puts it: "'Acts of possession' are, in the now fashionable term, a 'text'; and the common law rewards the author of that text. But as students of hermeneutics know, the clearest text may have ambiguous subtexts"[82]. In this section we will attempt to "read" the new contractual property relations carved out in Abadan, that gave rise to an inevitable conflict of interpretations over different social texts. APOC's relations with its local allies, as well as its employees, were built on clearly drawn contracts that defined exclusive boundaries of sovereignty over space for each party, despite the inconvenient fact that no such uncontested institutional arrangements existed anywhere in Khuzestan.

All parties involved were clearly aware that the contracts just signed were an illusion that would be strongly resisted by Khaz'al's own subjects as well as the

---

[80] Jesse Ribot and Nancy Lee Peluso, "A Theory of Access," *Rural Sociology* 68, no. 2 (2003): 155–81.

[81] Kain and Baigent, *The Cadastral Map in the Service of the State*; Karen Bakker, "The Commons versus the Commodity: Alter-Globalization, Anti-Privatization, and the Human Rights to Water in the Global South," in *Privatization: Property and the Remaking of Nature-Society Relations*, ed. Becky Mansfield (Oxford: Oxford UNiversity Press, 2008), 38–63. For vastly different claims to space in a colonial urban setting see Brenda S. Yeoh, "Street Names in Colonial Singapore," *Geographical Review* 82, no. 3 (1992): 313–22.

[82] Carol M. Rose, *Property and Persuasion: Essays on the History, Theory, and Rhetoric of Ownership* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 117.

central government. Khaz'al signed the contract in order to guarantee British protection for his continued personal dominion over Khuzestan, "a country as different from Persia as is Spain from Italy. Without a guarantee that we would assist him to the outmost of our power in maintaining his hereditary and customary rights and his property in Persia it would be suicidal for him meet our wishes. The Home Government authorized Cox to give such assurances, and to extend them to his heirs and successors"[83]. The signed contracts then became the basis for displacing what existed there before in order to establish the oil complex.

An Empty Land and a People Without History

In chapter one the functional importance to the discourse and practice of modernization of depicting the targeted area for development as desolate and empty, and of its population as unproductive and obstacles to modernity, were discussed. This framing allows land (and nature) to be presented as a valuable but poorly treated, underused, and a wasted resource. Its emptiness invites claims of ownership and trusteeship in the name of improvement. Depicting the population as sparse and incognizant of the valuable asset they hold frames them as unproductive, lazy, and ignorant of the requirements of the forward march of history toward progress. In the process they become unworthy custodians of scarce resources that ought to be developed for the common good of the modern civilization[84]. These themes underlay the transformation of the built environment of Khuzestan throughout the 20th century, first by the advent of oil capitalism, and later on by the claims of the central state and of private capital and major transnational development institutions that implemented enormous and internationally prestigious projects commercial agribusiness, hydroelectric dams, and vast irrigation works, as well as petrochemicals and heavy

[83] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914,* 93.
[84] Nancy Lee Peluso, "Whose Woods Are These? Counter-Mapping Forest Territories in Kalimantan, Indonesia," *Antipode.* 27, no. 4 (1995): 383-406; Tania Murray Li, *The Will to Improve* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "Natural Resources and Capitalist Frontiers," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 48 (November 29, 2003): 5100–5106; Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton, *Doctrines of Development* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 23–25, 296–308; Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), Introduction, 1–41.

manufacturing[85]. This section will unpack the operation of this discursive practice as APOC began to lay claim to the river island of Abadan.

To facilitate its acts of enclosures, APOC's narrative about Khuzestan was replete with images of empty land and infertile scrub, occasionally populated by 'natives' who were not industrious enough to make the desert bloom. At the time of the first discovery of oil Arnold Wilson was a young junior officer who had arrived in Khuzestan two years before in charge of twenty Indian mounted soldiers to protect the oil fields and pipelines from Bakhtiyari and Arab raids (chapter 1). He was then appointed in 1909 to survey the river Island of Abadan before a square mile of it was leased to APOC for jetties and the refinery. He reports an ancient shrine and recounts the historical lore about the place of pilgrimage. His detailed diplomatic analyses and reports contain only scattered mentions of the Island[86], which is regularly portrayed as a desolate stretch of sand: During the negotiations to lease the land from Khaz'al Sir Hugh Barnes, of the Council of the Government of India, wrote to Cox pressing him to obtain the lease on the cheap, "for if it was not only uncultivated, but uncultivable such land was free of all cost". Barnes did acknowledge that, "It may be necessary to pay [Khaz'al] something to ensure his cordial cooperation but certainly not more than the ordinary market value"[87]. This begs the question of whether and to what extent land was generally treated locally at the time as a commodity , to be bought and sold in a property market. Archival sources, Company records, and historical studies do not support such a claim. It is fascinating that the official history of the Company (now British Petroleum) contains a picture on the opposite page to this statement of

---

[85] Elsewhere I have discussed the history and social and geographic consequences of these modernization projects in Khuzestan, which have led me to label the province as "the laboratory of modernization in 20th century Iran". In addition to oil, the province became the experimental ground for the World Bank for the development of the first major multipurpose hydroelectric and irrigated agribusinesses on the model of TVA in the global south after WW2. See Kaveh Ehsani, "Sweet Dreams; Sugarcane and the Politics of Development in Pre and Post- Revolution Iran" (Conference presented at the Development After Development, New York University, 2003); Ehsani, "Rural Society and Agricultural Development in Post-Revolution Iran: The First Two Decades"; Grace Goodell, *Elementary Structures of Political Life: Rural Development in Pahlavi Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Paul Vieille, "La Société Rurale et Le Dévelopment Agricole du Khouzistan," *L'Année Sociologique*, no. 16 (1965): 85–112; Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*.

[86] Wilson, *A Precis of the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes and Shaikhs of Arabistan*, March 1911, filed as a rare document and archival material under Arnold.T. Wilson at the British Library

[87] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:123.

the ‘desolate’ “mudflats of Abadan in 1909”, showing a date grove, irrigation ditches stretching away, and a continuous line of date groves and trees in the distance![88]

Photograph 5: Empty Land? "The mudflats of Abadan 1909"



Source: Ferrier (1982):123; Iran Ministry of Petroleum.

Date groves were the cash crop of southern Khuzestan. Palm dates adapted better than grains and legumes to the sandy soil and the sparse windfall, especially as the sea tide raised the river water, allowing a simple but practical system of irrigation to feed the groves. Since the opening of Karun in late 19th century dates had become a major component of the cash crop economy of Southern Khuzestan[89]. Perhaps the newspaper “Asr-e Jadid’s” claim was an exaggeration that “Mohammareh and the Abadan Island have millions of date trees owned by small farmers, that are being turned into the personal and hereditary property of Sheikh Khaz’al”[90], nevertheless British diplomatic surveys as well as Company accounts did acknowledge, but then

[88] ibid.
[89] Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, 327–328; Ansari, “History of Khuzistan,” 247–254; Reidar Visser, “The Gibraltar That Never Was,” *Historiae.org*, 2007, http://www.historiae.org/abadan.asp.
[90] *Asr-e Jadid,* May 14, 1915

conveniently overlooked and dismissed the significance of a poor but thriving rural community that already resided on the Island:

> "Maniuhi: [village and area in Abadan] A stretch of date plantations on the western shore of Abbadan [as it is spelled] Island extending fifteen miles along the Shatt al-Arab, and containing some 300 mud huts scattered here and there in small groups. Annual yield of these plantations is over 50 thousand baskets."[91]

George Reynolds, the energetic Company chief engineer who had discovered oil in Masjed Soleyman, was skeptical about the valuation placed on land. He predicted that with proper mechanical drainage and irrigation the land would flourish, but at present "Arab apathy renders the ground waste, and Arab avarice will prevent you getting it at the price you quote" (see chapter 6)[92]. The recurring themes of "lazy native", "fair market value of land", and of "empty land"[93] ready to be planted and made productive by energetic European agents of industrial progress if only the stubborn obduracy of the "natives" was overcome made its dispossession justifiable. Getting right the terms and the signature on the "contract", and paying the "fair market value" for the land; land that was "wasteland" and even "uncultiveable", only proved the fairness, honesty, and the immense generosity of the British party of oilmen and colonial statesmen to themselves.

The recurring image of the "empty" and "uncultivated" land was an important component of signing of the contracts with the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheikh Khaz'al. For example, Masjed Soleyman was repeatedly portrayed as a harsh, arid, and desolate plateau, yet K.C.Scott, the surveyor who mapped the pipeline route from there to Abadan later reminisced that in 1910 when he was mapping 3000 square

---

[91] "Ross, Persian Gulf Gazetteer 1908", in Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*, vol. 3-Abadan (Graz: Akademische Drucku. Verlagsanstalt, 1976), 535.
[92] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:123.
[93] "Abadan was an uninhabited mud flat, leased from Khaz'al in 1909 by Dr. Young", Stephen Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East: Its Discovery and Development*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 20. "Abadan was leased on July 1909. It was a mud flat, and without any resources…Within a few years it was transformed into a complex, industrial site, the creation of a single company in a remote part of the country", Ronald Ferrier, "The Iranian Oil Industry," in *Cambridge History of Iran, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Chares Melville, vol. 7 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 641; "From the Khuzistan oilfields, APOC then constructed a 140 mi pipeline to Abadan, an uninhabited mudflat island in the Shatt-al-Arab waterway", Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 97.

miles of territory, "when rain comes the whole country teems with people, animals, sowing, grazing, and migrating birds"[94]. Much like North America or eastern Eurasia, tropical south Americas, or most of coastal Africa, the terrain of pastoral and hunter gathering societies is used seasonally, and not permanently. Its geography is not one of permanent picket fences, barbed wires, registered deeds, and unambiguous and airtight legal contracts[95]. Its land use is selective and plural; as some of the features of the land are used only seasonally - such as grass, acorn, and brush – while others are left alone. This is in contradistinction to the monocrops of commercial industrial agriculture, which demands the permanent cultivation of land with the aid of chemical supplements (mostly petroleum based), and eradicates alternative fauna and flora as pests. However, the enclosure of this common and fluid land use, and its conversion to exclusive private property designated only for extraction of surplus capital, requires the legal fiction of the contract and its depiction as empty and worthless.

In early 20th century Abadan was populated, sparsely like the rest of the province, by the Nassar Arabs, who were totally sedentary, cultivated dates, plus some cereals, flax, and fruits. They lived in adobe houses, and politically were under the dominion of Sheikh Khaz'al in nearby Mohammareh[96]. The copious intelligence reports of the General Staff of the British India's diplomatic and military personnel posted in southern Iran provide some of the most detailed descriptions of the overall social and geographic setup in Abadan. In 1908 the island was described by the Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf in the following terms:

> "The center [of the island Abbadan [as it is spelled] is mostly desert, but the margins of the rivers, as far inland as the creeks extend, are cultivated and planted with dates; much land is now being reclaimed in the Ma'amareh neighborhood near the south end…The inhabitants are almost all Ka'b Arabs…the south coast of the island appears to be fairly firm and well marked, but there are no fixed villages on it. *Total population is reported to be about 24,000*. The two southern administrative divisions are Maniuhi and

[94] G.B.Scott, "The First Surveys of the Persian Oil Fields", *Naft*, 7 (1931): 6-12
[95] Cronon, *Changes in the Land*.
[96] Ansari, "History of Khuzistan," 23–36.

> Nassar. In each of the villages bearing these names there is a representative of the Shaikh of Muhammarah. [my emphasis]"[97].

There was also an important regional shrine, the putative tomb of the Prophet Khedhr, located on the island, which was a major center of local pilgrimage. The presumed "empty land" was in fact populated, sparsely like the rest of the province (by the contemporary European demographic standards). Khuzestan at the turn of the century was estimated to have had a population of 300,000[98], albeit within slightly different borders from the present, of mostly agrarian and pastoralist communities that made flexible and seasonal use of the land and available resources. British intelligence reports were detailed in providing information on livestock, agricultural production, and number of "rifles" (as well as ammunition and type of weapons) that any social unit could muster at various times: "The fighting strength of the southern province was calculated in 1902 to be 54,500 men…They are principally armed with a rifle of Martini pattern, of which there are computed to be at least 15,000. Cartridges are refilled locally with native power"[99]; but these were instrumental details and "no attempt [was] made to estimate the overall number of the population"[100] since the information by itself was of little practical use for political and commercial purposes.

The local social structures were tribal, in that real or imaginary kinship was the primary but not necessarily the exclusive basis of collective solidarity and action[101]. There was a constant movement in and out of the area of migrants and newcomers who worked the land by drawing agreements (contracts of a different kind) with the Sheikh, who embodied the corporate interests of the tribal confederacy. In the impoverished southern Khuzestan, date farming was a long-term investment of considerable risk and hard work. Date groves were not 'owned' as private domain, and there were a multitude of legal arrangements to take into account irrigation, the varying quality of land, its terms of ownership/possession, the contribution of various forms of labor (individual, collective, communal labor performed not directly on

---

[97] "Ross; Persian Gulf Gazetteer, 1908" in Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*, vol. 3- Abadan (Graz: Akademische Drucku. Verlagsanstalt, 1976), 5, 525.
[98] Ibid., 3- Abadan:55.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid., 3- Abadan:52.
[101] Ansari, "History of Khuzistan," 37.

productive land, but on the means of improving yields, for example in drainage or maintenance of irrigation works) etc.[102].

Officially, land in southern Khuzestan was all crown land (*khaleseh*), but given the virtual absence of any real central government authority in the province since 1857, land in general was treated as tribal communal property, vested for specific purposes on individuals or collective groups, not permanently but for a specified time frame, by the living sheikh (so not in perpetuity), without conferring on him the right of private ownership or permanent alienation as private property. Of course, the boundaries of this form of control of land were rather fluid, and a powerful sheikh, like Khaz'al who had ruled for a long stretch (ruled 1897-1925), gradually accorded himself increasingly arbitrary powers that could undermine the customary limits set on his authority over land and the population. Tribal sections or clans were settled on fairly bounded territories, but the boundaries were rather fluid and porous. Much like the Bakhtiyari territories, individuals in the Arab Ashayeri areas of Khuzestan had no permanent claims to a given piece of land, but claimed shares in the collective tribal holdings, or obtained conditional contractual rights to plots, pastures, and groves. Access to productive pieces of land shifted as individuals and collective labor groups were assigned different plots. This was not a political economic system geared toward accumulation and constant growth based on technical input and capital investment[103].

[102]Ibid., 255; Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, 324–328; Najm al-Molk, *Safarnameh Khuzesan beh Zamimeh Ketabcheh Dastour-e Ma'muriat-e Khouzestan va Gozaresh-e Barresiha-ye Ân Saman*; Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*, 3- Abadan:54–57 .

[103] Ansari, "History of Khuzistan," 255–257; Ehsani, "Rural Society and Agricultural Development in Post-Revolution Iran: The First Two Decades."; Azkia and Ehsani, "Abiyari Dar Ramhormoz" Parts 1 and 2.

Photograph 6



Source: Iran Ministry of Petroleum

Although commercial change had been affecting the social fabric of southern Khuzestan and Abadan, at least since 1857, it was the sudden appearance of oil capitalism in 1911 that radically and irreversibly transformed life on the Island. Within a short two decades immigration and the construction of the refinery and shipping facilities increased the population to sixty thousand and growing. By the middle of the century, according to the demographer Jamshid Behnam, Abadan was one of the five "leading cities" in the country, larger than Shiraz, but it was a new town "with no links to the past"[104]. In subsequent chapters I will argue that "history" is not such a limited concept as this statement suggests. Abadan certainly had a history, and as it became a boomtown, new layers were added to make it the heart of the oil complex. However, the constant reinforcement of the myth of "a land without people and a people without history" was essential to the processes of dispossession that paved the way for the primary accumulation of oil capitalism there.

[104] Jamshid Behnam, "The Population" *Cambridge History of Iran*, Volume 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) 473, (hereafter *CHI*)

Making Abadan an Oil Town: 1911-1921

Khuzestan was one of the most impoverished and least urbanized areas of Iran, itself a desperately poor country at the turn of the 20th century. "In 1900 Iran was a fairly primitive, almost isolated state, barely distinguishable as an economic entity. About one fifth of the population lived in small towns; another quarter consisted of nomadic tribes, while the rest eked out an existence in poor villages"[105]. Historical cities of Shushtar, Dezful, Ramhormoz, Hoveyzeh, and Behbahan, had small populations ranging between 7 and 25 thousand. Ahvaz was initially a large village, but it had been turning into a fast growing market town following the opening of Karun in 1880s to steamship commerce and the construction of the mule transport "Lynch Road" from there through Zagros to Esfahan[106]. Later on in the 1920s the selection of Ahvaz as the new provincial capital as well as an administrative headquarter for APOC made the town expand further. Ahvaz' commercial growth as an intermediary city between the Iranian interior and the global market was briefly thwarted in the early 1930s when the commercial river traffic effectively ended by the imposition of a government monopoly of foreign trade. However, the trend accelerated again with the growing rail traffic once the trans Iranian railroad project and a major road connecting Tehran to Khuzestan had been completed[107].

On the other hand it is accurate to say that prior to the advent of oil capitalism there had been no *urban life* to speak of (although there had been plenty of other forms of social life, as discussed in the previous section) in what were fast becoming established oil cities of Masjed Soleyman and Abadan. These oil boomtowns began to be flooded by a constant flow of migrants generated by the dismantling of customary and collective economies of pastoral nomadism and agrarian historical social and political networks. "Our unskilled labour came first from local Arab and 'Persian' villages. When word of employment and good wages spread from all over came "tribesmen", from areas as distant as Luristan, the Bakhtiyari country, Kurdistan, found their way to Abadan. These men were more robust than locals, and were

[105] Julian Bharier, *Economic Development in Iran 1900-1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 19.
[106] Lynch, "Notes on the Present State of the Karun River, between Shuster and Teh Shatel-Arab"; Curzon, "The Karun River and the Commercial Geography of Southwest Persia"; Shahnavaz, *Britain and the Opening of South-West Persia 1880-1914*.
[107] Paul Vieille, *La Féodalité et l'Etat en Iran* (Paris: Anthropos, 1975); Kasravi, *Zendegani-e Man*.

welcomed[108]". These migrants had little option but to begin adapting permanently to the new urban order increasingly regulated and shaped by bureaucratic rules, sanitary regulations, industrial discipline, wage labor, and an economy based on money and market exchange[109].

When oil was discovered in 1908 the entire population bordering the Persian Gulf was estimated no more than 2.5 million and Khuzestan, one of the most poverty-stricken areas in Iran, had a population probably no more than two hundred thousand[110]. Mohammareh (Khorramshar) was a town of five thousand, mostly Arab fishermen, farmers growing dates and grain, and tending sheep and buffalo[111]. There were some merchants and craftsmen, like ship builders, reed weavers, shopkeepers, and jewelers (Nestorians and Jews), but in general, Southern Khuzestan was an overwhelmingly rural and agrarian economy. While in the Zagros region and northern Khuzestan the Bakhtiyari khans held sway, eastern Khuzestan was the domain of the Lur tribes of Kohkiluyeh, Bahmayi, and Mamsani[112]. In southern and western parts of the province Sheikh Khaz'al was the paramount ruler, and his alliance with Britain had become close enough that Mohammereh effectively had turned into a British protectorate by the time APOC had made the decision in 1911 to build a refinery in Abadan by leasing land from him. Britain's commitment to Khaz'al were long standing and primarily strategic: Until the discovery of oil in 1908 the Persian Gulf, and especially its northernwestern coast region was perceived by the British as a pivotal defensive frontline against hostile designs by rival powers to threaten India via the sea routes (chapter 2). In addition, Khaz'al's dominance in the province helped

---

[108] George Thompson, "Abadan in its Early Days", *Naft* 4 (1931): 14-18

[109] This was a long-drawn out process, with significant ups and downs.

[110] Richard Lawless and Ian Seccombe, "Impact of Oil Industry on Urbanization in the Persian Gulf Region," in *Urban Development in the Muslim World*, ed. Hooshang Amirahmadi and Salah el Shakhs (New Brunswick: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1993), 183–212; Lorimer, *GPG*.

[111] Louis Massignon, "Mohammerah," *Revue Du Monde Musulman* 2, no. 11 (1908): 385–409.

[112] Provincial boundaries were redrawn in the 1930s, when aerial mapping and military geographers collected more detailed cartographic information, adding it to the much more detailed spatial information that had been gathered by Europeans. Present day Khuzestan contains areas in the east that had been part of Fars, and in the north and northeast, which had been part of the Bakhtiyari territories. Western boundaries, bordering the then Mesopotamia/now Iraq, were drawn finally drawn after decades of drawn out intrigue, by a joint transnational boundary commission, in the midst of the WWI. The Commission was led by Arnold Wilson (after the initial head was taken ill), and a number of prominent Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian members rounded the commissioners who travelled from Mohammareh to Ararat. The tale of the commission is told in Keith McLachlan, ed., *The Boundaries of Modern Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*; John Marlowe, *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London: Cresset, 1967).

assure the growing flow of commerce, which by 1900 had doubled to nearly half a million Pounds Sterling most of which benefited British commerce[113]. To reward his loyalty and consolidate the alliance Khaz'al was knighted in 1910 (KCIE) by the British Government of India, thus cementing a special relationship that assured British commitment to his autonomy and the continued rule of his dynasty, until they chose to abandon him in 1925, in favor of a new alliance with the emerging central government[114].

The separate British alliances with the Bakhtiyari and Khaz'al caused a great stir in Tehran, an unease that was reflected in the flurry of telegraphic correspondence between the Foreign Ministry in Tehran and its local agent in Mohammareh (called *Kargozar*), the ambassador in London, and a few other officials. The bureaucratic and diplomatic chatter reflected the mounting anxiety among Iranian statesmen over APOC's schemes and actions in the distant province, its recruiting policies, and the liberties it seemed to be taking in controlling the movements of the population, the importing of goods, and the construction of facilities, all without any concrete knowledge or seeking the approval of the central state[115]. The daily press, limited as it was, also picked up the story, especially in 1915 when word of Khaz'al rapprochement and meetings with the Sheikhs of Kuwait and Basra reached Tehran. Given the current of political developments leading to the dismemberment of the Ottoman territories in the Najd, Mesopotamia, and the Persian Gulf; the Tehran

---

[113] Ansari, "History of Khuzistan," 172–201.

[114] The terms of the 1910 Knighthood, and the British guarantees to and agreement with Khaz'al were as follows:

> "I am authorize to inform your Excellency (Khaz'al) that whatever change may take place in the form of the government of Persia- whether it be Royalist or nationalist- His Majesty's Government will be able to afford you the support necessary for obtaining a satisfactory solution in the event of any encroachment by the Persian Government on your jurisdiction and recognized rights or on your property in Persia… These assurances are given for yourself and are intended to extend to your male descendants so long as you or they shall not have failed to observe your obligations toward the central government, and shall continue to be acceptable to your tribesmen, to be guided by the advise of His Majesty's Government, and to maintain an attitude satisfactory to them".

The diplomatic report goes on to state: "the document to be handed to His Escellency [Khaz'al] for the information of his tribesmen would only differ in that in the last paragraph there would be omitted the words 'to be acceptable to your tribesmen'". *Persia Annual Report 1910*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.5, 114–115.

[115] These telegraph reports are an un-numbered file available at the *Iran National Archives* (INA). The originals, which I have studied, were perishable thin telegraphic papers that had not been filed yet. The INA at my request typed the content into a 29-page document, and provided me with a copy in 2006. The reports contain the serial numbers of each telegraph and the date. INA, "Official Telegraphic Correspondence Regarding Labor Relations and Other Issues Concerning the Anglo Iranian Oil Company's Operations in the Province of Khuzestan (1908-1937)" (Iran National Archives, 1937 1908).

newspaper *Asr-e Jadid* claimed that the meeting that had taken place between these British protected potentates was aiming to carve out a separate state from Iran and the Ottoman Empire[116]. This paranoia was not farfetched, as Wilson later admitted that at the time British policymakers had drawn a map of an independent Mohammareh, but due to the circumstances it [the map!] hadd not survived[117]. Amidst the armed conflagrations of WWI, the effective collapse of central governmental authority in Tehran, due in no small part to the interference of rival imperial powers as well as mounting calls for autonomy and a greater share of power by various segments of the Iranian society, a nationalist discourse was shaped among urban population and especially the elite, that was deeply antagonistic to the local autonomy of provincial centers of power. Nowhere was this elite nationalist anxiety more pronounced than Khuzestan, and especially the areas under APOC's effective jurisdiction.

By the end of this period in 1921, Abadan was an overcrowded boomtown, badly congested, and a seat bed of social frictions and concentrated poverty. In large part as a result of this situation, and the unavailability of infrastructure and adequate material supplies for construction on such a massive scale, there were serious debates within the Oil Company about relocating all technical refinery operations outside Iran[118]. The general circumstances surrounding the decision against this move became the basis of an emergent paternalism that is the subject of chapters 5 and 6. Meanwhile, most observers have noted some of the distinct features of these industrial cities:

> "Their inhabitants who come from the most isolated and abandoned corners of the country without any experience of urban life, find themselves in contact suddenly with a 20th Century industrial city. Thus the nomads of the Zagros and fishermen of the Persian Gulf made up the population of Abadan without having lived through any prolonged phase of transition. These new elements which have so recently arrived on the demographic map of Iran, as on that of other underdeveloped countries, are the portents of fundamental changes in the Iranian Society."[119]

---

[116] "Arabestan va Jonoub-e Iran; Haqiqat-e Owza'e Gozashteh va Tashri-he Pishamad-e Hazereh" *Asr-e Jadid*, May 14, 1915; and "Arabistan va Jonoub-e Iran", May 7, 1915; "Raje' beh Maqale-ye Arabistan va Jonoub-e Iran", May 21, 1915
[117] Wilson, *Southwest Persia*, 420
[118] Ferrier, *History of BP*, vol.1, 430, 432-433, 436-437
[119] Behnam, "The Population", *CHI* vol.1, 476

This story has often been told from the perspective of the Oil Company, the Iranian central state, and political activists championing labor rights and interests, but seldom from the perspective and the lived experiences of the ordinary local population[120] who were also integral to this encounter. This silence is partly a result of the historical sources used as well as the narrators' perspective. Thus, the historical analyses relying solely on the archives of the Oil Company or the British Foreign Office tend to produce a narrative where the APOC is effectively the sole agent of transformative modernization[121]. On the other hand, state-centered historiography tends to produce an anti-colonial and nationalist narrative that outlines and highlights the Company's exploitative and abusive practices, and juxtaposes these against a narrow interpretation of 'national interests' that are taken to be the same as the interests of the state[122]. In chapter 6 I will rely on a range of archival material, pertaining to the legal petitions and collective challenges by the local population of Abadan challenging the Oil Company's claims to property, its imposed land use patterns, and its segregated and planned urban order, as a means to investigate whether and how ordinary people of varying social and economic standings attempted to insert their claims in shaping the built environment of oil in Abadan. Looking at the oil encounter through the lens of the physical world it created reveals that in spite of

---

[120] My use of the term 'local populations' is awkward, but unavoidable. I do not intend to imply that whoever lived in the local geography experienced similar trajectories and therefore bonded as a unit. However, once Abadan began to take shape more as an urban built environment it became the site of many different life trajectories coming together and participating in its urban process. My use of 'local population' here is meant to lay the ground for a discussion of that urban process in the following chapters.

[121] This has often been the case in the literature, with the result that whichever of these major social actors are the subject of analysis they may appear as autonomous monads. For example, the architectural historian Mark Crinson, in his history of Abadan argues that Abadan was a company town that was a conglomeration of four distinct spaces: the European neighborhood, the town/bazaar where the local population lived, the professionally planned residential neighborhood that started to be built from the 1930's, and the refinery that dominated it all. Although the physical space changes according to events and architectural plans, this portrayal is curiously a-historical in that the city is conceptualized as purely the child of the company; local actors, adjoining society, even the Iranian state have only subsidiary roles and little voice in this narrative. This is also the case in other scholarly analyses that rely exclusively on British and oil company sources to construct this history. See Mark Crinson, "Abadan: Planning and Architecture under the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company," *Planning Perspectives* 12 (1997): 341–59. See also Bamberg, *History of the British Oil Company*.

[122] Abolfazl Lesani, *Talay-e Siah ya Bala-ye Iran* (Tehran: AmirKabir, 1978); Mostafa Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992); Cyrus Ghani, *Iran and the Rise of the Reza Shah: From Qajar Collapse to Pahlavi Power* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

significantly uneven relations of power the local population of Abadan were an integral part of the new political economy of oil, and not marginal and accidental to it.

Conclusion: From Formal to Real Subsumption to Oil Capitalism

Abadan's urban environment had to be carved out of the existing social order, by first fragmenting and then reintegrating it into the emerging regime of oil capitalism. The assembling and consolidation of this oil complex required its own spatial configuration and built environment of pipelines, wells, transport networks, ports, residential areas, security perimeters, and spaces of consumption and leisure. This process of creative destruction was not only about housing, food, public health, employment, property relations, and municipal infrastructure and services; but also ideology, culture, laws, novel institutions and, above all, a new spatial order. APOC's archives and publications are replete with exasperated comments by company directors and managers complaining about the relentless burden of social responsibilities placed on their shoulders as a result of the scale of urban growth in Abadan, and the extent of the social disintegration in adjoining areas. Many among them thought of themselves as rugged and pioneering agents of civilization, the Empire, and scientific progress. Others sought their fortune and a career opportunities better than what was on offer in crisis-ridden interwar Britain (see chapter 4).

The Company's emergence had coincided with global events that redefined the next era, which was almost universally understood to be an important break with the world of pre-WWI. Alternatively various critical scholars have called this new era "the age of extremes", "late capitalism", "imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism", or "the second great transformation". Michel Aglietta has argued that these crucial decades augured a new mode of regulation based on a new regime of capital accumulation, while Eugene Weber saw this juncture as the end point of the transitional period when peasants were transformed into Frenchmen. Polanyi argued that the hundred year piece had come to a crashing close, and the market economy had to be either re-imbedded in a web of social and political obligations through planning, or collapse into barbarism[123].

---

[123] Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Capitalism*; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994); Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, New Edition (London: Verso, 2000); Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press,

Certainly this was an especially critical period for the colonized world[124] marked by the beginnings of nationalist calls for political participation, by the masses as well as by the new middle class professionals and nationalist elites. It was a new era for the rising class of professionals who became critically important intermediaries between labor and capital, and took on an expanding role in the regulation of social conflict in the name of universal welfare[125] (chapter 4). In Iran's neighboring Russia and Caucasus the 1917 revolution had created a decisive historical break. For nominally independent Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, the political turmoil as well as the popular possibilities opened up by constitutionalism and the rise of nationalism were offset by the untold miseries ordinary populations were to suffer.

As I have argued in this chapter, in Khuzestan this period augured a revolutionary integration into a global[126] political and economic whirlwind that irrevocably undermined the existing social and political economic agrarian, pastoral, and tribal orders. The following decade of the 1920s saw the emergence and the intrusion of the central state and its bureaucratic- military apparatus. Oil was central to these transformations, and the sum result of the establishment of APOC and the oil complex in Khuzestan was the dispossession of customary forms of property and social organization.

Marx in volume one of Capital argues that the subjugation of labor to capital tends to begin as a formal process, with the products of labor being what matters to the capitalists, rather than who the laborer is and how they work and produce, but eventually turns into a real subjugation when capital takes hold of the entire labor

---

1976); Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, 2nd ed. (Beacon Press, 2001); Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978). Of course, for Polanyi the 1920s are just as decisive because of the crises caused by war reparations imposed on Germany, the crises of the abandonment and re-adoption of the gold standard, and the vagaries of laissez faire capitalism that led to the Great Dhad epression, the rise of fascism and Stalinism, and WW2.

[124] See Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Frederick Cooper, *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor, And The Capitalist World System* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), Chapters 2–4; Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*.

[125] See Robert Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[126] I am using the term 'global' not as a flat adjective implying the emergence of a unitary world system, but within the tradition of *Global Labor History*, as a maelstrom of transnational, conflicting, and deeply interlinked political, economic, and ideological currents (see chapter 1).

process itself, as well as the laborers themselves and their reproduction. Initially capital is unconcerned with daily lives and social organizations of those who are left with no option but to sell their labor, and even those who buy the commoditized products of that labor. However, as competitions and class strife take root, and technical knowledge and more intricate division of labor gain more importance, the continued accumulation of capital needs to gradually take hold of ever more detailed aspects of collective and individual lives in order to continue the work of extraction from nature and surplus value form people. At some stage, the formal subjugation of labor is transformed into a real subjugation, when those who have to sell their labor power no longer have access to an alternative social and economic order, and end up with little option but to consider themselves integral to the process of accumulation of capital.

Marx' reference point was England where by the last quarter of the 19th century, the organized laboring classes were no longer targeting industrial machines and the factory regime as the enemy, but had begun to negotiate a role within the industrial and capitalist order by treating their own labor power as a commodity, and pushing for improved material conditions and a greater say in the political society[127]. E.P Thompson noted that this coercive transition was profoundly cultural, and not purely material. The embodiment of industrial time and industrial rhythms in lieu of agrarian or even merchant regimes of time, based on seasons, knowledge of climate and navigation, etc. marked this passage as much as the emergence of the modern working class trade unions or electoral politics[128].

I have argued in this chapter that the establishment of APOC in Khuzestan was also fundamentally a process of primitive accumulation of capital in oil, the commodification of labor and space on the basis of enclosures and the dismantling of existing modes of collective social and economic life. The collusion of local magnates, tribal leaders, and political elites was pivotal in making this transformation

---

[127] Marx saw this shift as important but futile, and believed only a revolutionary rejection of capitalism would serve as a solution to the crises of capitalism.

[128] E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, see especially Pp. 352-403; and idem, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Michel Foucault's notion of disciplinary power is also deeply indebted to Marx, although without acknowledgment. Foucault wants to situate the discursive structures of modern power outside the time frame of capitalism, in order to avoid what he perceived as a reductionist meta-narrative in the Marxist theory that reduced the analysis of power relations to forms of property, and a narrow definition of social class. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

a reality, as were legal contracts and geopolitical maneuvers, backed by the military and economic might of the British Empire, that created conditions where ever-increasing populations were dislocated and had to move to the new urban environment that allowed the oil complex to come into existence. The assembling (rather than "the birth") (see chapter 1) of the oil industry was predicated on dismantling the existing social order, and gaining exclusive access to land that was productive for oil capitalism. This assemblage required safety, certainty, and practicality. It had to be constantly maintained and reproduced through relentless effort, technical, scientific, financial, as well as political. It had to be defended, and made acceptable to those resisting or refusing to serve it. The history of Khuzestan in 1908-1911 reveals this protracted and highly contested process of real subsumption of the existing social order to the emerging oil complex.

In the following chapters I will demonstrate that the real subsumption of labor to capital, began in earnest in the 1920s when the Company had to shift policy due to radically changing circumstances. These changes were taking place at all levels- global, national, and local- and in various domains: in the place of oil in the emerging Fordist regime of accumulation, the transformation of corporate organizations ushered in by the rise of multi national corporations, and in seismic global political shifts that included the Russian Revolution, the rise of the American prominence, the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and a changed regional dynamic, and not least in profound domestic political challenges facing post War Britain and Iran.

As a result of these shifts at global and national scales, the Qajar dynasty was replaced by the nationalist and authoritarian Pahlavi state, whose mission was to build a modern and homogeneous nation state out of the heterogeneous population and fragmented territory of Iran. Locally in Khuzestan, APOC had to reluctantly adopt various forms of paternalism, in the form of municipal welfare, public health measures, and rudimentary urban planning. These measures were undertaken initially in order to retain and reproduce its skilled labor force, and to placate the rising central state, and a mushrooming urban population. As the industry was further consolidated the necessity of making a permanent industrial working class, to replace the casual and unskilled labor force became an unavoidable priority (chapter 6).

Photograph 7: Bakhtiyari Road Workers with an Indian Foreman (circa 1910s)



Source: BP Archives

At the same time, by mid 1920s, the bureaucracy and administrative-military apparatus of the central government had begun to take shape and to lay claim to its sphere of sovereignty in Khuzestan. This administrative machinery was not purely coercive, since it had to also fill the vacuum left by the demise of Khaz'al and the tribal order. In other words, it had to display "the will to improve"[129] the general living conditions of the growing urban population of Abadan. Elaborating on Foucault's theory of power to analyze the development regime in Indonesia, Tania Murray Li has argued that modern governmental power is exercised through three levels of sovereignty, governmentality, and disciplinary power[130]. The discussion in the next chapter will show that the governmental machinery, as it was gradually assembled and asserted in Khuzestan, operated at these three levels outlined by Murray-Li: It ruled and subjugated, it sought to perform and define general welfare, and it set up a disciplinary apparatus aimed at shaping the individual. At a micro level, the local society consisting of Bakhtiyaris, Arabs, Lurs, men and women, migrants from other regions, etc. found themselves dispossessed, materially as well as socially and culturally. They were effectively coerced to first adapt, and eventually to integrate into the intertwined systems of oil capitalism and nation-state. However, this

[129] Li, *The Will to Improve*.
[130] Ibid.

integration was full of friction and turned out to be a protracted and negotiated process.

The present chapter discussed the contractual relations between the Oil Company and provincial potentates in Khuzestan, that effectively prepared the ground for the creative destruction of the existing order to make room for the emergent oil capitalism. In the next chapter I will focus on the global shifts that took place during and after WWI and changed the nature of political power and the rules of accumulation in industrial capitalism. In chapters 5 and 6 we will return to the local scale, in order to analyze the frictions between the Oil Company, the emerging state bureaucracy, and local populations over property relations and the control of land and the built environment during the interwar years in Abadan, the heart of APOC's operations in Khuzestan. Land/space was the key resource for all these actors, albeit in very different ways. How the power over shaping space was struggled over and re-allocated tells us much about the nature of the oil encounter.

Chapter 4

WWI and its Aftermath: The Emergence of the 'Social Question' and its Impact on the Oil Complex (1914-1926)

The New Bazaar of Abadan: Small Case, Big Story?

This chapter and the next two are parts of a single story: that of the controversy surrounding the building of the new bazaar of Abadan by APOC in 1925-27. But because the story is highly complex, and takes place over a long and very eventful period, in separate and far away locations (England, Iran, Persian Gulf, Abadan, to mention a few), I have broken it down into three separate chapters. The present chapter takes place mostly in Britain during the first quarter of the twentieth century when the question of "the social" was being formulated with great urgency, leading to the gradual but unmistakable emergence of the institutions of the welfare state there. By *the social* I refer to George Steinmetz' formulation as,

> "The space between the economy and political institutions which in the latter part of 19th century Europe, and from the turn of the 20th century among nationalists elsewhere, began to be increasingly perceived as "the arena of collective needs, grievances, and disruptions" against free market and state institutions that needed to be addressed in order to avoid threats to the political and economic order, and to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of the nation state"[1].

My contention is that these developments affected the corporate culture and the policy directions of APOC and the British state, especially regarding relations with labor and subaltern populations, which began to be increasingly mediated by professional technical experts of various kind. The next chapters will pick up the story in Abadan, and will analyze the oil encounter that contributed to the particular formation of new labor relations and state institutions, and the process transformed

---

[1] See George Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social : The Welfare State and Local Politics in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Jacques Donzelot, *L'Invention du Social: Essai sur Le Declin des Passions Politiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1994); Gilles Deleuze, "Forward," in *Policing of Families*, by Jacques Donzelot (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), ix–xviii; Giovanni Procacci, "Social Economy and the Government of Poverty," in *The Foucault Effect*, ed. Graham. Burchell and et.al. (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1991), 151–68.

urban politics and industrial relations. Read together as interconnected parts of a unified story, the three chapters attempt to link together the local, national, and global dimensions of the history of the oil complex by investigating how its main social agents were shaped through these encounters.

'The Social Question' and the Reconceptualization of Modern Poverty:

World War I and its aftereffects was a watershed that affected all spheres of life across much of the world. These included the nature of government and its relation to society, the attitude of political and economic elites toward laboring classes and participatory mass politics, the industrial and corporate organization of capitalism and its modes of regulation, the relation of technical and scientific knowledge to industrial production and the economy and the position of professional middle class experts who embodied its values and practices, the representative organizations of popular classes and their modes of engagement in the political domain, and mass attitudes toward traditional social hierarchies, gender relations, and expectations from material life and entitlement to economic security and having a political voice.

The list is extensive, the common point being that together these developments opened up a new domain, 'the social', as the new focus of politics and the economy at the heart of which was the unprecedented acknowledgment by advocates of reform that modern poverty in its different manifestations was neither natural nor simply the result of laziness or incompetence, but a byproduct of laissez faire capitalism[2]. As a result of poverty being reformulated as a social problem caused by the shortcomings of the market economy, ameliorating its considerable political and social fallout could no longer be entrusted to the long-standing traditional institutions of private charity, the poor laws, and patricians in charge of autonomous local governments[3].

---

[2] This was a stance adopted by many liberal utilitarians, including the father of neo classical economics Alfred Marshall, "Three Lectures on Progress and Poverty by Alfred Marshall," *Journal of Law and Economics* 12, no. 1 (1969): 184–226; Alfred Marshall, *Where to House the London Poor* (Cambridge: Metcalfe (February, 1884), http://archive.org/details/wheretohouselond00marsuoft .

[3] The debate over poverty, how it is to be defined, and the causes, consequences, and its remedies, are at the heart of the modern social sciences, especially sociology, development economics, and urban planning. In Britain, the Poor Laws system was finally abolished only after WWII. The 19th century witnessed a succession of debates and legal and institutional reforms amending the punitive workhouse rules, Speenhamland laws, and poor reliefs. Polanyi and E.P. Thompson correctly pointed out that these struggles over relief of poverty through local taxation and charity were as much about

Social policies, and the maintenance and improvement of the general welfare of the population became a central tenet for the legitimacy of the national system of governance, both political and economic. In making social or welfare policies, the impartiality of the policymakers from sectarian interests (class or otherwise), and their credentials for implementing welfare policies funded by taxation and public resources became crucial. Some theoretical/ideological interpretations, notably social democratic and progressive liberals, have presented the rise of the welfare state and the professional experts implementing its social policies, as a marked historical improvement toward greater citizenship[4]. Marxist critiques have tended to be rather divided, some supportive others highly critical of the developments of social policies and welfare state institutions. Already in 1875, when the unified German state was pioneering some of the key early social policies in a systematic manner, Marx in his "Critique of the Gotha Program" insisted against rival wings of the German socialist movement, that they ought to remain clear headed about the nature of the bourgeois state, and resist the temptation to be co-opted into collaboration by being seduced by the reformist illusion that gradual steps taken toward social improvements would resolve the fundamental conflict between labor and capital[5].

Later on, some Marxists maintained this critical assessment by pointing out that the social policies of welfare states have not led to a systematic diminishing of social inequality and economic insecurity since it has been the working classes themselves who have had to fund social insurance schemes like unemployment

---

compassion and avoidance of social unrest as about creating and maintaining a functioning and effective labor market. The turning points in replacing private and local charity for the poor with publicly regulated (and partly funded) unemployment insurance and social welfare occurred at the turn of the 20th century, with the 1905 Royal Commission on Poor Laws, the Liberal Party sponsored 1906 welfare reforms, and the pivotal Minority Report authored by Beatrice Webb.

See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, 2nd ed. (Beacon Press, 2001); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966); Ed Wallis, ed., *From the Workhouse to Welfare: What Beatrice Webb's 1909 MinorityReport Can Teach Us Today* (London: Fabian Society, 2009), http://www.fabians.org.uk/publications/from-workhouse-to-welfare/; Margaret Somers and Fred Block, "From Poverty to Perversity: Ideas, Markets, and Institutions over 200 Years of Welfare Debate," *American Sociological Review.* 70, no. 2 (2005): 260-287; Fred Block and Margaret Somers, "In the Shadow of Speenhamland: Social Policy and the Old Poor Law," *Politics & Society* 31, no. 2 (2003): 283–323; José Harris, *Unemployment and Politics; a Study in English Social Policy, 1886-1914.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Pat Thane, "The Working Class and State 'Welfare' in Britain, 1880-1914," *The Historical Journal* 27, no. 4 (December 1, 1984): 877–900.

[4] Social democratic interpretations of the welfare state fall into this category. Most notably see T.H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class* (London: Pluto, 1992).

[5] Karl Marx, *The First International and After: Political Writings, Vol. 3* (London: Penguin Classics, 1993), 339–359.

benefits or social security, while other policies, such as affordable housing, have been generally geared toward benefiting the private sector and the accumulation of capital in the housing sector, subsidized by public funds and guarantees[6].

But the range of Marxist assessments of the nature and consequences of social policies have had significant variations as they have engaged with the empirical context of their formations. For example, focusing on the historical formation of nations and nationalism, Hobsbawm saw the expansion of social policies as either necessary concessions made at the end of 19th century by ruling elites for integrating diverse populations and new social classes, such as industrial wage workers, into the emerging nations states; or as integral to the nature of the new political system of representative governments[7]. Gramsci, who died in Mussolini's prison before the post war Keynsian system of welfare state had been institutionalized, provided the means of a more subtle understanding of the welfare state through his analysis of Fordism, and his concept of hegemony[8]. While maintaining a critique of capitalism and the nation state form, Gramsci's analysis allowed the glaring question of why the social order survived in spite of the exploitative and crisis-ridden nature of the market economy to be posed.

On the other hand, scholars with greater affinity to a post-structuralist approach to social questions[9], have tended to resist the teleological interpretation that

---

[6] John Saville, "The Welfare State: An Historial Approach," *The New Reasoner* Winter, no. 3 (1957): 5–25.

[7] E. J Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 82–90.

[8] Gramsci framed Fordism as the "inherent necessity to achieve the organization of a planned economy" in transition from "the old economic individualism", through the rationalization of work by Taylorism, combined with high wages to generate consent, as well as demand, in a system coordinated by financial capital. Gramsci's central insight was the concept of hegemony, or the uneasy combination of consent (managed by intellectuals) and coercion (a credible threat by state institutions) in stabilizing a political and economic order. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers Co, 1971), 12–13, 277–320.

[9] I do not mean to imply a clear-cut distinction between these various theoretical approaches. In fact, I think the more insightful literature on the topic is eclectic, theoretically. I believe the key distinguishing factor in the analysis of the welfare state and social policies is the theory of the state at the core of the analysis. When the state is framed rigidly as the democratic representative of all citizens, or alternatively as the instrument of the ruling class, the possibility of analyzing social policies as historically contingent and the result of social contentions and frictions becomes reduced. What I mean by post-structuralism is the openness to view state actions and policies as discursive practices, as well as regulatory or coercive actions. See in particular Tim Mitchell's critical analysis of rival state theories and his argument about the state being not a 'thing' or a coherent set of institutions, but an 'effect'. Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in *State/Culture*, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 76–97.

the advent of social policies was a sign of historical progress; as well as the more instrumentalist views that see social reforms simply as ruling class ploys to avert revolution and class conflict. Here, the central question at the root of social policies such as progressive income taxation, general education, public health, municipal services, unemployment insurance, workers' housing schemes, old age pension, workers' compensation, etc, is no longer what is done *for* the working people. Rather, the central question becomes what do these policies do *to* the working people and subaltern groups, how do they regulate collective lives, discipline and co-opt individuals, and shape relations of work, leisure, gender, family, and social class.

In Khuzestan's oil producing areas, the demands for and negotiations over a range of social policies became the key bone of contention between the Oil Company, the nascent central government in Tehran, and the heterogeneous local population that was fast migrating to Abadan under the duress of poverty, warfare, and dispossession; or attracted to the lure of the expanding labor market there. Where did the ideas for these social policies come from? Who made the demands for what social policies, when, how, and why? How were social policies conceptualized and implemented? What impact did they have? How were they received? Who paid the costs, monetary and otherwise? And what sorts of benefits were gained, by whom, and against what? To tackle these questions we need to trace the notions of governance, state legitimacy, and social welfare, as they were emerging in the first quarter of the 20th century, during the global paradigm shift that culminated in WWI.

The local oil habitus in Abadan fed on these global shifts and at the same time it was an integral extension of these larger transformations beyond the province's immediate geographic borders. By mid-1920s', when the bazaar controversy in Abadan came to a head, the cast of characters making the oil complex – the British oil men, oil workers, expatriate employees, the impoverished urban residents and migrants, and the Iranian administrators – were very different from the pre-war years: Many of the same people were still there, but they had changed, and so had circumstances and attitudes, and these local social actors were now functioning in an altogether different post war universe that was gradually but unmistakably replacing the old ways of doing things. How did these larger global trends affect and shape these actors and the local oil habitus of Abadan? What did the social policies aimed at maintaining order and improving productivity accomplish?

The question of poverty as a universal social concern was first raised in the 19th century, and especially around the crises of public health caused by epidemics and contagions. Since these concerns played a central role in the re-organizations of the oil complex in Khuzestan we will discuss them in the following section before tackling the impact of WWI.

Contagion and the Politics of Prevention

The question of contagious diseases and their root causes became a central preoccupation of urban life in 19th century European and colonial cities caught in the midst of the largest wave of urbanization in history. The related processes of industrialization, the accelerating marketization of economic life, and of modern nation state building were among the major causes of this geographic revolution[10]. The population of capital cities like London and Paris grew fivefold during the 19th century as waves of destitute rural migrants were forced off the land and moved to cities in search of a living. Colonial metropolises such as Calcutta or Bombay grew as fast. The more lucky would find work in industrial wage labor, domestic service, or the remaining crafts, guilds, in menial tasks in the growing municipal services, otherwise they found themselves in poor houses or pushed into the underclass[11]. In this new urban geography, inhabited by different social classes during an era of revolutionary political and economic change, contagious diseases became increasingly associated with the foremost fears and concerns that preoccupied the middle class imagineries. As a result, contagious diseases were linked, explicitly or subconsciously, either with delinquencies, especially criminality, prostitution and theft; or with poverty; and subversive political radicalism[12]. The cure for these ills became in large part associated with notions of proper sanitation, the application of science to improve the social condition, and the role of professional experts and of state institutions to regulate social affairs.

---

[10] Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*; Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (New York: Vintage, 1996); Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Peter Geoffrey Hall, *Cities in Civilization: Culture, Innovation, and Urban Order* (London: Orion, 1999); David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[11] Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), 130–149; Briggs, *Victorian Cities*; Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*; Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London* (New York: Pantheon, 1984).

[12] As inflected, for example, in the novelistic depictions of Balzac, Dickens, or Zola. See for example Emile Zola, *Le Ventre de Paris* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1997).

Comparatively, the urban condition of Abadan in the 1920s was not dissimilar to large sections of Paris, London, Chicago, New York, or Calcutta, of the mid to late 19th century to WWI, where destitute migrants uprooted from the countryside or their homeland were eking out an existence amidst poverty and disease[13]. It is important to analyze the mentalities and the politics of prevention that emerged out of this history in order to be able to frame the dynamics of urban change in Abadan in the 1920s.

The severe cholera crises of 1832 and 1849 in Paris book-ended the upheavals of the 1848 revolution, and linked the notions of contagions with criminality and class conflict as specifically urban pathologies[14]. The notion of a "sick city, perpetually agitated by disturbances, revolts, riots, and revolutions" took the appearance of commonsense in exponentially growing metropolises where social classes had to cohabit in close proximity[15]. It is worth quoting Evans' summary of how contagion, poverty, and radical politics came to be associated within the social imaginary of mid 19th century, because it is a sentiment that still survives in various ways and colors attitudes and perceptions to various degrees in class divided societies.

> "Cholera undermined bourgeois optimism by revealing the existence in great towns and cities of 19th century Europe of whole areas of misery and degradation. Virtually all commentators were agreed from the start that cholera affected the poor more than the well off or the rich, and the widespread middle class view that the poor only had themselves to blame was hardly calculated to mollify the apprehensions of the poor. Early writers on

---

[13] This statement is to highlight the rather a-historical approach of some the social historiography of public health in Iran during the Qajar period, which tend to frame the material state of the population's hygiene and living conditions as an unchanging product of its "Islamic" as well as "pre-Islamic" cultural practices and forms of knowledge, rather than as an integral aspect of its larger and changing historical and geopolitical context. The informative and encyclopedic, but un-analytical and un-comparative, work of Willem Floor is an example of this trend. See Willem M Floor, *Public Health in Qajar Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2004).

For a comparison of the living conditions of the working people in the largest European capitals of the late 19th century see Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic--and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006); Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1973). For a novelistic depiction of Chicago in the same period see Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).

[14] There were major differences in response to epidemics and managing the dangers of contagion in different cities. For example, Birmingham had a far more successful track record in curtailing the 1832 cholera pandemic due to a combination of fortuitous location away from seaports, uncontaminated sources of water (deep artesian wells), and an urban elite willing to take energetic measures to isolate and curtail the disease. See Ian Cawood and Chris Upton, "'Divine Providence' Birmingham and the Cholera Pandemic of 1832," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 6 (November 1, 2013): 1106–24.

[15] Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes*, 11–14.

> the disease constantly reiterated the bourgeois belief that drunkards, layabouts, vagabonds, and the idle "undeserving poor" were those most affected, and echoes of this view continued to surface right up to the end of the century. In this way confidence in bourgeois society as the epitome of progress and civilization was precariously maintained by ascribing the ravages of the disease to the uncivilized nature of the poverty stricken masses. By contrast, the poor could easily interpret the relative immunity of the bourgeoisie as evidence of exploitation, injustice, and even a desire on the part of the rich to reduce the burden of poverty by killing off its main victims"[16].

Cholera was the most feared disease of the 19th century, carried to Europe from colonial India via ever faster and larger merchant ships, through newly manmade and shorter routes like the Suez Canal and the expanding railways system. It spread in port cities and industrial towns with poor water sanitation and dreadful general hygiene and living conditions[17]. In other words, the increasing potency of contagious epidemics in the 19th century was directly linked to, and inseparable from, the twin processes of the consolidation of industrial capitalism and the global spread of colonialism. In European capitals and ports as well as in the colonies the dispossession of agrarian populations was driving them to towns. At the same time, the mineral extraction and export of raw materials from the colonies was processed through a global network of port cities, linked to the rural hinterlands through improved networks of land transportation through railroads, canals, and roads[18]. In the 19th century colonial cities acted more as warehouses for the export of extracted raw materials, in the 20th century this changed, and they became factories for the partial processing of these goods, with Abadan as a typical example[19].

---

[16] Richard J. Evans, "Epidemics and Revolutions: Cholera in Nineteenth-Century Europe," *Past & Present*, no. 120 (1988): 128.
[17] Peter Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830-1930* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37–122.
[18] Robert Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London: E & FN Spon, 1997), 64–65. Birmingham was spared the devastation of the 1832 cholera pandemic in part because it had not yet been linked through railroads. See Cawood and Upton, "Divine Providence" Birmingham and the Cholera Pandemic of 1832".
[19] William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 153; William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1992).

This urbanization of deracinated populations, interconnected globally by demands of capital and colonialism, was fertile ground for deadly epidemics. The situation created a conjuncture between sewers, criminality, poverty, and social conflict. It led to the emergence of "a politics of prevention" in the second half of the 19th century where professional experts began to take a more prominent role in social affairs in an attempt to address the crisis on behalf of the entire population[20]. As the "sanitary idea" took hold of imaginaries through systematic scientific, parliamentary, and journalistic investigations by social reformers such as Edwin Chadwick, Henry Mayhew, or John Snow[21], a new consensus gradually emerged as to the causes of the spread of epidemics; but the means of its prevention remained highly divisive. John Snow's statistical investigation and mapping of London drinking wells in 1854 had proved that contaminated water and not miasma was the cause of cholera, but the appropriate policies for combating epidemics remained a highly divisive terrain. Decades of scientific research, the compilation of statistical reports, and numerous commissions of experts followed this discovery without much being done in practical terms. The main bone of contention remained how to finance and build a sanitary urban infrastructure and to institutionalize universal public health measures to deal with the dangers of contagion in vast cities and among fast growing populations.

For utilitarian liberals, such as Chadwick, who had been at the forefront of pushing through parliamentary legislation such as the 1848 Public Health Act, this created a fundamental philosophical dilemma. True to their free market ideology

---

[20] Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830-1930*, 524–563; Jane Jenson, "Getting to Sewers and Sanitation: Doing Public Health within Nineteenth-Century Britain's Citizenship Regimes," *Politics & Society* 36, no. 4 (2008): 532–56; Barrie Ratcliffe, "Cities and Environmental Decline: Elites and the Sewage Problem in Paris from the Mideighteenth to the Midnineteenth Century," *Planning Perspectives* 5, no. 2 (1990): 189–222; Anne Hardy, "Public Health and the Expert: The London Medical Officers of Health," in *Government and Expertise: Specialists, Administrators, and Professionals, 1860-1919*, ed. Roy MacLeod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 128–44; Somers and Block, "From Poverty to Perversity: Ideas, Markets, and Institutions over 200 Years of Welfare Debate"; Block and Somers, "In the Shadow of Speenhamland"; Evans, "Epidemics and Revolutions"; Johnson, *The Ghost Map*; Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Julia Ann Laite, "Historical Perspectives on Industrial Development, Mining, and Prostitution," *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 3 (2009): 739–61.

[21] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, ed. David England and Rosemary O'Day (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2008). See the fascinating critical discursive analysis of Chadwyck's parliamentary report as the basis of reform of the Old Poor Laws in Somers and Block, "From Poverty to Perversity: Ideas, Markets, and Institutions over 200 Years of Welfare Debate"; Margaret Somers and Fred Block, "Reply to Hicks: Poverty and Piety," *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 3 (2006): 511–13. Marx used these reports extensively in composing the important chapters 10 and 15 of volume one of Capital on absolute and relative surplus value. On Dr. John Snow and mapping the sources of cholera in London see Johnson, *The Ghost Map*.

liberals wanted private companies that already owned the distributions rights to improve the water supply, however there were few incentives for private entrepreneurs to invest in costly urban infrastructure for the poor[22].

Eventually, the accumulation of statistical and cartographic knowledge about contagious diseases, and the failure of a private sector solution to the pressing need for sanitary urban infrastructure contributed to paving the way for new perspectives on 'society', the appropriate role of the government, and poverty and inequality. Sociology, as the new "science of society", differentiated the intimate face to face bonds of 'community' from the more abstract rules and institutions holding together 'society', bonded within national borders, and conceptualized as an organic body[23]. The poor and the sick were as much part of this social body as the aristocracy and the middle classes. The afflictions of contagious diseases among the poor and the working classes, if untreated, eventually would infect the entire social body that had been amassed in congested cities, and therefore could not be ignored. This new conceptualization of society as a collective organism gave impetus to notions of 'trusteeship', and of the responsibility of 'men' of science and professions to discover, plan, design, and implement reformist sanitary and municipal policies on behalf of universal social welfare and progress, disregarding the resistance of narrow and particularistic communal interests[24].

In France, the quantifiable data proving that poor urban areas were worse affected, combined with the knowledge that epidemics moved geographically across national as well as social boundaries and spread through contaminated water, allowed a link to be established between epidemics and "the age old accumulation of poverty". The medical knowledge of cholera, in other words, made urban social inequality incontrovertibly visible, and turned it into a social problem affecting all[25]. The size and rate of population growth during rapid social change, as well as issues previously

---

[22] Jenson, "Getting to Sewers and Sanitation."
[23] Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
[24] Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, 2–57; Randall Packard, "Visions of Postwar Health and Development and Their Impact on Public Health Interventions in the Developing World," in *International Development and the Social Sciences*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 93–118; Frederique Apffel Marglin, "Smallpox in Two Systems of Knowledge," in *Dominating Knowledge*, ed. Stephen Marglin and Frederique Apffel Marglin (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 102–44; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; Procacci, "Social Economy and the Government of Poverty"; Donzelot, *L'Invention Du Social: Essai Sur Le Declin Des Passions Politiques*.
[25] Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes*, 13–14.

thought to be purely economic - such as the price of bread, the rates of unemployment, the quality, availability and costs of housing, and the causes of hunger -- now became recognized as critical and quantifiable factors in controlling and preventing the spread of deadly epidemics[26]. As a result, poverty came to be framed increasingly as a social ill affecting all, rather than an indication of innate inferiority or personal and cultural failure.

By the late 19th century a political shift was on the way to make preventive public health measures -- such as food security, sewage treatment, the provision of safe potable water, vaccination, etc. -- compulsory upon everyone, including the poor and destitute, through legislation and direct government intervention. This paved the way for legitimizing the direct intervention of states into a widening range of compulsory public health measures, such as food regulations and vaccination; and the provision of costly urban infrastructure, especially sewerage and piped water, to be financed through taxation. The process led to what Jane Jenson has called a new citizenship regime, where good citizenship now came to be defined as generous public spending on building public works as an indication of dedication to achieving a higher civilization[27]. The process also opened the way for professional and scientific experts to take charge of the planning and implementation of these measures. In the colonies, however, the urban reform measures were far more drastic, as we shall discuss in the following section and in chapter 6.

Sanitation and Segregation in the City

The politics of sanitation and public health did not create only an inclusive and universal dynamic of citizenship entitlement to a healthy and safe living environment. They also gave rise to a counter dynamic of exclusionary 'quarantinism' that led to the spatial segregation of the poor, the "dangerous classes", and the contaminated. The combination of the sanitary idea with the increasing commodification of urban space through speculation in landed property and housing gave impetus to the increasing social segregation of urban neighborhoods by class, race, and social difference. The rich simply moved to safer areas they could afford.

---

[26] Ibid., 30–32, 161–162, 262; David Sunderland, "'Disgusting to the Imagination and Destructive of Health'? The Metropolitan Supply of Water, 1820-52," *Urban History* 30, no. 3 (2003): 359–80; Procacci, "Social Economy and the Government of Poverty."
[27] Jenson, "Getting to Sewers and Sanitation"; Marshall and Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class*.

Technological innovations, such as electricity, commuter railways, and motorcars, allowed the more affluent to move away from dangerous and contaminated cities, into suburbs that had begun colonizing the countryside. There they could enjoy the amenities of urban life thanks to mass produced household appliances without having to live in the city, or to pay the heftier property taxes to support the construction and maintenance of expensive urban infrastructure[28]. Even utilitarian social plans such as those of Ebenezer Howard for creating unified communities of rich and poor, living and working side by side in peri-urban 'garden cities', were initially lauded as humanitarian and visionary innovations, only to be adopted and turned into idyllic and exclusive suburban communities for the rich[29].

Ironically, just as the availability of urban sanitation for all was becoming an obsession by the end of the 19th century, the new knowledge of contagious diseases also became the basis for new social strife and class conflict. The scientific correlation of vulnerability to epidemics with poverty and poor living conditions became a political weapon for the urban poor and the working classes to demand better living conditions, and to hold the propertied classes responsible for their situation; especially as they could now use quantifiable scientific data to argue that human overcrowding was not in itself debilitating if material conditions improved and there were good jobs and decent wages to go with it[30]. As for the middle classes, they could blame the prevailing "culture of poverty" in urban slums as the fertile ground for contagious diseases, and strive to avoid the danger of contamination by moving away into their exclusive enclaves. This was the dynamic that turned urban space into an intensely contested terrain of conflict and negotiation.

R.K. Home claims that Britain became the chief exporter of municipalities and urban planning measures in its vast colonies[31]. The primary driving motives, and the

---

[28] Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1986); Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing, and Family Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002); Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790 - 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979).

[29] Stephen Ward, "The Garden City Tradition Re-Examined," *Planning Perspectives* 5 (1990): 249–56; Meryl Aldridge, "Only Demi-Paradise? Women in Garden Cities and New Towns," *Planning Perspectives* 11 (1996): 23–39; Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*.

[30] Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes*, 15, 31–32, 186.

[31] Robert Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London: E & FN Spon, 1997), 1. French colonialism, as well as American colonization of its continental west augured similar municipal practices. On French colonial municipal practices see Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1991); Paul

vision that defined British-influenced urban planning and municipal reform in the first half of the 20 century were the adoption of sanitary measures against contagious diseases; as well as the related and parallel idea of racial, functional, and class segregations[32]. In Abadan the historical and epistemological context of municipal and urban improvements emerged partly out of this British and colonial heritage of sanitary measures, especially as the urgency of social reforms had become more generally accepted after WWI. There are several important aspects of these municipal and sanitary practices that I will outline below that are of particular significance to the analysis of the urban changes that took place in Abadan in chapter 6.

First, the accumulation of scientific knowledge about the causes of contagious diseases, and the implementation of policies to reduce their risk, required the populations to become visible to the scientific gaze[33]. Congested neighborhoods and mobile and anonymous populations were simply not conducive to the production of statistical knowledge. The problem was most acute in port cities were soldiers, sailors, migrants, casual workers, prostitutes, smugglers, settlers, bureaucrats, slaves, tribesmen, and workers came and went, often anonymously and without any records. R.K.Home discusses four waves of professional experts that led the assault on existing urban fabrics to replace them with a new urban geography characterized by individually mapped and registered private properties, wide avenues, sanitary urban infrastructures, residential enclaves segregated by race and class, and variations of a planned urban grid systems that would make each unit distinct and visible to inspection and evaluation. These successive waves of professional experts were land surveyors and cartographers, followed by engineers, sanitary specialists, and eventually architects and urban planners, who oversaw urban change from mid 19th century to WW2[34]. This attempt to re-engineer urban space and to modernize and

---

Rabinow, *The French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); Zeynep Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers Under French Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat, Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). On the regional and urban politics during its westward colonization in the US see William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1992).

[32] Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 160–163; Home, *Of Planting and Planning*; King, *Colonial Urban Development*.

[33] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

[34] Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, Chapter 2. Arnold Wilson was a typical example of a proficient and exceptionally capable professional who served in India, Iran and Iraq as soldier, surveyor, cartographer, ethnographer, intelligence gatherer, political analyst, diplomat, police commissioner,

sanitize it took place almost simultaneously in British cities, as well as in the colonial cities such as Singapore, Cairo, Delhi, and Calcutta[35].

Second, the "sanitary syndrome" was the scientific justification and a major driving force behind the urban transformations of pre WW2 era. However, a common feature of urban spatial re-engineering was the imposition of segregated spaces to keep apart and to hierarchically organize the population, including Europeans and various classes of the indigenous population. European colonizers tended to blame the indigenous population for epidemics; with plague represented as "the filth disease of the Chinese", and India portrayed as "a factory of plague" in international sanitary conferences like 1897 Venice, or in the growing number of scientific journals[36]. As a result, their response to sanitary reform and urban improvement tended to be coercive, albeit wrapped in scientific justification. As spatial segregation became an integral feature of the modern urban design, it generated increasing political and social friction and resentment among ordinary people at a time when the ideas of citizenship and entitlement to equal amenities were taking hold in the era of mass politics. In India, for example, the practice of urban segregation in redesigned cities in the aftermath of the 1857 Mutiny, angered the un-represented inhabitants who were expected to pay for public works, but were now being displaced to make room for modern sanitary improvements and the monumental architecture that was being

---

regional administrator, national administrator, and corporate manager. He performed these tasks successively, and often simultaneously. Dr. M. Young was another example of a standout professional expert who served APOC for over two decades as physician, public health administrator, diplomatic negotiator, political consultant, and corporate strategist. See chapters 1, 2, 3.

[35] Colonial cities, as well as designed model villages, in fact provided fertile experimental grounds for coercive innovations that would have proved too controversial at home. Brenda Yeoh's investigation of changing street names in Singapore preceding major renewal of the old urban fabric, Tim Mitchell's analysis of similar renaming of streets of Cairo and Alexandria, and the construction of model villages to house displaced peasants and to modernize them; and Dossal and King's analysis of the mapping and renovations of Delhi and Bombay provide comparative examples of similar practices across the empire, before some of these policies were implemented in British cities. See Brenda Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 54–122; Home, *Of Planting and Planning*; King, *Colonial Urban Development*; Keya Dasgupta, "A City Away from Home: The Mapping of Calcutta," in *Texts of Power*, ed. Partha Chatterjee (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Miriam Dossal, *Imperial Design and Indian Realities: The Planning of Bombay City 1855-75* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[36] Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 171; Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 75. The 1897 Indian Epidemics Diseases Act blamed the recurrence of plague on the indigenous population and proposed drastic coercive measures to deal with the problem, such as soldiers breaking into homes to inspect the inhabitants, dragging away and isolating those suspected of being ill, digging our dirt floors, applying aggressive disinfection measures, and controlling the movement of population. *Ibid*., 76

erected to glorify imperial rule. This resentment fed the rising tide of nationalism among people dislocated and forced to live in inferior areas, and without any say in how their cities were being planned.

Colonialism and capitalism had exacerbated fast urbanization and the frequency and virulence of contagions, just as they were seeking scientific methods of prevention and cure. Grand colonial urban projects were changing the cities in the name of improving sanitary conditions, but while affluent and European neighborhoods thrived the poor continued to suffer. In the two decades prior to WWI more than 7 million people died of plague in the urban slums of India, only intensifying the resentment against the ever more visible urban segregation and inequality[37].

Increasingly, the idea of spatial segregation became contested by a growing array of people, ranging from indigenous elites who felt discriminated, the subaltern classes who felt vulnerable and threatened by the inferior infrastructures and municipal services that was leaving them at the mercy of killer epidemics, and even by European urban planners who questioned the logic of segregation based on scientific grounds. A prominent example of the latter was the urban planning pioneer William Geddes. After his extensive travels in India Geddes questioned Lutyen's 1911 redesign of Imperial Delhi based on racially segregated neighborhoods, by pointing out that it simply did not work as intended since plague infested rats merely moved from place to place, and the indigenous servants and domestics that were so integral to colonial life lived in or had contacts in urban slums. Geddes was also highly critical of the monumentality of the imperially redesigned cities in India, with their grand boulevards and public spaces built on demolished older urban fabric. He pointed out that in these new imperial public spaces all sorts of people mingled together, subverting the whole justification for segregation based on sanitary claims. He reminded his audience that the same mingling took place in workspaces occupied by Europeans and their colonial workers and subjects[38]. Geddes also considered the large-scale demolition of urban neighborhoods and displacement of poor populations

---

[37] Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 74–75; Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 174; Evans, "Epidemics and Revolutions."

[38] Robert Grant Irving, *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 87–89; Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 161–167; King, *Colonial Urban Development*, 183–184.

as "one of the most disastrous and pernicious blunders in the checkered history of sanitation"[39].

The prominent and influential colonial medical administrator William Simpson (1855-1931)[40] who had left his imprint on urban transformations across the empire, and became one of the targets of the criticism of Geddes and others who objected to the segregated landscape of urban colonial modernity. Simpson's proposed remedies, which became accepted as conventional scientific wisdom and implemented widely, involved the wholesale creative destruction of the old urban fabric of narrow and winding streets and closely packed houses, and their replacement with well-ventilated and individualized residential units, good drainage system, rigorous waste disposal, sewerage, piped and treated drinking water, open spaces and wide avenues. Underlying all these drastic measures was an insistence on residential segregation by race, and the imposition of rigid control over the living habits of the population[41].

These grand projects and coercive practices had many beneficial results, including for the indigenous population, but also proved to be tremendously disruptive and costly to the lives of ordinary people as they were intended to act as mechanisms to reinforce the colonial political hierarchy. As Geddes pointed out, more than anything else these grand schemes empowered the new professional experts who were now in charge of planning and implementing them. They secured and made safer the lives of Europeans as well as the indigenous elites, while the vast majority of the population remained excluded from their benefits, and often found themselves worse off as victims of mass slum clearance, or increased congestion and concentration of poverty following mass eviction and forced re-allocations. Proposals for less disruptive and more cooperative alternative solutions were often ignored or

---

[39] Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 79. This was in contrast to the French colonial model of the reification of Casba (across North Africa) as a traditional space to be preserved for its authenticity, instead of viewed as a living and thriving space that had been constantly changing with historical flows. See Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*; Rabinow, *The French Modern*; Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations*.

[40] In his long and influential career Simpson served as Chief Medical Officer in India, Commissioner in charge of investigating and dealing with outbreaks of plague and cholera in Cape Colony, Gold Coast, Mesopotamia, Hong Kong; professor of Hygiene in Kings College London, and the founder of the Ross Institute and Hospital for Tropical Diseases.

[41] Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore*; Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 75–84; Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 170–177; Myron Echenberg, *Plague Ports: The Global Urban Impact of Bubonic Plague, 1894-1901* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Prashant Kidambi, "'An Infection of Locality': Plague, Pythogenesis and the Poor in Bombay, C. 1896-1905," *Urban History* 31, no. 2 (2004): 249–67.

simply dismissed. For example, Geddes argued that much of the traditional systems of water provision could have been improved with minor anti malaria measures[42]. Such attempts at improving traditional systems of urban infrastructure were being tried elsewhere. For example in Iran in 1906, Dr A.R. Neligan successfully experimented with the use of gold fish, ducks, and frogs as natural larvicides in traditional water reservoirs[43]. Egypt's largest port Alexandria, remained a relatively healthy city during the 1899 plague epidemic as colonial authorities acted more sensitively to local cultural concerns, and instead of imposing racial segregation and wholesale urban displacement and demolition they collaborated with traditional medical practitioners and healers, including midwives and women *Hakima,* to contain epidemics and prevent their spread[44].

In other words, as contemporary critiques of the colonial notions and practices of trusteeship were arguing, progress and modernity were not necessarily incompatible with existing cultural practices and traditional systems of urban management; nor was spatial segregation simply a scientific solution to sanitary problems, as it claimed to be. Of course, spatial segregation was not exclusive to colonial or capitalist modernization. Urban neighborhoods in Iran, or Iraq, for example, had been historically segregated, especially along sectarian and religious lines. But these had been an occasional and only partial segregations based on cultural preferences and discriminations; not justified on the grounds of sanitary and scientific rationality[45].

As we shall see in chapter 6, these sanitary and segregationist practices were instrumental in shaping the urban built environment of Abadan in the post war period, and demonstrate how local, national, and global practices of industrial and extractive capitalism, and the new modes of governmentality and social disciplining in the post war era of nation states were geographically intertwined.

---

[42] Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 79.
[43] Neligan, "Public Health in Persia, Part2," 693.
[44] Echenberg, *Plague Ports*, 83–106. For the counter example of suppressing local knowledge and its consequences, especially for women, see Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 127–143; Khaled Fahmy, "Women, Medicine and Power in 19th Century Egypt," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 233–79.
[45] Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 174; Kaveh Ehsani, "The Politics of Public Space in Tehran," *City and Society*, under review 2015; Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement In Iraq* (Saqi Books, 2004), Ch. 2.

First World War: Total Warfare and the Remaking of Society and Economy

WWI transformed the world[46] by "mark[ing] a true watershed between the 19th and 20th centuries", precipitating a social and economic revolution in all spheres of life[47]. Continental Europe, Britain, Iran, India, the Middle East, and Persian Gulf region certainly emerged as different places at the end of the carnage. The changes in Britain came as a result of several factors: the war itself, which was the first instance of total warfare, involving entire populations and new technical means of destruction; second, the mounting crisis of capitalism (especially after the 1890s) and the transition to a new regime of accumulation; and third, the far reaching and slower consequences of what has been called 'the second industrial revolution'[48]. I will discuss each in turn and link them to what took place in Abadan.

Militarily, WWI was the culmination of the industrialization of warfare under mounting capitalist competition and technological development. It brought to an end the somewhat ironically labeled "long peace of the 19th Century", when major European powers directly fought each other only on a few occasions on the continent's soil, while constantly engaging in colonial skirmishes and wars elsewhere[49]. By the end of the 19th century industrial technology had already transformed the nature of warfare with railroads, steamships, synthetic chemicals[50],

---

[46] Polanyi argued that WWI was the terminal point of the "one hundred year peace", and marked the breakdown of the international system that was built around high finance. Written in the 1940's London amidst the WW2 he short shrifts "the conservative 1920s and the revolutionary 1930s". As I will demonstrate the 1920s were far more radical than Polanyi's cursory dismissal suggests. See Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 3–34.

[47] C. H. Feinstein, Peter Temin, and Gianni Toniolo, *The European Economy Between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 21.

[48] A number of English and American historical sociologists have attempted to systematically catalogue and neatly classify the institutional dimensions of historical transitions. Giddens, for example, argues that modern society is based on the 'structuration' of five institutional clusters: information storage (authoritative resource to structure social systmens); surveillance (control of information and surveillance of others' activities); military power and the means of violence; capitalism and class conflict; and technological change and forces of production. Michael Mann, on the other hand, investigates the historical changing configuration of "four sources of social power": ideological, economic, military, and political. As is the case with most Weberian categorizations, these ideal types are suggestive and informative in providing a useful prism to describe the status quo, but when it comes to explaining their instability and ephemerality they tend to be less analytically rigorous and convincing. See Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Vol. 2: The Rise of Classes and Nation States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Anthony Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992).

[49] Between 1803 and 1901 British troops were continuously fighting in some 50 colonial wars. Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence*, 223.

[50] The industrial production of synthetic chemicals increased from negligible figures at the turn of the 20th century, to four million compounds by 1980, at least 60 thousand of which currently are in common use. Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 21.

and telegraphs, making possible total warfare involving whole populations. Instead of long marches or limited troop transport by sailing ships, these technologies allowed rapid and coordinated mass deployments of soldiers, and created fronts instead of skirmishes and isolated battles[51].

Prussia had initiated the re-organization of its military by professionalizing the officer corps and ordinary troops, whose effectiveness were proven in the 1871 Franco Prussian War. On the other hand Britain received a shocking realization of its comparative military and industrial shortcomings during the second Boer War (1899-1902). Its troops proved unfit physically, and their general level of education fell short of allowing them to function as effective soldiers in a modern army[52]. Its advanced military equipment also performed poorly, casting doubt on the quality of the national technological and engineering abilities. For example, the army's optical range finders failed to function properly with the artillery losing much of its effectiveness[53]. Eager to enjoy the spoils of a highly unequal war against the tiny population of Boer farmers in resource rich South Africa, British speculators and politicians had counted on the post-victory spoils of an easy skirmish that they estimated would cost at most £10 million. Instead, the cost of the resulting fiasco spiraled to £250 million and created a profound sense of unease and national decline[54].

The ensuing malaise established a clear link in political culture between national performance in war and social policy. It was felt that the empire's destiny was in the hands of the masses of the people, who needed to be better educated and more physically fit[55]. Schumpeter situates the roots of this malaise in the great depression of 1873-1898, when a combination of rapid industrial development and rising poverty created a "Paradox of poverty amidst plenty"[56]. Rapid industrial change after the end of American civil war, electrification, the opening of new markets, and new trade roots such as the Suez Canal, further accelerated the 'annihilation of space

---

[51] Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence*, 223–232.
[52] Asa Briggs, *A Social History of England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983), 251.
[53] Mari Williams, "Training for Specialists: The Precision Instruments Industry in Britain and France, 1890-1925," in *Education, Technology and Industrial Performance in Europe, 1850-1939*, ed. Robert Fox and Anna Guagnini (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1993), 230.
[54] Pat Thane, "Government and Society in England and Wales: 1750-1914," in *Cambridge Social History of Britain: 1750-1950*, ed. F.M.L. Thompson, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 51–52.
[55] Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 251–252.
[56] Joseph Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 760.

by time' that railroads had begun earlier in the century[57]. Greatly expanded productive capacities flooded far away markets, precipitating a crisis of overproduction[58]. Cheap and plentiful American wheat and cotton flooded European markets, causing an agrarian depression there (as well as in Egypt, by then the mass supplier of cotton to British textile industry)[59]. The paradox was that the industrial expansion had substantially improved real wages, thus creating and entirely new standard of life for the masses in western Europe; but at the same time they also caused massive dislocations within the existing agrarian, artisanal, and older industrial structures and economies everywhere.

The combination of insecurity caused by the new poverty and destitution, with the improved standards of life for those engaged in the new industries caused a reaction against the results of laissez faire and free trade. It led to the 'double movement' of the radicalization of masses, and a general desire for social reform among some middle class liberals and utilitarians, as well as significant segments of,

> 'The business class increasingly willing to adapt its enemies' views and compromise, just as the hostile forces were increasing…Economic liberalism thus became riddled with qualifications that sometimes implied surrender of its principles. Political liberalism, from the 1880s on, lost its hold upon the electorates much more rapidly than appears on the surface…In England the strength of [their] existing political organizations and leadership was so great as to make it possible for them to win victories on radicalized programs [of major social reforms]"[60].

However, the moves toward policies of social reform were protracted and by no means immediate or straightforward. Improved public health, municipal reforms,

---

[57] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization and Perception of Time and Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[58] I discuss the impact of the great depression of 1890s on the devaluation of silver, and its significant impact on the Iranian economy, and on British-Iranian relations in chapter 2. See also Peter Avery and S. Simmonds, "Persia on a Cross of Silver: 1880-1890," *Middle Eastern Studies* 10 (1974): 259–86. The impact of the global depression on the Middle East, and the subsequent rise of mass politics throughout the region is analyzed by Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[59] Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1993); Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, 760; Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 54–121.

[60] Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, 761, see also 800–802.

universal education, and various schemes of social insurance were proposed and weighed by some segments of the political elite as necessarily measures to address debilitating poverty, but without much result[61]. The hegemony of liberal ideology against government interference in the economy and social affairs proved simply too entrenched, even though significant breaches were beginning to occur within the ranks of political figures as well as intellectuals, activists, and academics. This was in part a consequence of the historical organization of state administration in Britain. Contrary to France, for example, where local government and social policy were by now in the hands of paid bureaucrats accountable to the central state, Britain at the time had a polity that can be described as a weak central state, where local government was run mostly by an independent gentry[62]. It is important to note that until the turn of the 20th century liberals across the continent envied the British model of a decentralized state and autonomous landed elites, supported by a bourgeoisie of industrial entrepreneurs, financiers, and merchants. The British model was considered highly successful because the hierarchy of the social pyramid seemed to overlap with the political hierarchy. Compared to France, for example, landed property and wealth in Britain were far more concentrated[63]. In contrast to France, the institutions of the central state administration were more feeble in Britain: at the turn of 20th century France had a central bureaucracy of 400,000, four times Britain's. French liberals envied what they saw as the British model of deep rooted and organic connection between the gentry and their vested interest in local improvement, contrary to the centrally appointed French functionaries who owed their loyalty to the state[64]. In Britain, the autonomous gentry and the economic elite had an inordinate influence in

---

[61] Thane, "Government and Society in England and Wales: 1750-1914."

[62] Marion Fourcade, *Economists and Societies: Discipline and Profession in the United States, Britain, and France, 1890s to 1990s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 41. On the development of local state institutions under the Third Republic see Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford University Press, 1976).

[63] In 1873 some 80% of all agrarian land in Britain was held by 38,000 families. The richest 2000 families owned more than a third of all agrarian landed property. By contrast, in France, the economic elites were more feeble due to religious and sectarian conflicts, revolutionary upheavals, smaller landholdings, and the gradual parcellization of land and wealth after each generation due to [more egalitarian] inheritance laws. See Christophe Charle, "Légitimités En Péril: Éléments Pour Une Histoire Comparées Des Élites de L'état En France et En Europe Occidentale (19e - 20e Siècles)," *Actes de La Recherche En Sciences Sociales*, no. 116/117 (1997): 44.

[64] Christophe Charle, *Les intellectuels en Europe au XIXe siècle: essai d'histoire comparée* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 43–47. For a critical perspective on the nation state formation in Britain seen as a process of internal colonization of the Celtic periphery see Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (New Brunswick, N.J.: University of California Press, 1979).

the parliament and law making and felt such costly reforms were best left to the existing poor laws and private charity[65].

At the same time the importance of propaganda and molding public opinion were becoming evident, as was the conviction that the empire needed to invest in military technological innovation. The Russo-Japanese war of 1905 and the emergence of Japan as a new rival to British colonial interests in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, together with German military advances, prompted a costly arms race, especially in building new heavy battleships (called Dreadnoughts, after the first prototype built)[66]. Ironically, the tremendously costly battleships never played a major role in actual sea battles, but their technological innovations became a major conduit for the ascendency of petroleum as the preferred fuel, and of internal combustion engines as the new primary means of locomotion.

Oil Versus Coal: Warfare as Midwife of Change of Fuel Source

In 1911 the United States adopted oil-fired boilers for its new heavy warships. Britain also had begun searching for a sustainable way to undergo the conversion. Winston Churchill, newly appointed at the First Lord of Admiralty asked his predecessor Admiral Fisher to preside over the Royal Commission on Oil Supply for the Navy, with John Cadman, a professor of chemistry at Birmingham and the future director of APOC, also serving as an influential member of the Commission. Churchill asked the Commission "You have got to find the oil; to show how it can be stored cheaply; how it can be purchased regularly and cheaply in peace; and with absolute certainty at war"[67].

By 1914 Fisher had returned for a second stint as the head of the Admiralty and succeeded in getting the British navy to convert all its boilers from coal to oil[68]. The strategic problem with oil was its uneven geographic distribution since, aside from the United States and Russia, all the other major protagonists in WWI were oil

[65] Hobsbawm suggests that reliance on the captive colonial markets encouraged this inertia. See Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, 148–149.
[66] Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 56–62, 83–108.
[67] See Ibid., 98.
[68] Nicholas A Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 274–304.

importers[69]. As a result, for Britain oil was far more costly (four to twelve times more) than coal, especially since the Island had significant coal deposits and was itself a major exporter[70]. The opportune discovery of oil in Khuzestan in 1908 significantly reduced that major obstacle for Britain (see chapter 2) and smoothed the way for the eventual conversion to oil[71].

Oil had significant advantages over coal: It weighed less per thermal unit, was easier to transport, had twice the thermal energy of coal by bulk, and did not require stokers as it could be pipe fed automatically into engines. This released tremendous space in battleships, expanded the range of their operations[72], and significantly reduced labor requirements[73]. In addition, internal combustion engines were less bulky, and more economical than steam power during off-peak use since they could be turned on or off with ease. Oil burned cleaner than coal and produced less smoke, a major advantage in sea warfare, which relied on stealth.

WWI became a major conduit for the ascendency of oil as a major global strategic resource in large part as a result of these advantages as well as the type of decisions made by the wartime British government[74]. It led to the allocation of tremendous resources to, and created a major demand for, the mass production of military hardware that operated with the internal combustion engines, such as tanks, airplanes, automobiles, and submarines[75]. These technologies existed before, but as exceptions and luxury items of leisure for the affluent. But, partially as a result of the

---

[69] Of course, there were other important centers of production, like Rumania, Galicia, Burma, and Mexico. However, aside from the fast dwindling resources of Burma, these were also regions under geopolitical dominance of other rival great powers.

[70] David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus; Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750-Present*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 281.

[71] See details in chapter 2; andMarian (Kent) Jack, "The Purchase of the British Government's Shares in the British Petroleum Company 1912-1914," *Past and Present*, no. 39 (April 1968): 139–68; Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 97–100; Ronald Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 158–201.

[72] That is the range of ship movements, since railroads, privately owned in Europe, were reluctant to convert to oil. In the UK coal was readily and cheaply available, and railroads had a strategic advantageous relationship with coalmine owners, who depended on railroads for their marketing.

[73] According to Landes half of naval ship crews were stokers and half of the cargo space was taken up for coal storage. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*, 279–281.

[74] Geoffrey Jones, *Multinationals and Global Capitalism: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 49; E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: The Birth of the Industrial Revolution* (New York: New Press, 1999), 150; Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*. Oil consumption in France, for example, increased 42 fold in the course of the WWI. Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 252.

[75] For example, by 1918 the newly constituted Royal Air Force (RAF) had 30 thousand officers and 264 thousand other ranks, more soldiers than the entire army had had in 1914 prior to the start of the hostilities. See Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 252. Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 171.

internal combustion engine's major impact on the outcome of the war, oil ended up becoming one of the cornerstones of the post war economic and economic shift to Fordism and industrial mass production and consumption[76].

Equally significant to the ascendency of oil during WWI was the conflict's wider and long lasting social, cultural, and political repercussions. According to Giddens, "the meshing of industrial production and military strength is of prime importance among the influences that have shaped the modern world… Industrial production provided the means for the industrialization of war, but the activities and involvements of nation states are at the origin of the phenomenon"[77]. In Britain especially, with its Victorian traditions of minimal central government involvement in the regulation of the economy and social affairs and the strong autonomy of local elites and governing institutions, WWI affected the very culture and institutions of governance and the relations between state and society[78]. As the scope of the conflict expanded war became the concern of ordinary people and not just elites. Since it permanently affected class relations and the attitudes and policies of both business and government, and had a direct bearing on the actions of APOC and the British government in Khuzestan in the post war era, we will discuss it briefly.

War and the Politics of Conscription, Class, and Gender:

WWI was a total war, and like no previous military conflict it fused together society, economy, and politics. Hobsbawm calls WWI and its aftermath "the age of catastrophe" and argues that its destructiveness was caused by its similarity to unbridled competitive capitalism, which has no ultimate aim except limitless accumulation, acquisition, and global expansion[79]. The conflict engulfed the general

---

[76] Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, 28. This is not to say that the shift to oil was absolute and immediate, despite the significant increase in its demand. Coal remained a key source of energy throughout the interwar period but its relative importance declined, especially in the post war era, with major consequences for labor and coal miners. In fact, steam power based on coal consumption increased tenfold in the last three decades of the 19th century. However, Britain's exports of coal dropped dramatically after the war, directly affecting labor relations and social conflict. British exports of coal went from 20 million tons in the 1880s to a high of 75 mt in 1913, before dropping to 49mt in 1920s and 40mt in the 1930s. See Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 150.

[77] Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence*, 226.

[78] See Francis Michael Longstreth Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History of Britain: 1750-1950*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1990).

[79] WWI was presented as a zero sum game: Previous wars fought for limited and specific objectives…WWI was based on international rivalry modeled on economic competition without limit or objective. There were no limits to the "natural frontiers" of Standard Oil. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, 29–30.

public as conscripts, workers, canon-fodder, and ultimately made them pay for the costs of the carnage. But, at the same time and ironically, the very scope of war brought with it the expansion of the public sphere and opened up new avenues for political participation by the working classes, women, and ordinary people. This unplanned expansion subsequently allowed the working classes to enter directly the political sphere though a combination of electoral politics, trade unionism, and radical collective actions, such as the 1926 general strike. The majority of the general population, including many workers, trade unions, and most politicians representing them, came around in support of the patriotic effort. But, in exchange for the sacrifice of mass participation in war they demanded reciprocal sacrifices by property owners, both in material terms as well as political- a new social and political bargain, so to say[80].

This important development overlapped with structural developments in corporate capitalism (see the sections below on the second industrial revolution and the structural transformations of capitalism), forcing the state and large corporations like APOC to view labor and labor relations in altogether new perspectives. In this new configuration laborers could no longer be seen merely as anonymous producers of surplus value, but increasingly as "human capital" and, ultimately, as political citizens whose votes and political actions could affect laws and policies. While labor had demonstrated that it was able to organize politically to improve its lot and in the process to exert some pressure for the redistribution of wealth, and even present an existential threat to rates of profit or the capitalist order itself, it also needed to be treated as an investment, to be educated and trained to cope with the increasingly complex divisions of labor, a more hierarchical and alienating work process, and trusted to handle and operate ever more intricate and costly technology[81]. The changing approach of APOC directors to labor and urban issues in Abadan in the mid-1920s had already begun to be shaped by these wartime changes. In the rest of this section I will analyze in some detail several aspects of the social history of wartime Britain that will help provide an explanatory context for the later strategic tilt toward paternalism adopted by APOC in Khuzestan from the mid 1920s.

---

[80] Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*.
[81] See Marx' early analysis of this trend toward the production of relative surplus value, chapter 15, Marx, *Capital*, 1: 492-642.

WWI casualties were staggering, including in the Middle East[82]. The exponential growth of the military had brought about a change in the criteria of soldier recruitment, with far reaching social repercussions. The smaller professional military and reserves at the onset of the war soon proved inadequate for the scale of the conflict, necessitating a new government policy of actively manufacturing public opinion through systematic propaganda to present the war as a patriotic affair. The initial populist surge orchestrated by the War Secretary Lord Kitchener led to the joining of 2.25 million volunteers, but even this proved insufficient and by 1916-1918 universal conscription had been implemented for the first time, making the war and its staggering human and economic costs the concern of the nation as a whole. As a result, the army's ration strength (as a measure of the scale of enlisted manpower) increased from 165 thousand in 1914 to 5.4 million in 1918[83].

The British public had generally supported the war, but its end brought about a cultural break with Victorian conventions, caused by the grief of shattered families and communities. The war had affected entire generations with more than 8 million having been mobilized, two million wounded, and nearly a million casualties and an equal number still receiving pensions in 1922[84]. However, in addition to conscription and its social consequences, there was another paradoxical side to the conflict: the war demands necessitated the maximization of production (to feed the war and the population), and in the process brought about nearly full employment, for the first time in history[85]. This included women's employment in dangerous munitions factories, heavy industries, and clerical work[86].

---

[82] German casualties were 1.8 million, France lost 1.6 million, and Britain more than 800 thousand according to Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, 26; Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 258. Total war casualties dwarf these figures once we take into account the toll for the other belligerents, such as the Ottoman territories, Russia, Austro Hungary, and the non-belligerent nations, such as Iran, who were helplessly caught in the grinding wheel despite their declared neutrality. Adelson offers very different casualty figures, which brings me to assume the figures provided in the previous references to fatalities, whereas the present figures refer to the wounded as well as the dead. None of the sources consulted specify the difference. According to Adelson, in 1914-1918 Britain deployed more troops in the Near and Middle East (nearly 6 million) than in France (5.5 million). However, overall casualties in France were much higher (2.7 million) than (600 thousand). Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 171.

[83] Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 252. "Ration strength" seems to refer to the total number of rations issued as a way of keeping count of troop numbers in and out of direct conflict.

[84] Ibid., 260–261; A. J. P Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 120. Note the discrepancies in various sources regarding war casualties. Compare with footnote 62.

[85] The discussion in this passage is based on Pat Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State* (London: Longman, 1982), 126–130.

[86] Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*, 38.

Prior to WWI Britain was an overwhelmingly working class country, but with a significant portion of the workforce engaged in agriculture and domestic service. As ordinary and working people were directly called upon to bear the human and economic cost of war for patriotic duty, their reciprocal expectations from the political and economic system that was demanding such a sacrifice changed dramatically. As able-bodied men were recruited for war, the insatiable demand for labor had a manifold effect: It increased the negotiating power of trade unions to demand better wages and work conditions and job security. Politically, it created an unprecedented space for labor to participate directly at the highest levels of governmental and administrative policymaking. This forced large employers to accommodate labor and to accept state mediation with trade unions. This new trend led to the relative improvement, at least for a short time, of the standard of living of the working classes in war related economic sectors.

At the same time, the costly wartime necessity to accommodate labor, coupled with the insatiable war-driven demand, encouraged employers to invest heavily in labor saving technologies and to search for new industrial management methods and work re-organizations that would eventually contribute to the de-skilling of industrial workers and intensify the unemployment crisis of the post-war years[87]. This was especially the case in the large industries and mining sectors that had significantly expanded to supply the war effort, most notably steel, shipbuilding, and coal[88]. The following table shows the significant decline in labor strife during the war, compared to the period before and after the conflict.

Table 2: Number of British Workers Involved in Strikes Before and After WWI (Thousands)

1912	1913	1914	1919	1920	1921
1,462	664	447	2,591	1,932	1,801

Source: Adelson (1995), 191

However, as the costs of the war skyrocketed the financial situation deteriorated, rapidly turning Britain from the world's foremost international creditor

[87] Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 126–130; Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, 186–203.
[88] Feinstein, Temin, and Toniolo, *The European Economy Between the Wars*, 17–37.

to a major debtor. To deal with the situation Britain had to liquidate much of its overseas assets (in the US railroads, primarily), to borrow abroad,[89] and to impose taxes at home. As a result, by the end of the war the number of taxpayers had increased sixfold, and the rate of income tax had been raised up five times[90]. As taxes and prices increased so did labor unrest,[91] and the need of the government to respond and quell discontent by reluctantly engaging in expanding social policies that were anathema to the elite's dominant liberal free market ideology.

Housing and Urban Politics During WWI and After

In the predominantly working class Britain the increasingly prominent public role of labor and the sacrifices it was asked to make were bound to have larger political repercussions. At the turn of the century three quarters of the working population were engaged in manual labor, and there were some 1.5 million people in domestic service, acting as servants to the numerically small middle and upper classes[92]. Although labor's wartime average income and job security had improved, and patriotic propaganda was according a new respect and social status to working people which they had never before enjoyed, nevertheless their general living conditions were, by all accounts, appalling. This was especially the case in workers' housing, which rapidly became the focus of major social discontent[93]. Mines and large

---

[89] Hobsbawm estimates that Britain lost 25% of its global investment, which it had to sell to finance the war. The financial costs of the war amounted to more than £500 million, mainly in US railroad securities. By 1929 Britain's debts to the US amounted to more than 150% of its national output. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, 97–98. Before the war, despite its relative decline compared to its main rivals, Germany and the US, Britain had done relatively well as a financial power, while its captive colonial markets provided an important outlet and supplied it with revenues, with India, in particular, financing more than 40% of Britain's deficit. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 148–149. See also Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*, 363; Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*, 40–42, 124.

[90] Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 257; Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, 191–192. The social history of taxation during the war clearly has great relevance to the critique of the rentier state theory that I have presented in chapters 2 and the epilogue. As the history of wartime Britain demonstrates taxation was imposed as an exigency of the total war, with great reluctance by the political elite, under complex historical conditions that we have discussed here. The political bargains in the form of franchise and social welfare policies that emerged between the state and various social classes were not the automatic consequence of taxation, but the result of a protracted and ultimately unpredictable social conflict and class struggle.

[91] Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*, 39; Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, 193–203.

[92] Rondo Cameron, "A New View of European Industrialization," *The Economic History Review The Economic History Review* 38, no. 1 (1985): 1–23; Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 155–163.

[93] For housing conditions of laborers and the multitude up to the WWI see Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*, 121–187. Mass urban housing (as well as rural and suburban) for the working classes and the poor was of critical concern across Europe. See Michael Harloe, *The People's Home:*

industries such as steel, shipyards, munitions works, etc. that were at the heart of war-related economy were located in selected and designated regions and urban areas, many of which had been moderate sized cities before the War and therefore were ill equipped to accommodate the significant influx of newcomers.

The crisis of working class housing predated the war, and even large industrial cities like Birmingham, Glasgow, and London had already been under demographic pressure as a result of the first industrial revolution[94]. The economic depression of the 1880s, coming in the wake of the Paris Commune, was causing unrest among the urban poor and anxiety among the middle classes and the wealthy. Overcrowded housing at the heart of large cities like London became a great concern, especially as the recurrence of pandemics and anxiety over public health had been associated in scientific discourse with inadequate urban infrastructure and lack of access to decent drinking water and basic sanitary conditions by the poor. In addition to biological contagion, the fear of ideological and moral contamination of the working classes living in overcrowded urban dwellings side by side with the 'residuum', or the criminal classes and the radical political agitators, had become a major topic of public debate among social reformers, conservatives, and radicals alike[95]. The debate was shaped around the historically recurring theme of the 'culture of poverty' as the existential danger it posed to social stability and the economy. Of particular concern was the London labor market, dominated as it was by casual laborers who were seen as a barrier to the formation of a permanent, dependable, and 'civilized' labor force (human capital).

Across the ideological spectrum a range of schemes were proposed to address the crisis: Labor unions began to be perceived by employers not as class enemies, but as an alternative to insufficient charities and as a solution for stabilizing the labor

---

Social Rented Housing in Europe and America (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), See in general Chapter 1, which compares housing in Western Europe and the US. For Britain see Pp.35–40.

[94] For London see Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, especially 215–230. According to Stedman Jones London was not, strictly speaking, an industrial city, but an entrepot and home to vast numbers of casual workers, artisans, and small crafts. But workers at docks and transport networks were incremental to the industrial economy of Britain. For Paris and the notion of insecurity as a result of framing the laboring classes as dangerous classes see Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes*; Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*.

[95] Stedman Jones offers a comprehensive survey of debates about London. Proponents of social reform in housing included Alfred Marshall, the utilitarian economist. The housing conditions of the working classes and the poor in London played a critical role in shaping reformers like Beatrice Webb. See Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*; Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 216–345.

force and channeling the articulation of its demands within the framework of a mutually accepted labor market. Various municipal reforms and urban planning schemes were suggested by social reformers in the hope of curtailing the power of predatory slumlords. These reformist schemes ranged from the idea of Garden Cities (in 1901), the construction of affordable working class suburbs accessible by cheaper commuter train services, and subsidized rental schemes, some with the eventual option for ownership[96]. The conservatives, on the other hand, proposed the implementation of even more draconian and punitive schemes from those already in place, such as the expansion of workhouses, the establishment of labor colonies within England to forcefully segregate and coercively re-educate the criminal elements, or the wholesale expulsion of the subversive elements to the colonies[97].

The onset of WWI exacerbated the housing crisis for the poor and the working classes. Even larger cities had difficulty coping with the housing demands of the new labor force that was flooding in to occupy the new industrial jobs, exacerbating the urban crisis that was cutting across class divisions. It generated a range of responses from employers and the state to deal with municipal residential issues that had lasting effects and profoundly changed the social and economic habitus.

It is highly likely that this new business habitus equally influenced APOC, which was Britain's largest corporation, headquartered in London, in its approach to somewhat similar challenges in Abadan. In addition, APOC was already planning its postwar expansion of fuel and petrochemical supplies throughout the consumer markets of Britain and Europe[98]. As a result, the effective management of labor relations, the avoidance of potentially damaging social strife, the state of consumer markets, and having in place a strategy of smooth product supply to ward off powerful American, Dutch, and other competitors were fast becoming an urgent dimension of its long term corporate strategizing (see chapters 2 and 5).

The housing problem affected many social classes, but was especially acute for workers as they faced competition for cheaper houses from the financially pressed middle classes who had lost their servants to the army or the new industrial wage

---

[96] Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*; Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*.
[97] Damaris Rose, "Accumulation versus Reproduction in the Inner City: The 'Recurrent Crisis of London' Revisited," in *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Societies*, ed. Michael Dear and Allen J Scott (London: Methuen, 1981), 339–82; Gordon Cherry, *Town Planning in Britain Since 1900: The Rise and Fall of the Planning Ideal* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*.
[98] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:235–261.

labor market, and were now forced to downsize. With private financing and construction at a near standstill during the war workers became dependent on privately owned and poor quality rental housing in urban slum areas[99]. Trade unions had helped workers gain better pay, but the housing supply crisis was not something they could address directly or hope to solve. The housing crisis did not affect only unskilled workers, since lower middle classes and skilled workers, clerks, schoolteachers, and even shopkeepers also experienced exorbitant rent hikes. The shared anger against the housing situation generated a novel type of cross class urban politics of solidarity as these different groups participated together in numerous rent strikes against slum lords, demanding government intervention for rent control and housing aid[100]. More relevant to our story, the housing crisis led to a serious rift between different segments of capital, as large industrial employers actively supported government imposed rent controls. They sided with workers and the middle class renters against landlords and financiers who profited from rents[101]. As far as large industries were concerned high rents and poor living conditions of the workers had adverse effects on the quality and political demands of their own labor force at a time of acute labor shortage during the war years[102].

One of the more significant urban protests around housing and rent issues occurred in Glasgow, Britain's second largest city and a major industrial center, and set the tone for the urban struggles to come. More than 15,000 people went on a rent strike in October 1915, soon another 5000 more joined them, making this "one of the

---

[99] Harloe demonstrates that WWI elevated working class housing to the level of a European wide crisis. As the war engulfed the national economies, sucking in all available human and financial resources, investment in housing and other social domains effectively ceased. As inflation destroyed the value of mortgage payments and equities for financiers housing finance collapsed, leading to inflated rents and mass evictions of those who could not afford predatory rents or were unwilling to pay them. While in continental Europe the flood of war refugees to cities created a housing supply crisis, in Britain it was the movement of workers and their families to urban industrial centers that were the centers of production for the war industry that generated similar pressures. The problem was even worse in rural areas and smaller towns where new war-related industries and activities were located. These areas by and large, did not have the wherewithal or an existing stock of working class housing to cope with the new demand. See Harloe, *The People's Home*, 81.

[100] Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*, 147; Cherry, *Town Planning in Britain since 1900*, 52, 61–62. Cherry sees this juncture as a watershed in the greater institutionalization of government induced town planning in Britain.

[101] Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 131–133.

[102] Labor housing and the crisis of urban slums created some of the similar crises in the US. This crisis led to the emergence of the Chicago School of Sociology, and the academic-policy intervention of professional sociological experts and middle class urban activists, like Jane Addams, in setting anti-poverty urban social policy. Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982).

most important rent strikes in urban history… For the first time in history, housing was considered a right for the people, and the state was held responsible for it. Public housing was born… It was only when a social challenge appeared at the grassroots level that the power relationships were altered and the state was forced to intervene in the provision of housing"[103].

However, these urban protests did not lead to lasting solutions, such as mass production of affordable rental housing, or the institutionalization of systematic urban planning programs aimed at housing the workers and the poor. This was due to a lack of unity over policies to adapt between rival segments of the political and economic elite, as well as the non-negligible class differences among protesters, and the local nature of their struggles, which hindered wider mobilization to tip the balance of power in their favor and lead to structural changes.

Nevertheless, the problem was acute enough to generate several significant government acts aimed at lowering the rents and controlling them, to provide subsidized mortgages, encourage private investment in affordable housing, and to take some measures to improve the existing stock. More significant, and of direct relevance to APOC's changing approach to urban housing issues in post war Abadan, many large employers began to actively invest in building company housing for workers as a way of lowering their living expenses (and hence their wage demands) and to increase pressure on landlords.

By 1916 it had become clear that the private sector could not solve the housing crisis by itself. In 1917 an appointed committee of inquiry into industrial unrest acknowledged poor housing to be a major source of public grievance and recommended vigorous government action. In the same year another government committee (under) estimated that at least 300 thousand new houses would be needed immediately after the war and urged local government boards to begin stockpiling building materials and resources to move ahead with construction. Lloyd George, the prime minister, made "homes fit for returning heroes" a cornerstone of his 1918 election campaign[104].

---

[103] Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 27–37.
[104] See Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*; Harloe, *The People's Home*; Cherry, *Town Planning in Britain since 1900*; Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*.

Effectively, the housing dilemma had become connected to the very legitimacy of the political system. Even if urban unrest over the housing crisis did not explode into a revolutionary upheaval, nevertheless the issue remained of great concern to political leaders who kept receiving alarming intelligence reports that regularly raised the specter of Bolshevism[105]. If precarious housing was the cause of urban discontent and political instability, the provision of adequate and affordable housing, especially in the post war years, was an economic concern to employers. Keeping labor costs low in the lean post war years required the negative pressure on the permanent workers exerted by the industrial reserve army of the unemployed. Housing these casual and precariously employed workers was not economical and it would defeat the purpose of exerting downward pressure on wage demands. Balancing these political and economic concerns was a challenging task for the employers and politicians. It also placed the social provision of worker's housing squarely at the center of public debates, and became the subject of seesaw policy experimentations and heated debates over the next decades.

The unprecedented 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act made local governments responsible for assessing housing needs, drawing plans and overseeing their implementations[106]. By 1922 nearly 200 thousand houses were built by the private sector using state subsidies under this act and its follow up. However, this number proved hardly adequate and the programs primarily benefited developers, the middle classes, and the better paid workers who could afford the relatively high prices of these subsidized housing stock[107]. Once the war had ended the climate began to change, and the prevailing liberal ideology was back in swing, seeking to curtail and reverse the trend toward state intervention in the workings of the free market. After 1920 more rent strikes prompted the state to pass several further housing acts in 1923 and 1924. But these acts also fell into the pattern of avoiding state competition with

---

[105] Harloe, *The People's Home*, Chapter 2; Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 144–145; Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*.

[106] There had been numerous urban housing and municipal related parliamentary acts in Britain since the middle of 19th Century. What differentiated the 1919 Act from its predecessors (the last of which was the 1915 Act to control rents) was the direct government involvement, both at the national and local levels, in directly financing and regulating the production and supply of housing stock.

[107] Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 206–208; Harloe, *The People's Home*; Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*.

private landlords and financiers, and allocated subsidized mortgages for private housing instead of affordable rental units[108].

I have provided a more detailed analysis of the urban housing crisis in wartime Britain since the story has both global dimensions, while it also clearly overlaps with the rising crisis of labor housing in Abadan during the interwar period (see chapters 5 & 6). In the post war era, beset by revolutionary fervor and rising labor discontent, affordable housing for the masses had become a key component of maintaining the stability of a capitalist system beset by class conflict and facing a crisis of legitimacy. The League of Nations had established the International Labour Office (ILO) as one of its first acts in 1919, to regulate and manage labor issues. In 1924 the ILO produced a comprehensive comparative study of labor housing in Europe since 1913. The study began by asserting that housing provision before WWI had been shaped by Victorian era liberal and laissez-faire economic theories, which had already caused a major housing crisis prior to the war. WWI "had [only] precipitated the [housing] crisis, increased its intensity, and gave it the specific form which make it one of the most serious social and economic problems of the present day"[109].

Setting Oil Policy After the War:

As one of Britain's major petrochemical and primary industrial materials producers, the attitudes and praxis of APOC directors and experts were constantly being shaped by this wartime experience at home, on a rapidly remapped and increasingly competitive global market, as well as in Khuzestan and its other areas of its operation. The shifting geopolitical landscape affected APOC's policies at various levels, in Britain and Europe, as well as in Iran and the Persian Gulf. In 1916, the powerful Board of Trade drew up a memorandum for consideration by the Cabinet titled "The Future of Oil Supplies". It was the first indication of the recognition of the vital strategic importance of oil supplies not just for the country but also for the empire itself[110]. A protracted debate ensued where two options were considered: To establish a wholly British monopoly company, or to amalgamate APOC with Royal

[108] The 1924 act by the short-lived Labor government allocated subsidized funds to local governments for rent controlled rental units, but it remained limited in scope.
[109] See International Labour Office, *European Housing Problems Since the War 1914-1923*. (Geneva: I.L.O., 1924), 3; Harloe, *The People's Home*, 81–82.
[110] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:243.

Dutch Shell (RDS) into a jointly owned British-Dutch company. Both were awkward options, as the government was uncomfortable with its majority investment in APOC, a supposedly private corporation, while APOC and its supporters lobbied hard to portray RDS as a foreign concern. The possibility of compelling RDS to become a wholly British Company was briefly considered but was eventually abandoned as impractical[111]. John Cadman, the head of the Petroleum Executive (and future APOC Chairman), set up the Harcourt Committee in 1918 to draw up a comprehensive appraisal of the national and imperial oil problem: "The time has arrived to when it is necessary to formulate a policy by which His Majesty's Government shall be guided in all matters relating to the advancement and direction of petroleum industries"[112]. The Committee reported to Cadman that,

> "The present war has demonstrated the numerous purposes for which the British Empire is dependent on petroleum and its products, of which 80 percent of its supply come from the United States…the industrial supremacy of the British Empire has been built upon vast coal resources. The Committee was asked to consider what steps should be taken to secure control of as much as possible of the world's supply of natural petroleum…the future of the Empire depended on a satisfactory solution of its oil problems and that opportunities for such strengthening the position exists now which may not recur, and no time should be lost in deciding on the policy which will ensure to the British Empire adequate supplies of petroleum products"[113]

What this resolution meant in practical terms was the acknowledgment that a strategic shift from coal to oil in industrial and military spheres was now an unavoidable reality that needed to be acknowledged and managed. This acknowledgment translated into the government encouragement and support for APOC to plan for aggressive future involvement in the development of oil resources outside Iran (Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia being the first instances), and of the expansion of its industrial and consumer market activities in Britain. As for the

[111] Ibid., 1:253–261.
[112] Ibid., 1:252.
[113] Ibid., 1:252–253.

British government, this strategic outlook shaped its post-war policy toward the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, as was discussed in chapter 2[114].

In 1918-1922, at the same time as Abadan refinery was in a state of expansion and consolidation, APOC began the building of Llandarcy (named after William Knox D'Arcy), the first major oil refinery in Britain located in South Wales coast, near the Swansea docks. The refinery at its peak employed 2600 people. A company town was built nearby with 260 houses, together with a community center, and local stores, all owned by the Company[115]. In contrast Abadan, the heart of the Company's global operations, was altogether on a different scale. By mid 1920s, Abadan had an estimated population of 60 thousand, and the housing question there involved massive logistic and geopolitical challenges, and the production of company housing and designing and maintaining a company town planning would take another three decades of protracted and ever expanding efforts to implement (see chapters 5 and 6). In the end, urban problems and especially workers' housing shortages significantly contributed to labor discontent during the nationalization era, and the eventual eviction of AIOC from Iran in 1951.

APOC clearly drew important lessons from the wartime housing crisis when dealing the urban crisis in Abadan. These accumulated experiences across the Company's vast geographies of operations (in Wales, Khuzestan, Mesopotamia, etc.) contributed to shaping the patterns of paternalistic and self-interested interventions in the urban life of its workers. How these experiences were translated into Company practices and contributed to the formulation and implementation of social policies in Abadan need to be studied in connection to the local dynamics there, as we shall discuss in the next chapters.

Pluralism and Planning: The Impact of Political Franchise and Mass Politics

In the previous sections I have outlined the impact of public health measures, military conscription, the dramatic expansion of the labor market and trade union

---

[114] Geoffrey Jones, *The State and the Emergence of the British Oil Industry* (London: Mac Millan, 1981); Helmut Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq 1910-1928* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976); Adelson, *London and the Middle East*.

[115] "Llandarcy: Down to The Last Drop," *BBC*, December 2, 2009, sec. History, http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/southwestwales/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8389000/8389503.stm; National Oil Refineries. Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., *Llandarcy Refinery*. ([London]: Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., 1953); Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:453–454.

activity, and the social and material crises such as housing and inflation that affected the daily lives of working people in wartime Britain. These issues made a deep and lasting impact on the attitudes of the political and economic elites, as well as ordinary people, toward the role of government in civil society, the economy, and the social responsibilities of large corporations regarding the general welfare. In this section I will turn to the discussion of how these developments affected the political domain directly. After a costly and ruinous war that had to some extent brought into question the legitimacy of the old political and economic order, what did the enfranchisement of working people, women, returning soldiers, and paupers (the poor and the propertyless), imply for class politics, corporate attitudes, and government policies? How did the political advances made in the era of mass enfranchisement affect the post war habitus?

The rising social expectations of a more decent life in exchange for the sacrifices demanded of ordinary people only added to the malaise resulting from the shambolic and mismanaged conduct of the Great War[116]. The poor performance of military and political leaders had disillusioned the general public who were asked to shoulder most of the human and material costs. However, side by side with this general cynicism, an alternative and far less complacent political imaginary was also taking shape. This militant political culture was inspired by the grassroots networks build by trade unions during the war and the relative gains in wages and job security that had marginally improved workers lives, as well as the utopian horizon of possibilities opened by the Russian revolution[117]. Severe labor shortages during the war years had given labor a greater advantage in negotiations over working and living conditions, and its share in the political and administrative domains of policymaking[118].

---

[116] This point is greatly emphasized by Perkin in his social history of the rise of the professional society in England. Perkin frames the period as "the crisis of class society" which led to the emergence of a "corporate society", managed by technical and professional experts. See Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, 171–357.

[117] By 1918 trade union membership had increased to 6 million by 1918, as had the funds channeled to the labor party. Women were now 29% of the official workforce in factories, offices, and hospitals. Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 262.

[118] Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 127–130.

Once the carnage ended there was no way back from franchise reform and for the elites to ignore the new power of mass politics[119]. The widespread sentiment was captured by the novelist John Galsworthy, who wrote in the aftermath of the 1926 general strike: "Everything now being relative there is no absolute dependence being placed on God, free trade, marriage, consoles, class, coal, or caste"[120].

Britain had suspended elections since 1910. The fear of the revolutionary consequences of electoral democracy and voting rights for the common people had been a source of great anxiety among the elites throughout the 19th Century and the pre war years. Although the franchise had incrementally expanded in the 19th century it still did not include women and the propertyless, while the effectively rigged system was skewed to favor the propertied classes who enjoyed the privilege of having multiple votes[121]. The 1918 franchise reforms and the accompanying general election established for the first time a near universal voting right for all the males, and for most women above the age of 30[122]. The electorate increased nearly threefold at one go, from 8 million to nearly 22 million. It included nearly 8.5 million women, as well as paupers and returning soldiers, most of who had been previously disenfranchised[123]. This electoral reform severed the long established and ideologically enshrined connection between property and citizenship and, at least theoretically, opened the parliamentary system to direct representation of the general population[124].

The newly enfranchised population demanded secure jobs, better pay, decent and affordable housing, improved living conditions and social services. Politically, reneging on these new social demands by the working population was risky, but also vested capitalist interests were ambivalent about rolling back the preferential

---

[119] Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*, 163–180; Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 263; Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 129-130; Feinstein, Temin, and Toniolo, *The European Economy Between the Wars*, Chapter2.

[120] John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga: The White Monkey*, vol. 4 (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2008 [1924]), Preface.

[121] Saville, "The Welfare State: An Historial Approach," 13–14.

[122] Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*, 93, 125–128; Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 145; Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 262.

[123] Jose Harris, "Society and State in Twentieth Century Britain," in *Cambridge Social History of Britain: 1750-1950*, ed. F.M.L. Thompson, vol. 3 Social Agencies and Institutions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 74.

[124] T.H. Marshall sees this period as an important stage between political, economic, and social citizenship. The latter, according to his analysis, was realized only after WW2 and the eventual adoption of Keynisian welfare and full employment policies. See Marshall and Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class*.

advantages they had gained during wartime. Feinstein, et.al., estimate that during the war up to 40% of the entire economies of the belligerents had been directly or indirectly controlled by governments. The withdrawal of this demand would have caused havoc on the large engineering, mining, chemical, metallurgy, munitions, ship building, and engineering corporations that had expanded to supply the war needs. These powerful interests were highly weary and opposed the immediate withdrawal of public demand for their products. As a result of these intensifying frictions, and the significant contraction of the economy, social unrest and class conflict became one of the most pressing post war problems, with significant long lasting repercussions[125].

The period 1918-1926 was an era simmering with intense social unrest, but in spite of great anxiety about the stability of the ruling order after near universal enfranchisement, the 1918 elections returned to power the Liberal-Conservative coalition and the franchise did not lead to radical political change[126]. The main reason for this was the depth of social divisions and the lack of consensus among both the political and economic elite as well as the laboring masses. There were simply too many differences of opinions and proposed strategies to allow any radical consensus to take shape, and to bring about a unified and militant change of direction[127].

The 1918 election results should not be interpreted as an indication that no meaningful political changes had taken place, on the contrary. But the radical and fundamental changes were latent and subtle, rather than spectacular and manifest at the pinnacles of social and political institutions, thus creating a new social habitus. For one thing, the Empire's periphery was rocked by the aftershocks of the war. General conscription in Ireland had precipitated the Irish political settlement and led to the country's eventual independence. In the more distant colonies, and especially in India, which supplied the bulk of the British army[128], conscription and mass recruitments had contributed to social protests and energized the nationalist

---

[125] Feinstein, Temin, and Toniolo, *The European Economy Between the Wars*, 28–29, 60–64.
[126] For the range of established political formations in Britain at the time, Liberals, Conservatives, New Liberals, Labour, and various radical, socialist, Fabian, and communist formations, and their shifting attitudes toward the economy and the role of the state in setting social policies and regulating the social question, especially in the pressing domain of urban reforms see Cherry, *Town Planning in Britain since 1900*, 43–65.
[127] Harris, "Society and State in Twentieth Century Britain," 75.
[128] Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 45–46; Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

movements[129]. The brutal repression of nationalist and labor protestors in India over the question of political representation had direct and lasting repercussions in Abadan. Angered by their poor living and working conditions, skilled Indian workers and employees in Abadan were further energized by events in India, and went on a series of strikes beginning in 1920. The virulence of these labor protests prompted the Oil Company to begin expelling the strikers, and to rethink its long-term labor policy through a protracted process of replacing Indians with Iranian laborers (see chapters 1 and 5).

Within Britain, the more significant political reconfigurations of the exercise of power were taking place not so much in the electoral domain as in the proliferation of technocratic and administrative institutions that were planning and regulating civilian life to an unprecedented degree[130]. The poor military performance during the first two years of the war had paved the way for the emergence of a new system of government no longer dedicated to the appearance of constitutional niceties and minimal interference in civil society, but intent on establishing an efficient command economy focused on winning the war[131]. Already in 1915-1916 the government had begun regulating an increasing range of issues that had hitherto been considered the exclusive domain of the private sector and local authorities, such as improving controls on prices, rents, profits, wages, labor contracts, conscription, the recruitment of women in the industrial and clerical labor market, liquor licensing, food rationing, etc[132]. These governmental regulations were carried out in tandem with large business, although trade unions had also become increasingly involved in mediating labor negotiations and exercising a voice in matters related to the working and living conditions of their members.

---

[129] Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*, 150–160.

[130] Michel Aglietta highlights this ensemble of class frictions and conflicts as the centerpiece of the structural shift in the regime of accumulation of capital and the gradual but unmistakable transition to Fordism, and a system of mass consumption, full employment, and the maintenance of effectively high demand through deficit financing. Aglietta's focus is on the US, and his explicit unit of analysis is the nation state. However, and somewhat questionably, he de-emphasizes the revolutionary significance of the WWI and its aftermath, emphasizing instead the post WWII era marked by Keysian economics, as the key period in the new regime of accumulation. But, as I will argue in a subsequent section on the structural changes in the political economy of capitalism, many of the earlier structural shifts he highlights also characterized inter war Britain. See Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, 25–33, 116–117, 179–186.

[131] Harris, "Society and State in Twentieth Century Britain," 71.

[132] Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*, 34–38.

As we will discuss in the next section, the coordinators and agents of this increasingly interventionist state policy were the new professional classes. These were, on the one hand, full time trade unionists and professionalized labor negotiators who could stay in command of increasingly complex negotiated rules and regulations governing the labor process and workplace relations. On the other hand, they consisted of the new professional middle class with formal education and institutional accreditation from the expanding universities[133]. It is ironic that Lloyd George's governing Liberal Party and its Conservative coalition partners presided over this shift to a more centralized and planned political economy, making [classical] "liberalism a casualty of war"[134]!

If the elite were divided over the necessary boundaries of social policy reforms[135] and the proper extent of government involvement in the economy, so were trade unions, labor activists, and the Labor Party[136]. Labor was deeply suspicious of governmental power, which it viewed as repressive and a tool of employers. But workers also had a strong sense that they needed a collective countervailing power to defend their interests and to check the employers. The Labor Party's buildup began in the prewar years not in the parliament but among the grassroots, where it established local chapters and its members entered local government authorities. Asa Briggs sees

---

[133] Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*; Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*; Christophe Charle, *La Crise des Sociétés Impériales: Allemagne, France, Grande-Bretagne : 1900-1940* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), Chapter 3; Charles S. Maier, "Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 2 (1970): 27–61.Aglietta makes the same point regarding Taylorist time and motion managers within the workplace. This shift toward the professionalization of various domain of political and socio-economic life had a long precedence. In 19th century England the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and his numerous disciples such as Robert Owen (industrialist and 'utopian' socialist), Alfred Marshall and John Stuart Mill (economists), Ebenizer Howard (urban planner and garden city theorist), among others, had advocated the bestowal of greater influence and power of decision-making upon professional experts. In France, positivism and the followers of Saint Simon and his disciple Auguste Comte had likewise forwarded the notions of the 'scientific' analysis of a bounded entity they labeled 'society', and the burden of 'trusteeship' that befell on the shoulders of scientific experts to formulate and implement collective policies in the name of science and universal benefit to all. Lenin's "What is to be Done?", which precipitated the seminal break with fellow Social Democrats the Mensheviks, as well as with other syndicalist and socialist currents, was likewise predicated on the call for full time and professional revolutionaries to formulate and carry forward long-term party strategy. For an extended discussion see Kaveh Ehsani, "A Critique of Planning, Development and Progress" (MA Thesis in Regional Planning, University of Massachusetts- Amherst, 1986).

[134] Briggs, *A Social History of England*, 257.

[135] For example George Nathaniel Curzon, Conservative Foreign Secretary in the coalition government, former Viceroy of India, and the self-described foremost authority on Persia, was the president of the National League for Opposing Women's Rights.

[136] Vocal and organized opposition to government planning and involvement in the economy were very much part of the mainstream intellectual discourse of the post war era. See Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*.

the first three decades of the 20th century as the formative period in the building of "historical organizations that became the scaffolding of the modern labor movement"[137]. The dramatic rise in unemployment after the war caused major setbacks and somewhat eroded the negotiating power of labor. But by the mid 1920s the political landscape of Britain had changed and labor and its representatives in trade unions and the Labour party had become an integral part of the political and administrative system, at local as well as national levels. Labor's electoral gains, and the rising militancy of the unemployed and the precariously employed, meant that employers as well as the political elite had to take into consideration labor and its political representatives in a manner that would have been inconceivable a generation before.

The Rise to Prominence of Professional Middle Class Experts and their Impact on Corporate Culture and Governmental Social Policies:

When in 1926 APOC undertook the task of re-configuring its operations in Khuzestan, the protracted and extensive discussion among its senior directors and managers was undertaken in a new language and spirit of comprehensive planning of its long term relationship to the new and emerging central government in Tehran, as well as to their employees in Khuzestan. At the center of the new approach lay an acknowledgment of the necessity of formulating and implementing a set of social policies that in appearance had little to do directly with oil extraction, market shares, or profit rates. In previous years the notion of the Oil Company committing itself to providing social amenities and services for its employees, ranging from education to public health, municipal planning, housing provision, recreational facilities and leisure amenities for rank and file workers, and so on, would have been considered odd. But by the mid-1920s the Company was actively discussing a long-term commitment to initiating an extensive and costly range of social initiatives that would reshape the daily lives of its employees, as well as the region's population (chapters 5 & 6).

In official Company correspondence and in the energetic propaganda it set up to shape public opinion (see chapter 5), these interventionist social policies were

[137] Asa Briggs, "Introduction," in *Essays in Labour History; 1886-1923*, ed. Asa Briggs and John Saville, vol. 2 (London: MacMillan, 1971), 1–16.

always articulated and presented as reluctantly undertaken, generous, and benevolent contributions to public welfare. In practice, and forthrightly articulated in internal documents, they were aimed at reducing friction with its workforce and the Iranian government, and to increase the productivity of operations. These social policies became the instruments through which the Company engaged in shaping and managing the territory and the spaces where it was operating, as well as the populations and the institutions it had to deal with.

Ironically, most of the Company officials involved in these internal debates belonged to a pre-war generation shaped by the colonial Victorian and Edwardian culture and worldviews[138]. However, economic institutions and their constituent agents are not formed a priori, but are shaped through praxis and situated within the various social and geographic contexts (scales) where they operate. APOC's new corporate culture was simultaneously being formed and performed at various scales in which it was operating - local and global – in Abadan, Britain, Basra, and Burma[139]. A new regime of accumulation was emerging out of WWI. This global political and economic landscape was ushering in new labor relations that now were being managed through professional and technical expertise, and were premised on an increasingly regulated economy, and on planned social reforms aimed at mediating class frictions.

In Britain, the wartime governmental intervention in the civil society, in tandem with employers and trade unions, was becoming a lasting feature of the post-War era. Early on after the war this trend was highly contested both by labor, which mistrusted the state as the instrument of employees, as well as the traditional ruling establishment which was suspicious of bureaucracy and resented the subversion of the

---

[138] See Chapter 2 and the discussion of Arnold Wilson, Reynolds, Dr. Young, J.M. Wilson, John Cadman, and other Victorian and Edwardian era agents of Britain and APOC. Arnold Wilson's fascinating memoirs of his early years in Khuzestan, and then his controversial stint as the de-facto viceroy of Iraq after WWI are illustrative of this unmistakable shift. Wilson's early memoirs in Khuzestan are mostly told through his correspondence with his family and his daily diaries. They are the voice of a Victorian zealous conservative officer of the Empire who remains unconvinced of the political possibilities of constitutional political change in Iran. By mid 1920's, when he had become the senior managing director of APOC in Mohammerah, he had overseen the Company's dramatic shift of allegiance away from Britain's erstwhile local allies, Khaz'al and the Bakhtiyari Khans, and had become an unabashed and pragmatic advocate of social planning and Company engagement and investment in a wide range of social projects in Khuzestan. See Arnold T Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941); John Marlowe, *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London: Cresset, 1967). See chapter 6 for further details.

[139] On the relation of culture and economy see Marion Fourcade, "Culture and Economy," *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (New York: Blackwell Publishers, 2007).

free market and what it saw as the corruption caused by the undeserving poor taking advantage of the publicly funded welfare measures[140]. As the economic crisis worsened throughout the 1920s desperate attempts to return to pre war economic policies, like the return to the gold standard in 1925 to shore up the Sterling, proved a failure. However, as worsening social conditions began to threaten political stability, especially with unemployment staying persistently above a million throughout the decade, the proponents of greater regulation of the economy and long term social and economic planning gained greater acceptance and began to exert their influence[141].

Despite calls for austerity amidst mounting economic crisis and the ongoing debates over the appropriate extent of social policies, the overall trend throughout the 1920s was toward the significant expansion of the public sector, as a succession of Liberal, Conservative, and (briefly) Labour, governments kept steadily increasing expenditures for social projects throughout the 1920's[142]. By 1930 public spending on various social services had increased from virtually nothing to nearly 40 percent of overall expenditures, with state contributions to unemployment funds, for example, increasing twelvefold, from £3million to £37 million[143]. Not only the older and established means of dealing with social inequality -- such as charities, local parishes, and poor laws -- were no longer able to cope with the scope of the post war social problems, but also a permanent shift in public culture had rendered these Victorian institutions irrelevant. Out of work laborers and the poor were no longer content with accepting charity for the helpless; instead they were demanding employment and work as a social right. Decommissioned soldiers, women recently employed in dangerous munitions works, and hard-pressed families in industrial cities now expected more decent living conditions and greater economic security. The question of balancing political stability with the pursuit of economy in public expenditures had become a priority for the state and the elites.

---

[140] Harris, "Society and State in Twentieth Century Britain," 75–80.
[141] Alan Deacon, "Concession and Coercion: The Politics of Unemployment," in *Essays in Labour History; 1918-1939*, ed. Asa Briggs and John Saville, vol. 3 (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 9–14; John Burnett, *Idle Hands: The Experience of Unemployment, 1790-1990* (London: Routledge, 1994), 199–264.
[142] Harris, "Society and State in Twentieth Century Britain," 78.
[143] Deacon, "Concession and Coercion: The Politics of Unemployment," 9–10.

The Fallout from the 1926 General Strike:

The social policies that formed the core of the emerging welfare state in post war Britain were highly complex to implement, and were intensely contested. In 1921 a brief attempt was made to cut back expenditures ('The Geddes Axe') in order to make a return to pre war laissez faire. The social backlash was immediate, with major labor strikes and industrial unrest exacerbated by disaffection of decommissioned and unemployed soldiers. Avoiding disorder became a major concern for established politicians across the ideological spectrum, including labor politicians[144]. The massive 1926 general strike was a turning point in bringing about a 'passive revolution' in the general acceptance of the need for the consolidation of social policies that over time would come to form the backbone of what is now known as the welfare state. The strike involved more than 2.5 million[145] miners, transport workers, and steel workers against unilateral wage reductions of 13 percent, exacerbated by the withdrawal of government subsidies (effectively further reducing real wages by another 7-10 percent), in addition to the imposition of longer work hours, and generally worsening living conditions. These were the heavy industrial sectors that had greatly expanded in wartime, but were now facing dramatically reduced demand, coupled with unprecedented international competition during a period of major economic contraction.

Although the strike was defeated without much bloodshed, it had a considerable polarizing cultural impact. On the one hand, the general strike mobilized significant segments of the middle classes against radicalism, while on the other hand it convinced the Labour Party leaders to focus their efforts on accommodation with the parliamentary system and demand reformist concessions and favorable social policies[146]. Among the ruling circles the debate over how to respond to radical social discontent was intense. While some, like Churchill (the Chancellor), demanded a violent crackdown by the military, others, most notably Stanley Baldwin the Prime Minister, adopted a policy of appeasement combined with repression. The state had

[144] See for example Ernest Bevin and his role in the Labour Party's highly reluctant endorsement of the 1926 general strike. J Graham Jones, "Ernest Bevin and the General Strike; a Note," *Llafur* 8 (2001): 97–104.

[145] The strike involved 800 thousand coal miners directly who were supported by 1.8 million steel and transport workers.

[146] See Martin Pugh, "The General Strike," *History Today*, no. May (2006): 40–47. On the impact of the general strike on public discourse see Kate. Flint, "Virginia Woolf and the General Strike.," *Essays in Criticism* 36 (1986): 319–34; D. H. Robertson, "A Narrative of the General Strike of 1926," *The Economic Journal* 36, no. 143 (1926): 375-393.

long prepared itself for the strike. The establishment press helped mobilize the middle classes against the strikers by claiming their actions to be a radical assault on the social order. Eventually the strikers could no longer sustain their effort and had to compromise amidst rising material pressures[147].

Chronic unemployment and persistent labor discontent and social unrest during the post war years (1918-1926) eventually tilted the balance toward the general acceptance of the need for the implementation of social and welfare policies. However, neither bureaucrats nor politicians were equipped on their own to justify, conceptualize, plan, implement, and evaluate the performance of the expanding array of social policies that were being formulated in ad hoc response to various crises. This task fell to the professional middle classes, including by now professional labor politicians and representatives[148], who had emerged as an increasingly coherent social force in the inter war era.

The 'social question' was gradually but unmistakably being defined in public discourse as, on the one hand, intolerable problems arising from class conflict and the insecurity caused by unregulated free markets and, on the other hand, the subversive agitations of political radicals taking advantage of public discontent[149]. From 1918 to 1926 chronic unemployment hovering over 1 million, deteriorating wages, and poor housing and living conditions, were by far the greatest causes of social discontent and the reason behind continued waves of strikes and political protests[150]. To save capitalism from itself the different spheres of the market economy needed to be differentiated and regulated in order to modify their combined and spiraling negative social impact, and the working population needed to be made stakeholders in the political and economic system.

Influential intellectuals and prominent economists, such as J.M. Keynes, argued for the necessity of differentiating markets according to their social impact. Labor markets, for example, could not be treated the same as consumer commodities: Whereas supply and demand could govern the market for physical goods, a sharp fall in demand for labor would have severe political consequences. The same was true for

---

[147] See Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*, 241–248.
[148] On the Labour Party and its commitment to industrial conciliation and accommodation with the political system see Ibid., 198–200, 219–220, 248–249.
[149] Burnett, *Idle Hands*, 215-241 Deacon, "Concession and Coercion: The Politics of Unemployment."
[150] Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 147–148; Wolfgang Mommsen, "Preface," in *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany: 1850-1950* (London: Croom Helm, 1981); Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, 89, 93–94; Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*, 368–369.

financial markets, as money and finance was the lifeline of the entire economic order, and the collapse of currency due to inflation or speculation would disrupt the political stability, as it had done in post war Germany[151]. Solving the crisis required authoritative and impartial intervention against individual interests of the employers, by insuring full employment, good wages, and economic security for the working classes. This would improve effective demand for consumer goods, and create economic prosperity and turn workers into stakeholders rather than exploited adversaries[152]. The trauma of the general strike of 1926 had rendered these arguments more convincing.

Taking on the role of formulating a growing set of social policies to deal with rising social crises and class conflict fell to professional experts from the academia as well as those employed in the private and public sectors, including urban and economic planners, journalists, engineers, civil servants, economists, statisticians, medical and public health officials, lawyers, and social scientists among others[153].

---

[151] See John Maynard Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion* (New York: Norton, 1963), especially 80–104, 186–212, 312–348; Richard D Wolff and Stephen A Resnick, *Economics: Marxian versus Neoclassical* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 109–117. An important social critique of laissez faire came from Polanyi in the 1940s. Polanyi argued that land, labor, and money were fictitious commodities that should not be treated according to the laws of the free market. Their commodification during the 19th century had been the reason behind the depression and the two world wars. The solution was to embed the markets within a web of social needs, regulated and planned according to collective needs. See Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*.

[152] This was the general premise of Fordism, and of mass consumer society. See Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 277–320; Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity : An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 125–140. See also previous footnote.

[153] From the mid-1920s as the economic malaise deepened, the role of experts was in part framed within the debate between advocates of planning versus a free market economy. Obviously, the alternative example of the Soviet planned economy was to have an influence, especially in the 1930s. But in the post WWI era, social policy and economic planning, and the role to be played by technical experts in the process were also an important aspect of public debate. I have discussed the debates over planning and expertise in this period in Ehsani, "A Critique of Planning, Development and Progress."

The debates over the economy, and the role of economists, and the mechanisms of the institution's ascendance during the interwar period and after is the topic of important contributions by the following authors who have influenced my work: Michael A. Bernstein, *A Perilous Progress: Economists and Public Purpose in Twentieth-Century America.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Timothy Mitchell, "Rethinking Economy," *Geoforum* 39 (2008): 1116–21; Timothy Mitchell, "Economists and the Economy in the Twentieth Century," in *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences : Positivism and Its Epistemological Others*, ed. George Steinmetz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 126–41; Fourcade, *Economists and Societies*; Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable* (Waukegan: Fontana Press, 1995); Yves Dezalay and Bryant Garth, *The Internationalization of Palace Wars: Lawyers, Economists, and the Contest to Transform Latin American States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Jamie Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2010); Dieter Plehwe, "Introduction," in *The Road from Mont Pelerin*, ed. Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1–44; Block and Somers, "In the Shadow of Speenhamland"; Foucault et al., *The Foucault Effect : Studies in Governmentality : With*

These social policies were advanced as new regulatory laws and institutional arrangements, addressing problems ranging from unemployment insurance to poverty alleviation, education reform, public health, workplace rules, affordable housing, old age pensions, and social security[154].

Historically, during the long 19th century, the drafting and proposal of social policies in Britain had been undertaken through parliamentary committees, like Edwin Chadwick's mid-nineteenth century parliamentary reforms of Poor Laws, improving factory conditions, and public health and sanitary measures. Unemployment in particular, was a whole new category of social crisis that was 'discovered' after 1870, and came to be seen as "the fundamental problem of modern

---

Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault; Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*; Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*.

The formation of the development discourse, or planned intervention in forging economic and social policy in the former colonies by technical experts is the subject of the following work: M. P. Cowen and R.W. Shenton, *Doctrines of Development* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

My sociological and analytical critique of professionals as a social class, and their institutional production through educational accreditation and other professional institutions is influenced by the work of George Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, trans. Andrew Arato and Richard E. Allen (New York:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979); Alvin Ward Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Alvin Ward Gouldner, *The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980); Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967); Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[154] On 1880-1920s Britain see Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, 218–404; Harold Perkin, *The Third Revolution: Professional Elites in the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1996), 49–76. This trend also extended to the colonies. See Robert Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London: E & FN Spon, 1997); Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (Routledge, 2007); Frederick Cooper, "Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labor in Africa," in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa*, ed. Frederick Cooper (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983), 7–50.

The trend toward the expansion of social policies and the making of a welfare state under the aegis of the rising professional middle class was a trans-European phenomenon, with the unified Germany at the forefront. The discussion of Germany in the pre-WWI period falls outside the pursue of this essay, but it is important to note that its increasing range of social policies, including the incorporation of trade unions into policy making, had a major influence on its major European rivals. For Germany I have relied on Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social : The Welfare State and Local Politics in Imperial Germany*. The important range of social policies implemented in France after 1871 is the subject of the magisterial Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*. There are two important comparative studies of Germany and Britain's routes to building a welfare state, although the role of professionals as a distinct social class is not emphasizes in either. See Mommsen, "Preface"; Richard Biernacki, *The Fabrication of Labor: Germany and Britain, 1640-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 437–470. The latter work highlights the nationally different cultural and ideological formations in the workplace and labor organization in the two countries over a longer period (17th century to WWI). Of specific interest is the contribution of economists, political activists, and especially overseers to the reception of the ideas and practices of commodification of labor in the pre-WWI decades.

society"[155]. Great expositions of poverty and social injustice by journalists, philanthropists, popular novelists, and social reformers such as Henry Mayhew, Charles Booth, Ebenezer Howard, Arnold Toynbee, and Charles Dickens among others, had contributed to the social critique of the negative consequences of industrial capitalism and laissez faire. These sustained critical discussions by prominent academics and public intellectuals had given credence to the idea of a "social body", or to 'the nation' as a collective social organism that required nurturing and rational guidance in order to improve (evolve and progress), and to avoid corruption and disease[156]. Earlier in the 19th century, these responses to intolerable social problems had begun to give impetus to the novel idea of the English government as a regulator and manager of social problems, especially when it came to dealing with the threats of contagious diseases, as we discussed earlier in this chapter[157].

However, to the extent that the government had involved itself in making social policy, it had been primarily the domain of elite amateur reformers, most of whom were dilettante gentlemen and products of middle class public schools who were in charge of effectively autonomous local governmental institutions, while a small and permanent corps of civil servants and bureaucrats was managing the drafting of related parliamentary acts for national implementation[158]. Gradually from the 1870's onward, the trend toward the emergence of a new breed of middle class intelligentsia and technical experts displaying self-awareness as an increasingly coherent group, differentiating their social role from the other main social classes of landed gentry and aristocracy, businessmen and industrialists, and working classes, became unmistakable.

At the avant-garde of this spectrum were reformist socialists, trade union activists, and other prominent social reformers committed to the improvement of the living conditions of the working classes and the urban poor. Most of these reformers were associated with the Fabian Society and were shaped under the influence of the 19th century Benthamite utilitarianism. The Webbs, Bernard Shaw, H.G.Wells, Ebenezer Howard, and (later on) Keynes, stood as prominent examples of this

[155] Burnett, *Idle Hands*, 145-198
[156] See Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, especially 1–24, and 98–114.
[157] See Oliver MacDonagh, "The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal," *The Historical Journal* 1, no. 1 (1958): 52–67.
[158] Fourcade, *Economists and Societies*.

trend[159]. But the major shift took place when the governing Liberal Party itself became the main advocate of implementing social reforms and welfare policies, as the means of improving the national economy and the productivity of labor, and of averting political instability.

Perkin identifies this as an important moment in the rise of "the professional social ideal" in response to the crisis of a segregated class society. This collective identity was articulated around a number of key premises: At its core was a critique of the irrational consequences of unfettered laissez faire. It was built around a gospel of work and productive activity in service to 'universal welfare' as opposed to the 'idleness' bequeathed by private wealth (of hereditary landed proprietors) and selfish individual pursuits (of competitive merchants and industrialists). According to Perkin,

> "Professional people saw themselves as benevolent neutrals, standing above the main economic battles…While all classes try to justify themselves by their own concept of distributive justice, the professional class can only exist by persuading the rest of society to accept a distributive justice which recognizes and rewards expert service based on selection by merit and long arduous training… It is the success of such persuasion which raises him (when he succeeds) above the economic battle, and gives him a stake in creating a society which plays down class conflict…In all its manifestations, liberal, conservative or socialist, the professional social ideal consistently applied the test of justification by service to society and, in one form or another, of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, to the analysis and criticism of contemporary society"[160].

The critical importance of this development for the formation of the oil complex in Khuzestan becomes clear when we explore the apparently puzzling question of why in the post-WWI era both APOC and the fledgling Pahlavi state eagerly justified the expanding range of their social interventions and urban infrastructural activities in the name of disinterested service for universal public welfare, while they were engaged in actively dismantling existing local social and political structures and coercively dispossessing peasant and pastoralist communities.

---

[159] See the fascinating memoirs of Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship*. For a contemporary re-evaluation of their impact see Wallis, *From the Workhouse to Welfare*.
[160] Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, 116–123.

Whereas a generation before, at the onset of the D'Arcy Oil Concession, British oil speculators had dealt exclusively with Persian courtiers and local tribal elites (1901-1921), by the mid 1920s the political irrelevance of the ordinary population could no longer be taken for granted. The practices and cultural attitudes of the oil corporation and state administrators and policymakers had undergone a significant change as a result of these global re-alignments. By the mid 1920s, both Oil Company officials as well as British and Persian administrators and policymakers had adopted the language and the outlook of professional experts, seeking to justify their actions and policies in the name of universal benefits to the ordinary population. The oil habitus in Khuzestan had changed, along with the global, national, and local transformations that had been ushered in the course of WWI and its aftermath.

Already prior to WWI middle class expert professionals had played an increasingly important role in crafting social policies, especially in sanitation, factory and workplace regulation, cartography, and municipal affairs, but not directly in industrial and governmental policy-making[161]. The pattern was different in the colonies, where the ideology of laissez faire and competitive markets and free trade were not held as sacrosanct[162]. Throughout the British and French colonies technical experts were assigned a far more prominent role in governance through social engineering, surveying and mapping, infrastructure development, urban planning, and colonial governance through designing spaces and social life[163]. Hobsbawm's statement about India holds true for the rest of the empire, despite his exaggerated singling out the crown jewel of the Empire as a supposed exception: "India was the only part of the British empire to which laissez-faire never applied. Its most enthusiastic champions in Britain became bureaucratic planners when they went there, and the most committed opponents of political colonization rarely and then

---

[161] Scientific labor management (Taylorism) had become an increasingly important feature of industrial production in the United States, but the widespread acceptance of its managerial and corporate practices in British large industries took place after the WWI. See Maier, "Between Taylorism and Technocracy"; Jones, *Multinationals and Global Capitalism*; Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*; Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*.

[162] Home, *Of Planting and Planning*; Dasgupta, "A City Away from Home: The Mapping of Calcutta"; Rabinow, *The French Modern*; Dossal, *Imperial Design and Indian Realities: The Planning of Bombay City 1855-75*; Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*.

[163] On the urban intervention in designing colonial spaces see King, *Colonial Urban Development*; Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore*; Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations*; Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*; Abu-Lughod, *Rabat, Urban Apartheid in Morocco*, 1981; Rabinow, *The French Modern*; King, *Colonial Urban Development*; Lawrence Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

never seriously suggested the liquidation of British rule"[164]. Throughout the 19th century the colonies had served as convenient laboratories of social engineering by technical and scientific experts in a manner that would have been politically and ideologically unacceptable in the home countries. Involuntary evictions and reallocations of populations, outright confiscations or the imposition of limits on property relations, coercive regulations of workplace habits, personal hygiene, family relations, domestic architecture and housing design, etc. were sensitive issues that lay at the ideological heart of liberalism and individualism, but were routinely practiced without undue moral qualms across the colonies. However, the global crises of the first decades of the new century paved the way for many of these techniques of governing the economy and society to be implemented in Europe as well, albeit with considerable political modifications in order to make them more acceptable.

WWI precipitated the consolidation of Fordism, the new regime of capital accumulation, a central characteristic of which was the close coordination and overlap between large industry, centralized government, organized labor, expanded military, and universities[165]. The new political economy was also imposing significant re-organizations on these institutions, both internal and external. Managing this transition to a new regime of accumulation became the domain of professional experts and laid the foundation for the gradual but highly visible emergence of the technocracy, and its differentiation from civil servants, businessmen, and politicians[166]. The professionalization of philanthropists, reformers, and political activists who had advocated social reforms prior to WWI created a labor market for the emerging technocracy, allowing them to fill the social spaces between labor and capital, and between politicians, bureaucrats and the civil society[167].

---

[164] Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 148–149. As the sources in the previous footnote make clear Hobsbawm's observation about Indian exceptionalism is exaggerated.

[165] James P. Hull, "From Rustow to Chandler to You: How Revolutionary Was the Second Industrial Revolution?," *Journal of European Economic History* 25, no. 1 (1996): 202.

[166] See the important essay by Maier, "Between Taylorism and Technocracy."

[167] Christophe Charle makes a distinction between the sociological emergence of "intellectuals" and "professionals". The former, a category of cultural and political avant-garde gained coherence in Republican France, in the course of the Dreyfus Affair, and maintained an uneasy distance from formal institutions of political power and the university labor markets. By contrast, the Anglo Saxon category of 'professionals' " accepted the internal division of labor of the ruling class, while 'the intellectuals' aspired to the universal and defended their own values. The 'professional' aspires to attain the status of the real social elite through individual effort. He manages his career as an entrepreneur would manage his business. He seeks to fulfill the functions of notables (similar to old provincial liberal professions), of personal wealth (as would have popular novelists and dramatists, or successful doctors and lawyers) and the status of an expert (scientists, physicians, jurists). Among the professionals these three

The formalization of this new labor market for the professional class also led to the reform of the educational system, especially secondary schools and universities, as the institutions that would train and produce the professional classes, and accredit their scientific credentials and technical abilities. Since building an educational infrastructure aimed at shaping an adequate labor force in Khuzestan's oil complex became a major bone of contention in the 1920s. I will review the relevant aspects of educational reform in Britain during this period, to provide a wider comparative context on this topic, which will be one of the topics of the next chapter.

Education Reform

Education reform and the proper role of the state in regulating institutional pedagogy had become important concerns across Europe in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and especially in the later 19th century. Until the turn of the 20th century the primary focus of compulsory education reform for primary schools had been to teach basic literacy and numeracy, but especially to impose a standard vernacular as official national language, and to indoctrinate youth in the prevalent nationalist identity and appropriate moral codes[168]. By the turn of the century new priorities loomed for education, beyond turning peasants into Frenchmen, or the so called 'Celtic fringe' into proper subjects of a United Britain. The main focus now was to prepare the next generation of workers, bureaucrats, and expert functionaries for a competitive industrial economy. As is often the case, economic malaise and warfare triggered the will to initiate major reforms[169].

In Britain, the poor military performances in Boer war and WWI had acted as wake up calls about the shortcomings in preparing soldiers and officers, as well as

---

objectives overlap." Christophe Charle, *Naissance des "Intellectuels", 1880-1900* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990), 232.

Russel Jacoby makes a similar argument regarding the demise of "public intellectuals" in post 1968 United States. See Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (Boston: Basic Books, 1987). The important but problematic distinction between intellectuals and the intelligentsia is discussed in Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (Vintage, 1996); Pat Walker, *Between Labor and Capital* (Boston: South End Press, 1979); Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harcourt,Brace & World, 1968); Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*; Konrad and Szelenyi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*; Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*; Ehsani, "A Critique of Planning, Development and Progress."

[168] See Norman Rich, *The Age of Nationalism and Reform, 1850-1890* (New York: Norton, 1977), 68–69; Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 232–233; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 92–100; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 1996), 67–82; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 67–94, 303–338.

[169] See Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Vol. 2*, 378–381, 447–450.

shoddy quality of the military equipment. Intensified military, technological, and industrial competition from the US, Japan, and Germany generated further anxiety and fueled the conviction for the necessity of educational reform in order to produce more competent technical experts as well as better-qualified workers. At the turn of 20th century full time university students across Britain numbered around a mere 20 thousand[170]. The higher education system was selective, and primarily geared toward producing recruits for the governing caste. Until the 1890s universities excluded professional training and the curriculum, especially at elite universities, was built around classics (including mathematics) and instructed though the system of colleges and tutorials[171]. Prestige and social connections were the primary criteria for admission as well as the recruitment of instructors. Scientific research and the training for engineering and practical applications of science to technical and industrial domains was more the purview of guilds, Royal Societies, and professional associations that valued practical and hands on apprenticeship rather ivory tower accreditation[172].

The decades leading to WWI and the interwar period marked a European wide movement to reform educational systems and bring them in line with modern innovations in technology and industrial organization. This trend in turn spurred the expansion of the teaching profession[173] and precipitated educational reform in secondary and higher education, as it was generally accepted that comprehensive schooling, high literacy, and rigorous technical education were crucial factors distinguishing the competitiveness of national economies. However, establishing a consensus that educational reform was an integral aspect of social, economic, and

---

[170] In 1900 these included 6,300 male students in Oxbridge, 8,000 in other English universities, including 2800 women, 1300 in Wales, and some 5000 in Scotland. See Jillian Sutherland, "Education," in *Cambridge Social History of Britain: 1750-1950*, ed. F. M. L. Thompson, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 156.

[171] Fourcade, *Economists and Societies*, 131.

[172] Ibid., 46–50; Robert Fox and Anna Guagnini, eds., *Education, Technology and Industrial Performance in Europe, 1850-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4; Hull, "From Rustow to Chandler to You: How Revolutionary Was the Second Industrial Revolution?," 203–204; Anna Guagnini, "Worlds Apart: Academic Instructions and Professional Qualifications in the Training of Mechanical Engineers in England, 1850-1914," in *Education, Technology and Industrial Performance in Europe, 1850-1939*, ed. Robert Fox and Anna Guagnini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 16–41.

[173] See Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 151–152. Fox and Guagnini, *Education, Technology and Industrial Performance in Europe, 1850-1939*, 1–10.; and Fourcade, ibid. For post 1871 France see Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 303–338; Charle, "Légitimités En Péril: Éléments Pour Une Histoire Comparées Des Élites de L'état En France et En Europe Occidentale (19e - 20e Siècles)."

industrial improvement and progress was a protracted process and was not immediately accepted. Reformers kept up a vocal and public argument to emphasize the shortcomings of the existing national educational systems that were perpetrating social inequality and allowing the existence of "islands of modernity surrounded by seas of backwardness"[174] that simply failed to keep up with advances made in countries like Germany, where a comprehensive system of education had been implemented at various levels.

The establishment of what came to be known as 'red brick' universities in industrial cities, like Birmingham, Manchester, London, and elsewhere, were a major hallmark of a new trend intended to coordinate technical education with the immediate needs of changing industries[175]. These new educational institutions were intended to compensate for the traditional elite's disdain of industrial pursuits, and to prepare the ground for training formally accredited engineers, industrial researchers, chemists, managers, and industrial and scientific researchers whose task was to modernize the economy. Birmingham, in particular, became a center of research and training for the emerging petrochemical industries. John Cadman, later the chairman of APOC in the 1920s, established the petrochemical department and petroleum research at Birmingham University, before being recruited by the Admiralty during the war to oversee the navy's conversion from coal to oil[176]. Similarly, the Imperial College in London became the cornerstone of attempts to improve the design of precision instruments vital components in modern technological warfare. At Cambridge, Alfred Marshall, and later on his pupil Keynes and their colleagues had played a major role in professionalization of economics as a 'scientific' discipline distinct from politics and other social concerns[177].

After WWI the government adopted a more proactive role in coordinating the interaction of universities with the industry and resolve the perceived inadequacies of the educational system. By 1925 the institutionalization of the procedures for establishing research and development programs and formal training courses at major

---

[174] Cameron, "A New View of European Industrialization," 20–21.
[175] Of special interest was the establishment of the London School of Economics and Politics in London by the Webbs. See Fourcade, *Economists and Societies*, 132–133.
[176] SeeJohn Rowland, *Ambassador for Oil: The Life of John First Baron Cadman* (London: H.Jenkins, 1960); H.S. Torrens, "Cadman, John (1877-1941)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.lib.depaul.edu/view/article/32233 .
[177] Fourcade, *Economists and Societies*, 129–134.

universities with critical government support and involvement had become a fait accompli[178]. Although the elite nature of higher education was not significantly altered until after WW2, the significant expansion of universities, and the extension of government scholarships, free place quotas, and the implementation of blind qualification examinations paved the way for relatively greater meritocracy in the accreditation of professional middle classes[179].

The re-organization of the education system was not limited to universities, but involved the labor force as well. Successive military conflicts and the changing nature of industrial production since the turn of the century had demonstrated the inadequacy of labor training methods in technically demanding and higher skilled tasks such as product testing, draughtsmanship, machine tool operations, and so on[180]. Preparations for many of these skills, and for the operation of more complex tools and industrial processes, required greater abstract and theoretical knowledge and it was felt that it could no longer be left to the care of on-the-job practical training or traditional apprenticeship alone. As a result, the more comprehensive and forml education of the next generation of working classes became a greater concern after WWI. The 1918 Education Act eliminated school fees for elementary schools. It also doubled the salaries of teachers, and increased their pensions threefold. The University Grant Committees of 1919 channeled greater government funds to universities and increased the funding of teacher training colleges. However, these measures were short-lived, as the austerity budget of 1921 led to extensive cutbacks, including funding educational reforms[181].

Establishing social welfare reforms, as previously discussed, was a protracted process, fraught with political friction and class contentions. By mid 1920s only 13 percent of all children remained in the formal education system; the rest had to go to work to subsidize the family income. Despite waved school fees families often could not afford school supplies and uniforms, nor could they cope without children's wages. Despite government subsidies and elementary and secondary school reforms

---

[178] See Williams, "Training for Specialists: The Precision Instruments Industry in Britain and France, 1890-1925," 237–247.
[179] Sutherland, "Education," 162; Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 151.
[180] Williams, "Training for Specialists: The Precision Instruments Industry in Britain and France, 1890-1925," 237.
[181] Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 151–152; Taylor, *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*, 183.

working classes and the poor benefited little, and publicly funded educational social policies effectively benefited various layers of the middle class[182].

Shouldering the Burden of Social Policies:

From the onset in mid 19th century, a persistent objection against the expansion of social policies was their substantial cost, which had to be funded from new taxes, and the question of who ought to shoulder the burden[183]. In arguments that resonate to this day, the main objections against new taxes from the mid 19th century were formulated around variations of the 'moral hazard' argument and the supposed corrupting effects of publicly subsidizing services that ought to be shouldered by individuals. In this discourse social policies were supposed to subsidize idleness and undermine personal responsibility. They were also presumed to interfere with the unfettered workings of the market and to place a burden on the productively employed and the deserving rich[184].

It is important to recall that the debate over the significance of taxation (income tax, tariffs, and value added tax in particular) occupy a particularly important place in the contemporary literature about the relationship of oil and politics[185]. In this section I will discuss some of the relevant aspects of the debates over taxation in the period under discussion, and provide a different interpretation of the relationship between taxation and the exercise of politics in contemporary nation states.

The social question and the welfare state institutions that emerged with such urgency in the interwar period were premised on the extraction of taxes to fund the growing range of their programs. Historically, building an effective fiscal and financial machinery of the government had been the cornerstone of the architecture of modern nation states in Western Europe[186]. Initially, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the

---

[182] Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 201–206.
[183] Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, 168–170; Thane, "Government and Society in England and Wales: 1750-1914," 53–58.
[184] For a history of significant and ongoing polemical debates over the question of welfare and poverty see Somers and Block, "From Poverty to Perversity: Ideas, Markets, and Institutions over 200 Years of Welfare Debate"; Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*; Block and Somers, "In the Shadow of Speenhamland"; Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*; Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*; Mitchell Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty: Toward a Genealogy of Liberal Governance* (London: Routledge, 1991); Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*; Procacci, "Social Economy and the Government of Poverty."
[185] See Ehsani, "Crude Power: Rethinking Oil and Politics.".
[186] For Europe, and in particular France see Gabriel Ardent, "Financial Policy and Economic Infrastructure of Modern States and Nations," in *The Formation of States and Nations in Western*

growing power of state bureaucracies to extract taxes had served the purpose of building modern infrastructures, and fueling the growing military industrial complex. The imposition of new taxes, especially on income and revenues accruing from market activities, was based on more systematic bureaucratic record keeping, and the rule of parliamentary law. Schumpeter maintained that this modern "tax state" was based on a historical compromise reached during the wars of religion between absolutist monarchs and the bourgeoisie and the gentry that essentially redefined the nature of the polity after 16th century. In exchange for the voluntary acquiescence by the latter to pay taxes and fund military campaigns and state projects, the decision over the volume, the nature, and the manner of the collection and expenditure of taxes was taken out of the hands of the monarch and entrusted to the care of elected representatives. Overtime, this new social contract changed the nature of the patrimonial state, and had served to advance and make acceptable the notion of the state as the universal representative of common interests[187].

So long as the franchise was limited to those with status and property, and excluded women and other legally marginalized groups, this idea had limited purchase as the burden of taxation was simply passed on to the working population. In Britain, the extension of universal franchise after 1918 changed this dynamic and made the debates over the welfare state and its social policies, and the appropriate forms and levels of taxation a matter of more inclusive negotiations. States are by definition financed through some form of economic extraction. But various forms of taxation, and their associated redistribution, generate very different politics. Whether compulsory contributions to the state involve the imposition of levies on persons, property, inheritance, income, transactions, or commodities, can engender different responses among the targeted segments of population, and establish a range of expectations from the state.

In the modern era of nation states the building of a fiscal infrastructure capable of keeping track of economic performance of individuals and other economic agents required the setting up of extensive bureaucracies, and the intrusive collection

---

Europe, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 164–242. For comparison of German and Britain see Rudolf Braun, "Taxation, Socio Political Structures, and State Building in Great Britain and Brandenburg Prussia," in *Formation of Nation States in Western Europe*, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 243–327.

[187] Joseph Schumpeter, "The Crisis of the Tax State," in *Economics and Sociology of Capitalism*, ed. Richard Swedberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 99–140.

of detailed data, and elaborate record keeping[188]. The negotiations over tax contributions and their eventual allocation became a centerpiece of parliamentary and representative politics, especially when it came to financing social projects such as education reform, housing programs, unemployment insurance, social security, and so on. Schumpeter saw the fiscal system as the heart of the modern state and a primary instrument of social engineering: "the budget is the skeleton of the state stripped of all misleading ideologies…Our people have become what they are under the fiscal pressure of the state…All of this created economic forms, human types, and industrial situations which would not have grown in this manner without it"[189]. Written at a time when he was the finance minister of a defeated Austria, Schumpeter warned against the fragility of what he called "the tax state". The exponential increase of the social demands heaped on the state in the post war era was a great cause for concern, and if tax policy was mishandled it could easily target any hope of economic recovery and growth, and lead to the state's collapse.

In practice, however, the implementation of taxation for the financing of social programs was not simply a matter of developing the proper economic models and of delegation of decision making to qualified experts. For one thing, there are major differences between public assistance and social insurance; two forms of public social security often mistakenly lumped together, even though they are quite distinct. Social insurance schemes (such as unemployment benefits, pensions, or health insurance) are more codified, and consist largely of contributions related to benefits. They modify certain risks within the population and among the working class by socializing the costs. Employers and the state contribute to these schemes because the continued accumulation of capital within the economy of mass production and consumption (Fordism) relies on the continued effective demand for consumer goods by the population. In addition, the accumulated financial assets now form a substantial segment of the financial system. On the other hand, public assistance schemes are often financed through public budgets and administered through bureaucratic institutions that impose very selective criteria for qualification. While social insurance schemes have become integral to the politics of class compromise

---

[188] For an overview of some of the key debates over the question of the tax state see Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social : The Welfare State and Local Politics in Imperial Germany*, 29–31.
[189] Joseph Schumpeter, "The Crisis of the Tax State," in *Economics and Sociology of Capitalism*, ed. Richard Swedberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 100-101.

that emerged with the welfare state, public assistance schemes (such as welfare for the poor) are always in jeopardy and treated as morally suspect[190].

The imposition of new taxes contributed differently to these schemes, and political reaction and support for these expenditures have also varied considerably. In addition, democratic oversight over these funds, and decision-making over their allocations are not similar. While social insurance schemes are more 'untouchable' and relatively more open to oversight by contributors, public assistance has always been subject to greater contention and resistance.

The implementation of progressive income taxation did lead to some measure of social distribution of wealth, but not as extensively as it is sometimes claimed. Social security benefits in Britain did increase twelvefold in the first half of the 20th century, although from a very low starting point[191]. But their greatest burden fell on the shoulders of working people and not the well to do, thus limiting their actual redistributive effects. In 1913 working classes were paying more in taxes than they were receiving in services. A decade later, in 1925, they were paying 85 percent of the cost of the expanded social services, but they were now receiving £55 million more than their contributions. By 1937 this figure had increased to £250 million[192]. On average working class incomes increased between 8-14 percent between 1913 and 1937, and some small redistribution of income did take place. However, the major beneficiary of the changed economy seemed to have been the salaried professionals, as shown from the following table 3:

---

[190] Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, 180–183. For comparative analysis of welfare policies and critical debates about poverty see Margaret R. Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), especially Ch.1; Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton University Press, 2001); Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*, 6th ed. (New York: Free Press, 1999); Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare,* 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1993); William J Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
[191] Saville, "The Welfare State: An Historial Approach," 17.
[192] Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 170.

Table 3: Share of National Income in Britain Before and After WWI (as percentage of total)

	Wages	**Salaries**	**Profits**
1911	38	14	34
1924	42	26	25

Source: Thane (1982): 170

Despite the slight shift in redistribution of incomes, the burden of direct and indirect taxation fell mostly on the working population, especially if we take into account various obligatory contributions to welfare that were not categorized as tax. As a result, most expenditure on social services ended up being a transfer of income mediated by the state, via taxation, within the working class. Compulsory contributions to social programs, instead of raising taxes, placed much of the financial burden on the poor and avoided any significant redistribution of wealth. According to Saville "Mostly working classes pay for their own social security benefits by compulsory contributions and high levels of indirect taxes"[193].

This brings to a conclusion the analysis of the manner in which the 'social question' was posed with urgency amidst the military and political challenges of WWI and its aftermath. This process deeply affected the ethos and the practices of the British state, and large businesses such as APOC, toward labor and social concerns. As we have seen, the protracted assemblage of the institutions of the welfare state -- in affordable housing, education, urban reform, unemployment insurance, public health, and so on – were not the result of some mythical and inevitable maturity and evolving rational decision making, but of unforeseen circumstances, and a response to intensified social strife and class conflicts that were reaching explosive dimensions. The movement toward the consolidation of social policies and welfare institutions was neither immediate nor straightforward. They were the outcome of political struggles, ongoing negotiations, and trial and error aimed at modifying and managing class frictions. Equally important, they were the result of calculations aimed at improving the performance of the economy and the productivity of labor in a changed international arena. To paraphrase Michel Aglietta, lived history is heterogeneous,

[193] Saville, "The Welfare State: An Historial Approach," 21–22.

and beyond any historical 'laws' of evolution. "History is initiatory…we can act in history not calculate it"[194].

This juncture was also the turning point for the rise of a class of professionals and the accompanying technocratic ethos in managing social welfare policies and reforming industrial relations. It coincided with a period marked by the formal entry of labor, the poor, and women into the arena of political citizenship, which had expanded threefold by the end of 1920s[195].

The welfare state was not strictly speaking a redistributive state. Saville may have been oversimplifying in claiming, "The welfare state is essentially a bourgeois project… its aim was not redistribution, but 'self help' and insurance paid for and by the poor. The state now 'saves' for the working class and translates the savings into social services"[196]. But he was correct in asserting that the result was that the idea of private property was never seriously challenged and in the end the distribution of wealth was not substantially more equal than the turn of the century.

The history of the rise of the 'social question' that we have unpacked in this chapter had direct repercussions on the dynamics and the development of the oil complex in Khuzestan, as the idea of social policies as necessary and unavoidable antidotes to labor unrest began to gradually became part of governmental and corporate understanding in Britain and much of Europe. But, in the post war era simmering with the energies of socialist revolutions, rising nationalism, and the establishment of independent and modern nation states, the implementation of social policies by emerging bureaucracies also became an integral component of the legitimacy of these new states[197]. In the fast expanding spheres of industrial production, such as the oil industry, labor had begun to be perceived in a different and conflicted light: no longer as a casual, cheap, and anonymous factor of production, but as both a potentially dangerous political agent, as well as a necessary 'human capital'. Raising the productivity of labor in the age of highly competitive rapid mechanization and mass production now required investment in the workers,

[194] Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, 66–67.
[195] Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 155.
[196] Saville, "The Welfare State: An Historial Approach," 19, 23–24.
[197] For the case of modernization in Iran see Banani, *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941*; Atabaki and Zürcher, eds., *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah*; Schayegh, *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong*; Bharier, *Economic Development in Iran 1900-1970*; Homa Katouzian, *Political Economy of Modern Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1980); Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*; Ghani, *Iran and the Rise of the Reza Shah*; Mahboubi Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Moassesat-e Tamadoni-e Jadid dar Iran*.

including the provision of specialized training to adapt them to an increasingly fragmented and technical labor process. But it also demanded social investments to placate the rising political power of the working populations by making improvements in their living conditions and to insure the acculturation of their children as the next generation of producers and consumers..

The reproduction of labor power thus became an integral concern of the new political economy. As the moderate political representatives of the working classes were being integrated into the political system, the consumption habits of the workers were also becoming part of the cornerstone of the new economic order of Fordism and the mass consumer society[198].

In Conclusion: The Social Life of Oil in the Wake of WWI and the Transition to Fordism

By mid-1920's APOC was re-organizing into a new form of business organization, which four decades later David Lilienthal named the multi-national corporation[199]. This re-organization was coming at the apex of what has been labeled the second industrial revolution, a problematic term that, nevertheless, highlights the fundamental nature of the changes that were taking place. Fordism is an industrial and political-economic order that has been built on oil as its primary material, and is organized through the vertical and horizontal integration of related economic activities within corporate giants with global reach, that combine industrial scale production with mass consumption. Its workings are based on both the detailed control of the labor process, as well as on sustained and disciplinary intervention into the reproduction of labor power. The daily lives, consumer habits, political imaginaries, and cultural preferences of workers, their families, and the general population, are integral to the functioning of consumer society. Fordism relies on the increased commodification of labor power and the expansion of the wage contract, and the active participation of laborers and the general population in the mass consumer market. The financial system, and the welfare and social policies planned

[198] See Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, 151–163.
[199] It was David Lilienthal who coined the term in 1960. See Geoffrey Jones, *Multinationals and Global Capitalism: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

by experts and implemented by public institutions, form the basis of the Fordist regime of accumulation.

As we have seen in this chapter, the emergence of the Fordism and the social policies of the welfare state were not the inevitable outcomes of historical progress and rational planning. To paraphrase Aglietta, history has no 'laws'; it is a creative and contentious process. "History is initiatory… we can act in history not calculate it"[200]. The protracted shift to Fordism and the institutionalization of social policies that accompanied it, were shaped in large part during the unpredictable conflicts of WWI, and then accelerated in the course of social conflicts and global crises that followed.

As one of Britain's largest and most strategically important corporations APOC's practices and organization were not insulated from the social and political events and processes discussed in this chapter. However, as we shall see in the following chapters, this does not imply that practices and forms of expertise shaped in wartime Britain and in the interwar years were simply transmitted by the Company to its Khuzestan operations. The analysis provided in this chapter sheds light on the historical context where 'the social question' was posed in Britain with great urgency, and the new arts of government that emerged out of it and reshaped the habitus there. As we shall discuss in the following chapter, these events had a direct bearing on what transpired in the oil complex in Khuzestan; but they did not determine the outcome. They contributed to shaping the oil habitus in Abadan, but they did not define it.

As an industrial leader APOC's reorganization in the post war era was driven in part by the adoption of labor saving technologies, and by its fevered attempts to capture and monopolize markets for their mass-produced consumer goods. In Britain, APOC began, with significant assistance form the state, to build national networks of distribution, gas stations, a major refinery, fund research and development projects, initiate the development of new petrochemical products, and so on[201]. Like other businesses it was affected by the convulsions of the era of mass politics and the labor strife that ushered in the welfare state. It was also a global company, producing oil in far-flung corners of the Empire, for consumption by navy ships, the Royal Airforce, military transport, as well as private consumers. It was a majority government owned

---

[200] Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, 66–67.
[201] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*; Laurence Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.* (London: Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), 1938).

corporation, even if it was operating in a grey area between the state, the empire, and the market.

Together, these crossed historical ties and global-local forces affected the attitude of APOC toward its employees in Abadan, the urban population, and the Iranian state. The planned construction of the Abadan bazaar was not an exception; but one of the first crucial steps in a strategic change of approach from a corporation that was shifting identity from a speculative extractive mining operation to a major global industrial business, during a revolutionary period. From this juncture the Company began to get increasingly involved in attempting to actively shape and ever more directly plan minute aspects of the lives of its employees and their families. These social policies were conceived by a new breed of technocrats as the solution to the complex political challenges, and the social and class frictions that the Company's operations faced in Iran. These social policies were adopted with great reluctance, but always framed and presented as generous and benevolent acts, serving the general welfare. The Company had hitherto skirted the claims of social responsibility, because they had nothing to do with maximizing profits from oil production. Building the bazaar of Abadan, investing in schools, company housing for staff and (much later) for workers, public health measures, urban planning and involvement in building municipal infrastructure, gradually became the first hesitant steps in what soon became a growing repertoire of what can only be called "reluctant paternalism" that defined the Company's new approach [202].

[202] See the insightful essays by Charles S. Maier, "Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 2 (1970): 27–61; and the follow up essay in Charles Maier, *In Search of Stability: Explorations in Historical Political Economy.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 53–68.

Chapter 5

Reluctant Paternalism and the Social Question in Khuzestan's Oil Complex in the Post War Era

The 1926 Turning Point: Oil Encounter in Abadan

The short decade after WWI witnessed the consolidation of the oil industry in Iran. The interlude was a revolutionary turning point on many scales during which all the main social actors in the making of the oil complex were transformed through abrasive encounters with each other, as well as with the larger transnational forces that have been discussed in previous chapters. Although the consolidation of the oil complex was an ongoing process, I have taken the year 1926 as a symbolic but significant turning point when the new trends in the oil complex took a turn toward being institutionalized in significant ways. By this date a number of the important general outlines of the oil complex in Khuzestan had emerged with some clarity, even though frictions and re-adjustments continued and the oil industry kept changing in response to the forces of politics, the immense technical challenges bedeviling the industry, the vagaries of the markets, shifting geopolitics, persistent labor issues, and an ever growing range of practical difficulties and obstacles.

The year 1926 was the coronation of Reza Shah, and the juncture when the Iranian central government began to move more confidently to impose its direct sovereignty over Khuzestan. With the increasing retreat of the British government from direct interference in southern Iran APOC had to rethink its positions. Throughout the preceding months the Company concluded a major policy review of its operations in Iran, aware that it was entering a new phase and an unexplored territory where it had little options but to reconfigure its relations with the Iranian government, its employees, and the local society in Khuzestan. The population of Abadan, a growing multitude of bewildering diversity, some local indigenous, others migrants from the northern borders of the Persian Gulf and the Zagros highlands, or from more distant places like India, the Caucasus, or inland cities of Iran, had to find ways of accommodating with each other, as well as the increasingly intrusive bureaucracy and the hardnosed Oil Company. They had to devise individual and collective strategies of negotiating with the enormous material and social challenges

they faced in an unfamiliar and hostile new place, with its alien rules and increasingly impersonal and money-based relationships. Some had come to work for wages in the oil facilities; others had been pushed there following the demise of their former social and communal modes of life due to warfare, famine, or the dislocations wrought by oil capitalism. Oil was the direct or indirect reason why all of these social actors had converged on Abadan, but it was the city itself that was the stage for their encounter. The frictions between these social actors shaped the urban space of Abadan; and in return it was this built urban environment that reflected and molded the social life that oil was materializing there.

Contrary to the conventional historiographies of the oil industry, the institutionalization of the oil complex in mid 1920s' was not accomplished by the sovereign actions of any single actor, regardless of how powerful they were, but was the outcome of the difficult, unequal, and conflict-ridden relations between them all, set within a transitional global conjuncture. Understood in this way, we may avoid the usual pitfall of seeing the social history of oil as one more instance when 'the global' determines the local; or producing a reverse determinism that believes the local is ultimately what matters most. Rather, the challenge is to unearth how 'the local' was integral to shaping the macro processes that were revolutionizing the world after WWI (chapter 1).

In previous chapters I have attempted to demonstrate that the major actors in the drama of oil in Iran did not appear on the scene 'ready-made'; their historical development and the course of their actions were neither predictable nor pre-determined; and none of them were the sovereign authors of their own history. Rather, these social actors and institutions were made through relations that were contextual and situated historically and geographically. In this chapter I will continue to investigate this history at a local level, by further exploring how the main social actors in Iran's oil complex *were made and remade* through their frictions and interactions with each other, in specific places like Abadan, as well as with larger processes at work in the larger world. This was equally true in the case of the colonial superpower the British Government and its Iran policies, as it was for the upstart Iranian state, the emerging corporate oil giant APOC, the heterogeneous population of oil areas like Abadan, and the local magnates in southern Iran such as the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheikh Khaz'al who witnessed their local autonomy and social base rise and then fall during this pivotal era. The fortunes and misfortunes of

these social actors were shaped in constant relation with each other, through what Amitav Ghosh has aptly called 'the oil encounter' (see chapter 1).

The oil encounter in Abadan during the first quarter of the 20th century saw the river island go with breakneck speed from an arid agrarian stretch of land in a river delta to an oil boomtown at the center of the emerging global economy. It went from the hinterland of a peripheral province to a strategic border town between two nation states, one of which was a new proto-colonial invention, Iraq[1]. By mid-1920s Abadan was crisscrossed with pipelines, shipping docks, and refinery facilities; but also with teaming slums populated by thousands living in horrifying conditions. The elimination of the local magnates and the undermining of the social and political orders they represented had created a vacuum in managing the rising social problems that urgently needed to be addressed. At the same time, the new central government and APOC were now confronting each other directly, for the fist time, in the same location. Both had to deal with the pressing and completely novel material challenges and social expectations of a heterogeneous population, in an unfamiliar territory, and through untried ways. For APOC and the Iranian state this new urban population was a resource as well as a burden… and even a potential political threat. It was a population that needed to be managed, socialized, and assimilated.

From the perspective of the Oil Company the growing population of Abadan was the potential raw material for the production of surplus value in oil. It was the necessary reserve army of the unemployed, desperately in need of being hired for money, while their numbers kept a downward pressure on wages. However, the industrial requirements for time discipline, coordinated work habits, and familiarity with technical skills were sorely missing among most of the urban migrants who had recently left pastoral and agrarian rural lives on the shores of the Persian Gulf or the Zagros highlands. At the same time, the horrid living conditions in the boomtown were a barrier to the attraction of the required better-qualified workers from abroad, as well as from elsewhere in Iran. Deadly epidemics were a constant threat, there was no public social life to speak of, and poverty and destitution created fertile ground for political discontent and subversive resistance, not to mention devastating epidemics.

[1] The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres and the League of Nations put Mesopotamia under a British Mandate, thereafter three Ottoman provinces of Basra, Mosul, and Baqdad were collated into a unified nation state, under a monarchy established in 1921 and nominally headed by Faisal who was installed by Britain at the time as Syria and Lebanon had been placed under the French Mandate. See Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 30–62.

Having created the oil boomtown, the Company was also aware of the repercussions of the negative public image that the horrid material conditions were projecting both inside Iran, as well as internationally[2].

APOC's response and its justification for its lucrative oil concession, one that it repeated regularly, was to eulogize its part in creating a global industry that was bringing tremendous wealth to Iranians. However, neither its financial dealings with the Iranian government, nor its labor hiring practices, or the living conditions of actual Iranians living in the areas under its control provided convincing evidence that this was the case. By the middle of the decade, APOC, a nominally private corporation that was majority owned by the British Government, and which always claimed that shareholder dividends and market performance were its priorities, had to shift reluctantly toward accepting responsibilities and commitments to a range of 'social' issues that nominally had little to do directly with the business of oil capitalism, such as public education, housing, public health, retail provisions, social entertainment, public relations, leisure activities, urban amenities, municipal infrastructure, and urban management.

I refer to this shift toward the adoption of a range of social policies by APOC, as well as by the government bureaucracy, as 'reluctant paternalism', because of their top down authoritarian approach to urban and social improvement that were eventually adopted with hesitation, plenty of haggling, and a desire to press the burden onto someone else. These social policies were explicitly programs of social engineering, intended to undermine the dangers of political discontent and subversion, but to also create contended and loyal employees, as well as patriotic and docile citizens. As we saw in the previous chapter this engagement with the social reproduction of labor power was not exceptional to Abadan but was integral to the wider global transition to Fordism and to the adoption of social welfare measures by states, professional classes, labor activists, and capitalist corporations in the interwar era. In the same vein, the emergence of reluctant paternalism in post war Abadan was both an extension of this wider trend toward accommodating labor and managing

[2] See "Arabestan va jonoub-e Iran; haqiqat-e owza'e gozashteh va tashrih-e pishamad-e hazer" [Khuzestan and southern Iran; the reality of previous conditions and explaining the present] Part 1, 14 May 1915, and Part 2, 20 May 1915; with a "Reply" by Seyyed Amanollah Behbahani, a Majles Member published on 3 June 1915, in *Asr-e Jadid*

social conflicts, but also a response to geopolitical shifts in the region, and the specific challenges emerging in the oil geography of southern Iran.

The social question in Abadan became an equally pressing issue for the Iranian state. While Reza Shah's modern army was devouring the meager annual budget and putting down regional resistances, eliminating provincial magnates, undermining local autonomies, and enforcing its authoritarian modernization, it was also discovering the need of a nominally "constitutional state" to acknowledge certain novel public expectations that had been irrelevant to the absolutist Qajar state. The centralized nation state that was being erected under Reza Shah intended to mould and shape the heterogeneous populations as its modern and homogeneous Iranian citizen-subjects. Toward that end it began its work by establishing new institutions of education, with Persian as the obligatory national language. It moved to formulate a new territorial imaginary of the nation-state based on he historical reconstructions of pre Islamic Imperial Persian grandeur, aided by recent discoveries in the new discipline of archeology. It erected modern governmental institutions of census taking, public health, tax collection, standardized bureaucratic record keeping, policing, municipal management, the registration of individual vital data as well as properties and commercial transactions, etc[3]. It imposed uniform dress codes for men and women to force them out of traditional garbs and into modern European style attires, fabricated in national textile factories. It began to force pastoral nomads to settle, and attempted to eliminate the autonomous political and military power of tribes and landlords by declaring communal land as exclusive state properties[4]. The coercive intrusions of the bureaucracy into everyday life, and the militarized integration of populations in the border regions were justified in the nationalist language of belonging to a common motherland.

---

[3] On the establishment of various institutions of modernization see Hossein Mahboubi Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Moassesat-e Tamadoni-e Jadid dar Iran*, 3 vols. (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1975).
[4] Hoochang Chehabi, "Staging the Emperor's New Cloths: Dress Codes and Nation Building under Reza Shah," *Iranian Studies* 26, no. 3–4 (1993): 209–34; Patricia Baker, "Politics of Dress: The Dress Reform Laws of 1920s and 1930s Iran," in *Languages of Dress in the Middle East*, ed. Nancy Lindisfarne Tapper and Bruce Ingham (Richmond: Curzon, 1997), 178–92; Rudi Matthee, "Transforming Dangerous Nomads into Useful Artisans, Technicians, Agriculturalists: Education in the Reza Shah Period," in *The Making of Modern Iran*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London: Routledge, 2003), 123–45; Kaveh Bayat, "Riza Shah and the Tribes," in *The Making of Modern Iran*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London: Routledge, 2003), 213–19; Stephanie Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41* (London: Routledge, 2007); Amin Banani, *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961); Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

The paradoxical reverse side of the coin was the unavoidability of ignoring certain public demands made in the name of patriotism, citizenship, and national belonging against purported abuse by foreign outsiders. As a result, when the population of a city like Abadan would call upon the state to protect them from destitution or injustice caused by the foreign owned Oil Company, to ensure that employment in oil would go to Iranians and not to foreigners, or to intercede on their behalf for improvements in their dire living conditions, the state had little choice other than to respond, even though it was itself partly responsible for the dislocations that had forced people to move to Abadan in the first place.

The flurry of social activities in Abadan caused friction between the Oil Company and the central government and its local administrators and representatives, who felt that the company was indeed responsible for assisting in improving social conditions. Their rational was that Abadan had been erected as an urban place to serve the Oil Company, and therefore it had to take responsibility to improve the town's state of affairs. At the same time, and paradoxically, state officials felt that the decision-making power and the management of urban affairs ought to fall within the purview of the central government: What would be the point of establishing municipal bureaucracies if the Company continued to remain in charge? In Khuzestan, in particular, with its long history of British intrusion and domination in southern Iran through its local allies, the issue of who ought to be responsible for and in charge of social matters had great political sensitivity, especially for the central government who remained always suspicious of separatist plots on its borders, and particularly so in Khuzestan. This *ongoing struggle over the boundaries of sovereignty between the bureaucracy and the Oil Company* played a defining role in shaping the oil encounter in Khuzestan; and to this day characterizes the dynamics of the oil industry in Iran.

For the new central government, the oil operations in Khuzestan represented a major source of financial revenue and a strategic asset, but also potentially an existential threat. Reza Shah's rule, as was discussed in Chapter 2, was consolidated within the complex historical dynamics of Anglo-Iranian relations and the strategic balance of power between Iran and its neighbors. From Tehran's perspective Khuzestan was always one step away from British-instigated separatism, similar to Kuwait or to Bahrain, an Island that Iran dubiously claimed as its own territory; or to Iraq, a newly patched together nation state that Britain had created on its western

border. Iran refused to recognize Iraq well into 1920s over continued border disputes, especially regarding the Shatt al-Arab river and the ownership of water resources and oil deposits in the border areas. Other major bones of contention included the status of Iranians who had been long residents of Mesopotamia, the fate of Shi'a holy places, the citizenship of Arab tribes straddling the now rigid national borders[5], and the legitimacy of Faisal as an imported monarch. The bloody repression of Shi'a rebellions in southern Iraq after the war, the emergence of 'the Kurdish question', and the significant continued British military presence in Iraq kept relations tense and Tehran highly concerned with the situation in its southern provinces and border regions[6].

Under these circumstances, all APOC activities in Khuzestan were treated as highly suspicious, while at the same time the state was keenly aware of its own limits in funding social works or mustering the manpower and expertise to manage it. Furthermore, as the analysis in this chapter will reveal, there was gradually a growing awareness among all parties involved that social improvements were in fact acts of social engineering; or to paraphrase Foucault, they represented a symbiosis between the management of territory, populations, and security, with successful governance and improving productivity[7]. Taking charge of these social projects was tantamount to educating and molding the loyalty of the population and insuring their usefulness and docility. Social projects were costly and required professional expertise and long-term institutional commitment, but they were also invaluable for the development of the desired human resources. As a result the social and urban arena in the oil complex became a political battleground between the Company, the government, and the local population. This tug of war shaped the particular geography of Abadan.

---

[5] See *Persia, Annual Reports, 1925* and *1926,* in R. M. Burrell, ed., *Iran Political Diaries 1881-1965* (London: Archive Editions Ltd, 1997), Vol.7, 367–373, 550–554. See also Keith McLachlan, ed., *The Boundaries of Modern Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Reidar Visser, *Basra, the Failed Gulf State : Separatism and Nationalism in Southern Iraq* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2005); Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[6] Asqar Ja'fari Valadayi, "Tarhha-ye Tajziyeh-ye Khouzestan (Plots to Separate Khouzestan)," *Ettela'at-e Siasi-Eqtesadi*, no. 211/212 (2): 32–41; Visser, "The Gibraltar That Never Was"; Reidar Visser, *Basra Crude The Great Game of Iraq's "Southern" Oil*, Working Papers (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2007); Visser and Stansfield, *An Iraq of Its Regions*.
[7] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population :Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Creating Enclaves; Setting Boundaries:

The Oil Company, in particular, tried to carve out exclusive geographies by effectively denationalizing territories over which it could exercise its own rules, without government intrusion[8]. By mid 1920s, as the central government institutions began to be set up in Abadan and throughout Khuzestan, APOC reacted by beginning to create exclusive company areas, or company towns, where it would create a built environment according to its own requirements and commands. These exclusive geographic enclaves encompassed the refinery and its associated facilities, but soon the Company also began to develop, build, and expand a range of social amenities and urban infrastructure in response to mounting social pressure. However, these social commitments always sat uneasily within the Company's corporate culture and its financial calculations as a private enterprise. It accepted its social role with great reluctance, and at every step it tried to negotiate with the Iranian state to convince it to shoulder a greater share of the burden, while at the same time it strove jealously to maintain absolute control over its own built environment. But in the turbulent postwar era this ideal arrangement was no longer a possibility. Neither would the state accept it, nor did the sheer scale of a fast growing Abadan allow it. Abadan never became a typical company town, simply because it was already too large by the end of the war, and once Sheikh Khaz'al was overthrown and the central government had stepped in to stake its claim it was not willing to cede back total sovereignty over municipal matters and spatial control back to the Company. Meanwhile, the new Abadanis, the heterogeneous population who had settled in the boomtown, had begun to stake their own claims to this growing and novel urban space[9].

The Company's housing projects for its employees was a case in point: Initially, prior to 1920s, when there were less than a hundred Europeans in Abadan (see table 2), the Company had only built a permanent bungalow in the Braim area for the Abadan manager Mr. Thompson. This bungalow was mostly made of tin, but was later rebuilt with stone, and a few other Spartan temporary shelters were added for the other Europeans. By mid 1920s a number of permanent barracks and lanes were constructed to house skilled and semi skilled artisans and workers, mostly Europeans

[8] Dara Orenstein, "Foreign-Trade Zones and the Cultural Logic of Frictionless Production," *Radical History Review* 2011, no. 109 (2010): 36–61.
[9] Kaveh Ehsani, "Social Engineering and the Contradictions of Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns: A Look at Abadan and Masjed-Soleyman," *International Review of Social History* 48, no. 3 (2003): 361–99.

and Indians. These were called appropriately the Sikh Lane, Indian Quarters, and Bungalow Area. After the extended crisis with the central government over royalties and the "Persianization" of the labor force that eventually led to the renegotiated 1933 agreement (see chapters 1 and 7), more extensive urban development and housing projects were funded for semi skilled workers, the staff, and artisans, including Iranians[10]. However, mounting urban tensions, industrial necessities, and political realities eventually forced the Company to begin a commitment to far more extensive labor housing projects by late 1930s[11]. This trend accelerated after the end of WW2, in the 1940s, when rising labor militancy and deep-set social resentment over the hardships suffered during the occupation led to the vast expansion of urban housing projects in Company areas of Abadan and Khuzestan, this time for manual workers[12].

Last, the local population of Abadan gradually moved toward forging new webs of solidarity and place-defined identities in part as a negotiating mechanism with the larger forces that had altered their lives and brought them to this place. The population of Abadan in the 1920s consisted of a growing hodgepodge of indigenous Arabs, small merchants, casual workers, artisans, and shopkeepers from Bushehr, Isfahan, Shushtar, Behbahan, Ramhormoz, Shiraz; oil wageworkers from India, Azarbaijan, and the Bakhtiyari; women sex workers from we don't know where; along with many other as yet anonymous migrants who had made the boomtown their abode. In Abadan they encountered soldiers, household servants, clerks, and skilled industrial workers from the Indian subcontinent, British Company staff, Canadian and Polish technicians and mariners, and many others itinerants from other unfamiliar places. In collective labor actions that led to strikes and open confrontations in 1920, 1922, 1924,and 1929; but also through daily acts of resistance and negotiation on occasions like the Bazaar incident, company employees as well as urban residents tried to consolidate and improve their harsh working and living conditions. These quiet and not-so 'quiet encroachments of the ordinary', as Asef Bayat has called the gradual formation of collective urban acts of claiming a growing share in social rights

[10] Crinson, "Abadan: Planning and Architecture under the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company."
[11] For Company housing in Abadan prior to 1920s see BP 70146. For housing skilled artisans and staff in the 1920s and 1930s see BP 49690. For the start of workers' housing projects in 1940 see BP 49688
[12] Lindsey-Smith, "J.M. The Story of an Architect"; Ehsani, "Social Engineering and Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns"; Crinson, "Abadan: Planning and Architecture under the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company."

over space[13], came to a head during 1924-1927 with the unexpected resistance of local residents of the Sheikh neighborhood of Abadan against their forced relocation in order to build a sanitary bazaar (chapter 6). This was a novel form of collective struggle to claim "the right to the city"[14], in a place that was not in any sense 'a city', yet, but a sprawling boomtown of industrial filth and teaming poverty[15]. It was through the experience of industrial wage labor, but also through these collective, place-based struggles, that new bonds of solidarity and identity were forged by new urban neighbors who were migrants and settlers, but now gradually had begun to identify with this new geography and social settings, and started referring to themselves as "Abadani"[16]. In the rest of this chapter we will investigate the frictions and interactions between these social actors in order to reproduce a social and geographic history of oil during this pivotal period, as a set of social relations.

Labor and the Social Question in Interwar Abadan

As APOC's operations kept expanding exponentially throughout the war years, the challenge of recruiting and maintaining an adequate labor force took on greater urgency. Once the initial phases of oil exploration and extraction had been successfully completed, the subsequent stages of expansion posed an even greater challenge. Some of these new challenges were scientific and technical, for example mastering techniques of handling the heavy Persian crude and adjusting refining techniques to extract new chemical derivatives from the petroleum and its byproducts. The main products from Abadan were lubricants and fuels for internal combustion engines and lighting (see table 1), items urgently required by the military during wartime, and after the war for mass consumer products, transportation, and aviation.

---

[13] Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
[14] I am thinking this juncture through the work of Henri Lefebvre. See Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'Espace* (Paris: Anthropos, 1983); Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
[15] I have discussed extensively the struggle over urban space and its political resonance in Kaveh Ehsani, "The Politics of Public Space in Tehran," *City and Society*, under review 2015.

[16] Ehsani, "Social Engineering and Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns."

Table 4 Abadan Refinery Main Products, 1912-1931 (000 tons)

YEAR*	BENZINE	KEROSINE	FUEL OIL	TOTAL**
1912-13	5	8	20	33
1914-15	24	33	178	235
1916-17	108	38	330	476
1918-19	161	118	644	923
1921-22	394	163	1138	1965
1923-24	223	125	1334	1682
1925-26	363	197	1970	2521
1927-28	531	228	2137	2896
1929	1053	359	2676	4078
1931	1166	370	2631	4167

Source: Ronald Ferrier (1982): 278 ,671,673, 674
* Calculations based on Persian calendar year, by APOC. The practice changed to single Christian year after 1929
** Calculations based on the products listed

Aside from labor recruitment and maintenance there were other challenges of a different practical nature. These involved the exponentially growing investments in the development of fixed assets and infrastructure, such as the completion and expansion of the all important networks of roads, pipelines, a local railroad, shipping and loading docks, the storage and refinery structures at Abadan, as well as the vast array of the necessary social and administrative facilities without which the oil business could not function. The latter included hospitals, dispensaries, and public health measures, housing for staff and clerks, office buildings, company stores, jetties and unloading docks, schools and training facilities, guards and security measures, etc[17]. Meeting these challenges required substantial inputs of expertise, material, and manpower, not to mention growing capital investments, all of which were in short supply during the war years, and even more so after. In Abadan and the Fields most material had to be imported from elsewhere, creating an additional logistical challenge of its own.

> "No commodity of any kind is produced in the fields: all food stuffs, wines, clothing, and other necessities of modern life have to be imported form home or India…Something like 15,000 people have to be fed and clothed from these stores, so it may be imagined what quantity of stocks has to be held…Fresh

[17] See Ronald Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 220–232.

> meat and vegetables are rarely obtainable, but one heard very little of the monotony of subsisting on tinned foodstuffs. Anything within reason can be purchased, and the Company takes great trouble in this most important department…the prices were most reasonable in this out of the way spot"[18].

This was equally true of basic construction material for housing and facilities, such as brick, steel, etc. as well as all machinery, and technical supplies. All repairs had to be done on the spot. George Thompson, one of the first APOC employees to be sent from Burma Oil Company to Abadan around 1909 recalled, "Abadan was fine for the refinery but had no sand, stone, lime for construction purposes". Labor supply was also a major problem as there were no skilled workers available locally. There were plenty of unskilled labor in the area, "but of very low quality". The supply of material and labor were crucial priorities. Bricks had to be manufactured and imported from Basra; stone, sand, lime, gypsum (*gatch*) from Bushehr and Kuwait, delivered by riverboats[19].

For the Company provisioning its employees was a challenging task, but in the boomtown, the maintenance of teh supply of food and living materials for the teaming population not employed by the Company was a nightmare. While the Company took care to supply its European staff with imported tinned food and wine bottles, its workers had still to find accommodation, pay rent, find food and safe drinking water in a place that did not readily supply these basic necessities locally. Inflation, speculation, and shortages could easily lead to eruptions of urban protests, or induce workers to go elsewhere (see below), resort to criminal activities such as smuggling, or be drawn to radical subversive ideas.

The scale of the expansion and the constant intensity of activities meant that the vital question of reliable availability of adequate and sufficient labor power remained a paramount concern for the Oil Company. As the war came to an end this issue took on even greater urgency. The Company classified its labor force in broad categories, as skilled, semi skilled, and unskilled; a practice that continues to date in the Iranian oil industry. The non-manual employees included clerks, managers, and

---

[18] A.R.C. Cooper, "A Visit to the Anglo Persian Oilfields," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 13, no. 2 (1926): 153.

[19] "Correspondence with Architects J.M.Wilson, H.C.Mason & Partners: 1927-1951", BP 68848; George Thomson, "Abadan in Its Early Days," *Naft* 7, no. 4 (July 1931): 14–18; Lindsey-Smith, "J.M. The Story of an Architect"; Crinson, "Abadan: Planning and Architecture under the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company."

staff, had their own sub categorizations. In the early years the semi skilled workers were by and large recruited from the Indian Subcontinent, the casual unskilled workers were mostly Iranian, and the senior staff and management were British, together with some Europeans and North Americans. Table 2 shows the total range of Oil Company employees before nationalization:

Table 5: APOC/AIOC Employees in Iran by National Origin (1910-1950)

YEAR	IRANIANS	INDIANS	EUROPEANS	OTHERS	TOTAL
1910	1,362	158	40	146	1,706
1915	2,203	979	80	187	3,449
1920	8,447	3,616	244	35	12,342
1925	15,820	4,890	994	7,201	28,905
1930	20,095	2,411	1,191	7,549	31,246
1935	25,240	954	1,035	119	27,348
1940	26,484	1,158	1,056	15	28,713
1945	60,366	2,498	2,357	240	65,461
1950	72,681	1,744	2,725	34	77,184

Sources: Ferrier (1982): 276, 401; J.H. Bamberg (1994)

The figures clearly indicate that wartime productions during both World Wars had significant impacts on the scale of production and employment. Other significant junctures were 1920 and 1922 when strikes by Indian skilled workers and some Iranians led to the preparation for their long-term replacement of these with Iranians, although this was a protracted process (see below). The dynamics of employment and production were often affected by fractuous negotiations with the Iranian central government. This occurred especially during the periods of major political transition that were coupled with labor strife, such as 1920-1922, and 1925-1926, and during the testy renegotiations of the oil concession that lasted from 1928-1933 (as we shall discuss in the following pages). One of the recurring demands of the Iranian

government was a tangible increase in the *Iranianization* of the employees. APOC was reticent to heed this increasingly nationalist demand, partly due to its latent racist corporate culture, but also for practical calculations that had to take into account the necessity of remaining competitive while dealing with the vagaries of the international oil business and the global economic trends that the Company could not control, such as the adoption by Britian of the gold standard in 1925 and its impact on Sterling, or the shockwaves of the Great Depression of 1929-1933. These global economic shifts affected Company performance, and shaped its business decisions and employment practices.

Table 6: APOC/AIOC Employees in Abadan and Khuzestan (1910-1927)

YEAR	Employed in Abadan					Total Khuzestan
	Iranians	Indians	Others	Europeans	Total Abadan	
1910	471	80	76	5	632	1706
1913	1827	865	111	22	2825	4035
1916	1137	1202	50	53	2442	3925
1919	806	2499	38	36	3379	6784
1920	1080	2687	35	71	3873	12342
1921	1608	3313	51	99	5071	14040
1922	4941	2679	1048	100	8768	26156
1923	7336	2654	379	220	10589	26970
1924	6521	2782	454	303	10060	24501
1925	6862	3001	4405	402	14670	28905
1926	7946	2161	1442	428	11977	26493
1927	10171	2062	1273	527	14033	29223

Source: Ferrier (1982), *The History of the British Petroleum Company,* 401, 659

The major centers of oil activities were Abadan, Ahvaz, and the "Fields". The latter initially consisted of Masjed Soleyman, as well as the geographies carved out and claimed for the crews that explored for new deposits, laid pipelines, built roads, pumping stations, maintained transport and communication links, or stood guard. Gradually new urban centers grew around newly tapped oilfields in Haftgel, Gachsaran, Aghajeri, Lali and Naft Sefid. Once it was decided to build a refinery at Abadan in 1910, settlements and installations on the Island grew exponentially and it

became the most significant center of industrial activity not only in Khuzestan, but throughout Iran, as well as a major shipping outlet to the outside world (see table 6).

The building of the refinery and the storage and shipping facilities required the direct involvement of a significant number of people in production, ranging from manual and semi skilled workers to skilled technicians, engineers, chemists and scientists, office workers, accountants, and managers; but it also required an equally significant number of support staff to make possible the reproduction of those working in production, such as servants, cooks, drivers, guards, storekeepers, nurses, etc. The result was the exponential growth of Abadan where by 1925 there were at least an additional fifteen thousand newcomers who were directly employed by the Oil Company (table 6).

Formal figures such as Oil Company employees, inform us little about the actual scale and the composition of the fast growing population of the Island, or about the more complex social dynamics taking place there. For example, all these company employees were men, but how many had come there with their families? Company records at this period only account for European and especially British employees with minor, almost negligible personal and specific details. More recently some effort has been made to shed light on Indian migrant workers in Abadan[20]. But the records remain silent when it comes to the Iranian (the eponymous Persian) employees, who were routinely depicted as anonymous aggregate numbers. This silence affected even some of the Europeans who worked there. For example, in 1918 the Company asked the British Depute Commissioner in Basra to grant an exception on wartime travel restrictions for "Several married men whose wives have been out there 4 to 5 years, and quite apart from being overdue for home leave their general healths are affected"[21]. Personal reminiscences also mention a meager social life for "the tiny European community"[22]. But aside from these snippets there seem to be scant further details that have yet come to light about the lives and experiences of these Europeans, and even less about the lives and experiences of the far more numerous indigenous populations.

---

[20] Touraj Atabaki, "Far from Home, but at Home; Indian Migrant Workers in the Iranian Oil Industry," 2014; Rasmus Elling, "On Lines and Fences; Labor, Community and Violence in an Oil City," 2014.
[21] BP 68779, "Correspondence with A.T Wilson Deputy British Commissioner Turco Persian Frontier Commission, November 1914-July 1919", 1 November 1918.
[22] Thomson, "Abadan in Its Early Days."

Iranian state archives also provide little information in this regard; nor to my knowledge are there any published memoirs or oral histories from this era that reveal the intimate experiences of the thousands of Iranians who came to work in Abadan during this decisive period. Why did they come to this place to sell their work for wages? Were they attracted to the prospect of industrial work and wages, or had they no other option but to uproot and move there involuntarily? Had they come alone, or had their families and kin accompanied them? Once in Abadan did they fit into existing communities there, or did they have to struggle on their own? The term "Iranian" or "Persian" is itself vague, especially in this period when a coherent and homogeneous national identity had not yet been more systematically institutionalized through the uniform practices of mass education, conscription, mass media, bureaucratic individual documentation, and patriotic propaganda. As a result, the geographic, ethnic, linguistic, and kinship ties of these employees remain relatively vague. What manners of connections did they maintain with their communities of origin? How did these newcomers link the emerging urban life of Abadan to their original communities? This information would provide an important insight into the spatial linkages between the city and the countryside, the province, and the varied national spaces beyond the borders of Khuzestan. What sorts of webs and connections were linking Abadan to these other places via the social and personal networks maintained by these employees? Equally important is the question of gender, especially in a place that seems to have been mostly populated by males: workers, expatriates, soldiers, bureaucrats, shopkeepers, smugglers, and the precariously employed. What were the roles of women in this city? Who were they, and where had they come from? Did they work for money? If they kept house what sort of household did they run? As in all frontier boomtowns there were sex workers in Abadan, but the existing records reveal very little about the political economy of the women who were part of the market economy. Precious little is available on brothels, pimps, landlords, police attitudes and regulations of the sex trade, Company attitudes, the circulation of money in the sexual economy, and the women who had to sell their bodies as a commodity. As is often the case, the history of the oldest profession is rendered invisible through a mixture of moral denial or condemnation, patronizing compassion, and intentional and uncomfortable silence[23].

[23] The physical devastation of Abadan during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) has led to the destruction

Photograph 8: Building the Abadan Refinery (circa 1920s)



Source: Ministry of Petroleum Iran

Photograph 9: Arab Oilworkers Lining Up for Work at Abadan Refinery



Source: IISG Archives

---

of relevant local archives stored in the city, such as police and customs records. Many of these records were not duplicated for the provincial and national headquarters. Thus far I have been unable to locate relevant records. Oral interviews have also proved difficult and of little value thus far, as there is general acknowledgment of the significance of sex workers, but little else in terms of substantial ethnographic information (see footnote 26 below).

Many of these pertinent questions about the everyday lived realities of Iranian oil workers and Abadanis during this formative period remain as of yet unanswered by the material I have managed to excavate[24]. Even the growing literature of popular and academic local histories of urban and provincial Khuzestan are regrettably silent about these crucial social and geographic details when it comes to the interwar period[25]. The unavailability or the absence of any significant government records of personal and individual data, such as birth, marriage, and death certificates, or of conscription records, property registration, individual tax records, criminal police records, or any official census material only add to the blank picture[26]. This heavy silence has its own significance, like the Isac Dineson story "The blank page" about the framed snow white sheet hung in public on the morrow of the nuptials[27]: In its silence the blank page inadvertently reveals its own story about what was deemed irrelevant to the gaze of those tasked with recording the course of events. But it also opens the possibility of imagining and conjuring our own reading of what the available information can tell us.

The significant silence is not limited to the social lives of Oil Company employees outside their place of employment, which would provide a window into the reproduction of labor power; it also involves the urban life of Abadan Town, a congested sprawl on the margins of the refinery and the shipping docks, but crucially also the setting for its continued operation since that was where most workers lived

---

[24] I have made several research trips to the BP Archives at the University of Warwick (2000, 2002, and 2003); in addition to the British Library, Royal Institute of British Architects; and the Iranian National Archives (2005-2007). This argument is also based on ethnographic research in Abadan and Khuzestan over a period of 18 months in 1989-1992. See Kaveh Ehsani, "Arshiv-e Sherkat-e BP; Daricheh-yi Digar Bara-ye Tahqiqat-e Irani [BP Archives; a New Window for Iranian Studies]," *Goftogu*, no. 30 (2001): 199–203.

[25] Lahsaeizadeh, *Jame'eh Shenasi-e Abadan*; Abbasi-Shahni, *Tarikh-e Masjed Soleyman*; Yousefi, *Tarikh-e Khorramshahr*; Ahmad Latifpour, *Tarikh-e Dezful* (Tehran: Farhang-e Maktoub, 2008); Shakiba, *Negahi beh Tarikh-e Mahshahr*; Emam Shushtari, *Tarikh-e Joghrafiyayi-e Khuzestan*; Ahmad Kasravi, *Zendegani-e Man: Dah Sal dar 'Adliyeh va Chera az 'Adliyeh Birun Amadam* (Tehran: N/P, 1944); Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Pansad Saleh Khouzestan*; Lorimer, *GPG*; Mahmoud Daneshvar, *Didani-ha va Shenidaniha-ye Iran*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Ferdowsi, 1948).

[26] It must be added that the physical destruction of the city of Abadan and Khorramshahr during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) are an additional cause of this absence, although many of these documents ought to have been duplicated as official correspondence, and be available in provincial center, Ahvaz, or the Capital, Tehran. My attempts at accessing such records or verifying their existence thus far have been unsuccessful.

[27] Isak Dinesen, *Last Tales* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 99–105. Dinesen's short story is about a visit to an aristocratic palace where the bed sheets from the wedding night of each heir are framed and displayed on the walls as proof of the consummation and continuity of the legitimacy of the bloodline. One frame contains a snow white and unstained sheet. Appearing like a blank page, unlike all the others, it is not a story of predictable continuity, and has its own mystery to tell.

and all social life revolved around work, at least for the Iranians. As for the Europeans, the scanty early reminiscences reveal a life of hard work, of 12 hour workdays, year around, often including weekends, with little social activity except informal and periodic organized events. A tennis court was built sometime after 1912, but given the dire shortage of material and labor during wartime no club was built until the completion of the refinery[28]; an austere life indeed.

There are no reliable figures for the total population of Abadan in mid 1920s, but existing estimates put the number at somewhere between 40 - 60 thousand, by then probably the largest concentration of population in Khuzestan[29]. Yet, in the absence of more detailed information we face a challenge in producing a thick description of the urban life of Abadan during this period, and of necessity some of our conclusions will remain deductive for the time being.

With the sudden growth of the town myriad urban issues became pressing topics of concern, and with them came the attentive gaze of professional experts whose task was to manage and modify the challenges that faced life in Abadan and its refinery. In 1925 the Oil Company had invited J.M. Wilson, a Scottish architect and urban planner based in Baghdad and London, to visit Abadan and the fields to offer suggestions regarding the rising problems of housing and sanitation for the Company[30]. The central government of Iran instituted a new law in 1926 to establish municipalities, and one of the first was established in Abadan. J.M. Wilson returned soon after, this time permanently employed as chief architect and urban planner for APOC to plan a more comprehensive expansion of the Company areas in Abadan and the fields[31].

Public health had been a major area of concern, and one of the earliest and most urgent nodes of social policy making. Epidemics were a major threat to operations, and the insalubrious living conditions deterred not only Europeans but also Indians and Iraqis from seeking work there. Furthermore, establishing pubic health institutions and practices were becoming a major tenet of modernization and

---

[28] Thomson, "Abadan in Its Early Days"; G.B. Scott, "The First Survey of the Persian Oil Fields," *Naft* 7, no. 2 (March 1931): 6–12. The most gripping description of European expatriate life at the time in Khuzestan remains Arnold T Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941).

[29] For sources estimating the population of Abadan in the 1920s see chapter 6.

[30] See J.M. Wilson's enthusiastic account of his first visit to Abadan in Cooper, "A Visit to the Anglo Persian Oilfields," 159.

[31] Lindsey-Smith, "J.M. The Story of an Architect."

state building in Iran, as they had been in Europe, and government bureaucrats came to consider sanitation as one of the key measures of state accomplishment and progress[32] (see chapters 4 and 6).

Regarding labor relations, by mid 1940s the Oil Company had to resort to employing a specialist 'Labor Attaché' to deal exclusively with increasingly challenging labor management issues[33]. The Iranian government, likewise, had come to legislate labor laws, mainly in response to the growing frictions in the oil industry and their potential subversive spread elsewhere[34]. Public education became a primary concern of social policies, especially as it was linked to the mounting pressures for the 'Iranianization' of the labor force in the Oil Company. Without proper training and basic education the Oil Company would have faced continued difficulty in finding adequate recruits to work in the increasingly sophisticated refinery and oilworks, and to handle the hazardous and technically complex work details. More significantly, the Company gradually but unmistakably, began to view education as an investment in 'human capital'[35]. With the shifts in the organization of industrial production, the advent of mass consumer society, and the rise of mass politics, workers were beginning to be conceptualized less as simply raw material or as cheap, anonymous, casual, and temporary inputs (chapter 4). Investing in properly training workers capable of handling more sophisticated and hazardous chemical and industrial operations was becoming an urgent business necessity for large coporations like APOC. Furthermore, education and training were exercises in disciplinary power intended to shape docile and loyal, as well as productive and efficient, employees[36]. They would prepare the next cohort by training the workers' children to create a multigenerational repository of corporate culture. Furthermore, according to article 12

---

[32] Cyrus Schayegh, "A Sound Mind Lives in a Healthy Body: Texts and Contexts of Modernist Discourse of Health, 1910s-40s," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 2 (2005): 167–88; Amir Arsalan Afkhami, "The Sick Men of Persia: The Importance of Illness as a Factor in the Interpretation of Modern Iranian Diplomatic History," *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 3 (2003); Floor, *Public Health in Qajar Iran*; Neligan, "Public Health in Persia, Part 1."

[33] Donald MacNeill: "The lessons of 1946; an essay on personnel problems of the oil industry in southern Iran", January 1949, BP 118823

[34] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*; Atabaki and Ehsani, "Shifting Governmentality in the Shadow of Labor Activism: Revisiting the Roots and Impact of the 1929 Abadan Oil Workers' Strike"; Floor, *Labor and Industry in Iran, 1850-1941*.

[35] Michael E. Dobe, "A Long Slow Tutelage in Western Ways of Work: Industrial Education and the Constainement of Nationalism in Anglo- Iranian and ARAMCO, 1923-1963" (PhD Dissertation, Rutgers, 2008).

[36] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977); Michael Burawoy, *The Colour of Class on the Copper Mines: From African Advancement to Zambianization*, Zambian Papers, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972).

of the D'Arcy concession, "The workmen employed in the service of the Company shall be subjects of His Imperial Majesty the Shah, except the technical staff such as the managers, engineers, borers, and foremen"[37]. Although the replacement of all non-managerial wageworkers by Iranians did not take place prior to nationalization in 1951, nevertheless it entered Company policy, just as it became a major bone of contention with the central government. As a result, public education became part of the repertoire of social policies adapted with considerable reluctance by APOC in 1926.

In conclusion, 'the social question' emerged in Abadan in the interwar years, much like it had in post war Britain, in response to the transformations of the new regime of accumulation of capital, and against the background of the political premises of the nation state and the rise of mass politics[38]. These issues came to head during the pivotal years 1925-1926, and set the tone for the long-term development of the oil complex in Iran. In the rest of this chapter I will discuss this rise of the social question in Abadan, and the bazaar controversy that lay at the symbolic center of this historical shift.

Labor Troubles in an Expanding Boomtown

Labor recruitment was a major challenge facing APOC, especially in the first two decades of its operation in Iran. The Company had to cast a wide net geographically to attract all sorts of workers and employees willing and qualified for the diverse and increasingly complex tasks across its expanding operations, especially in Abadan. According to George Thomson, one of the earliest oil experts who had settled in Abadan around 1911, the initial artisan laborers were hired from Burma's Rangoon Refinery. Soon a growing nucleus of skilled workers began to be recruited from India. Unskilled workers in Abadan were hired from the surrounding local "Arab and Persian villages". "Once word of employment and good wages spread they

[37] For the text of the D'Arcy Concession see Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:640–643.

[38] As an interesting footnote the famous Chicago School of Sociology emerged at approximately the same period, to formulate an academic and social response to the pressing issues of urban poverty and "the culture of poverty" in immigrant urban slums of Chicago, by considering the city itself as the site of social reproduction, as did feminist social movements, such as Jane Addams' *Hull House* project. See Robert E. Park, Ernest Burgess, and Morriss Janowitz, *The City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925); Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 151-180.

came from all over. Tribesmen from areas as far distant as Lurestan, the Bakhtiyari Country, Kurdistan found their way to Abadan. These men were more robust than locals and were welcomed"[39]. In this early period the skilled workers were mostly British or Indians; but they also included drillers, machinists, and mechanics from Poland, Canada, the US, and elsewhere in Europe, as well as across the border from Mesopotamia.

During the war Abadan had grown rapidly to supply the Admiralty with fuel, as well as the enormous military machine assembled in Mesopotamia and the Middle East (see table 1). After coming online, the refinery had supplied on average two thirds of Royal Navy's fuel, in addition to nearly 200 thousand tons of refinery products to the other British forces in Mesopotamia[40]. Wartime military demand were enormous: At its maximum strength the British war machine had assembled nearly 450 thousand troops in Mesopotamia alone[41], mostly recruited from India. This increasingly mechanized war machine had created an insatiable demand for the Abadan refinery output, as there were some 6400 motorized transport vehicles (running on internal combustion engines) and 45 airplanes deployed there. However, in addition to petroleum products, the British war machine was also absorbing most the manpower throughout the region, by employing nearly 900 thousand people during wartime[42].

To the extent that a local and regional labor market had come into existence it was being nearly monopolized by the military apparatus, leaving little for the Oil Company and other commercial operations in the region[43]. Wartime needs were such that the military did not shirk away from gang pressing workers into service, or deploying prisoners and indentured laborers from India[44]. The military also paid higher wages and when necessary prohibited APOC or other private firms from

---

[39] Thomson, "Abadan in Its Early Days."
[40] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:288–290.
[41] Total British troops in Near/Middle East during 1914-1918 were nearly 3 million. At their maximum strength they stood at 1.3 million. They suffered 303 thousand casualties during this period. Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 171.
[42] Ibid. The Motorized transport vehicles operating with an internal combustion engine included trucks, motorcycles, cars, armored vehicles, etc.
[43] Visser, "The Gibraltar That Never Was." Visser notes a range of commercial firms operating in Basra and southern Iraq (and Iran), mainly in river transport, export of commercial agricultural products, and import of manufactured goods.
[44] Stefan Tetzlaff, "The Turn of the Gulf Tide: Empire, Nationalism, and South Asian Labor Migration to Iraq, C. 1900–1935," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 79, Special Issue 1 (2011): 7–27.

pilfering those in its employ, especially in neighboring Basra[45]. As a result APOC faced a severe and unequal competition for recruiting its much-needed manpower. The Company dispatches during the last two years of the war emphasize the range of its frantic activities, and the pressing need for qualified personnel to deal with them. These tasks were in response to the need for the expansion of physical infrastructure that included storage, port facilities, fields electrification, technical staff to deal with extraordinary "line losses" (the loss of oil in pipelines as it was dispatched from the fields to Abadan through pipelines), the establishment and maintenance of telephone and telegraph systems, tank farms, road constructions, fire controls at wells and the refinery, housing constructions at Fields and in Abadan, and so on[46].

Furthermore, the oil business was booming everywhere during wartime, leading to the recruitment office in Mohammareh complaining to London in 1917 that "With Pennsylvania crude at a phenomenal $3.25 and great activity everywhere it is going to be hard to get good drillers"[47]. However, the devastating impact of the war in Iran had created a negative image that was not easy to overcome. Forbes-Leith, and officer serving with the wartime British expeditionary forces in western Iran recalled his harrowing experience:

> "The invasion had very seriously depleted [the western] part of the country of its stock of grains, and many of the farmers had been drained by the armies to such an extent that they had been obliged to eat their seed corn in order to avoid starvation. In the year 1917 they had nothing left to sow. To add to their misery in the winter of 1916-1917 there was an exceptionally light snowfall and the resultant spring drought. This caused the breakdown of their irrigation system and in consequence most of the crops in the line of march [of invading troops] failed…Famine conditions naturally bring diseases in their wake, and typhus, cholera, smallpox, and the influenza epidemic ravaged our force in spite of what I feel was the almost perfect technique of our efficient army medical service. I lost my friends and my men from all kinds of foul diseases,

[45] "Lt. General Sir P.H.N. Lake, Commanding Officer" 4 March 1916, "British or other firms are prohibited form engaging locally other than local labor, unless they are recent arrivals who haven't worked for other local firms or have discharge papers", BP 68779
[46] BP 70146, "Letters Regarding the Fields and Pipelines, to and from Mohammerah and London, April 1916- May 1920", see dispatches from March 1917- 12 June 1918; BP 70145, "Need for the expansion of the physical infrastructure", 24 January 1919
[47] 19 September 1917, BP 70146

> and under such conditions it is little wonder that many of my brother officers regarded Persia as a veritable hell on earth"[48].

The Company needed not only drillers and oil experts, but also all manners of specialists. With war coming to an end the Company anticipated decommissioned military personnel in the neighboring Mesopotamia to become available for recruitment, but it was repeatedly frustrated in these attempts[49]. The Company sought electrical communication specialists to take over managing their "first class facilities with no one to maintain [and operate] them". The General Manager in Mohammareh repeatedly complained about the shortage of expert labor, and pleaded for more energetic attempts to get reliable men from the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force, and for "Competent European military personnel to superintend telephone and telegraph operations with efficiency in teaching and handling signals ", but with limited success[50]. The reasons for these difficulties were primarily the uncompetitive and relatively lower wages and salaries the Company offered, the inadequate recruiting networks, the hellish working conditions, and the equally poor and hazardous living situation in Khuzestan and across the Company areas at the time. We shall discuss these issues in order to get an insight into life and work in Abadan at this juncture.

APOC did not offer adequate compensation to be an attractive work option for skilled recruits, even among decommissioned and now unemployed men who had served in the difficult conflict in Mesopotamia. This poor reputation had been true during wartime as well. In 1916 the APOC General Manager complained to Arnold Wilson, then stationed in Basra, "We suffer from labor leaving us from Abadan for higher pay at Basra. Our clerks can draw abnormal pay at Basra". He cited three cases of Iranian clerks who had simply moved to Basra for pay increases of up to 50 percent[51]. Indian skilled workers and personnel also sought the more favorable terms across the border in Mesopotamia[52]. It seemed the Iranian employees had set up

---

[48] F. A. C. Forbes-Leith, *Checkmate; Fighting Tradition in Central Persia,* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 20–21.
[49] BP 70145, General Manager in Mohammerah, 21 February 1919
[50] BP 70145, General Manager in Mohammerah, 18 February 1918; BP 70146; "Letters Regarding the Fields and Pipelines, to and from Mohammerah and London", 18 December, 1918
[51] General Manager, Mohammerah, to Arnold Wilson, Basra 2 October 1916, BP 68779
[52] Atabaki, "Far from Home, but at Home; Indian Migrant Workers in the Iranian Oil Industry."

informal networks for finding better pay elsewhere, when they could. There was the case of a certain Mirza Kazem,

> "Who had worked well and was discharged honorably", but was now "Enticing labor away to Basra. He has high influence with workmen at Mohammerah, and is in position to promise temptingly high wages for [British] government employment [in Iraq], denuding us of our local staff. As it is we have for months felt the pinch consequent upon desertions to Basra"[53].

However, the problem was not limited to the all too rare and valuable Iranian clerks and staff, but also involved unskilled Arab "coolies" as well as the skilled and better trained Indians. There was delight when a highly skilled technician was found in India, and seemed willing to commit to work for APOC:

> "We are very pleased that the electrical expert has sailed, and also that you have instructed him to engage whatever experienced native labour he requires before leaving India. This is a wise course, as the labor we receive through various agencies is very indifferent. Really good men are receiving high wages in India, and the rates we offer are no inducement…we are working with a minimum staff and with not a man to spare"[54].

The Company had engaged a number of labor recruitment firms in India, but there were complaints regarding their reliability to continue supplying the skilled staff needed[55]. There were dire needs for surveyors and telegraph operators, but it was felt that "Indians get either ill or leave". The Company began technical training classes in Ahvaz from 1916, hoping to prepare pupils at the English school it had helped establish there, "but despite inducements when standard proficiency is reached our efforts did not meet success". Apparently the trained pupils would just pack up and leave for Mesopotamia and even as far away as West Africa, "which are crisscrossed with telegraph lines and there is great need for Indian telegraphists"[56]. It seemed "skilled Indians draw high wages and return to India after one year". There were also suspicions about their possible subversive attitude at a time when anti colonial nationalism was on the rise: "The Indians are highly independent minded"; and they

---

[53] BP 68779, 6 August 1916
[54] "Expert labour shortage", 18 February 1918, BP 70145
[55] Atabaki, "Far from Home, but at Home; Indian Migrant Workers in the Iranian Oil Industry."
[56] BP 70145, "Mohammerah to London", 18 February 1919; 6 December 1918; 20 December 1918; 20 December 1918

were seen as disloyal and opportunistic: "A good many of our men are anxious to get away from Abadan to work in Basra for higher wages. Our wages to skilled Indians are good…and we are eager to keep [them]".

By the war's end the labor shortage had reached critical dimensions, and the manager there wrote Wilson, "Our staff at Abadan is barely sufficient to keep the refinery running. We are seriously feeling the shortage of chemists".[57].

As for unskilled Arab employees, they also bolted for greener pastures in Basra or elsewhere, at a time when borders were porous and the British military exercised sovereignty across the region. The manager at Abadan and Mohammerah complained to Arnold Wilson, the Deputy British Commissioner in Basra,

> "We have all along been having the greatest difficulty retaining coolies at Abadan… Matters have worsened recently and we are 1,000 coolies under strength. We have done all we can with the Sheikh [Khaz'al], Haji Raiis, Sheikh Mousa. All say they can't do anything on the account of urgent demand and high wages being paid in Basra. Last payday some 200 men cleared out [at Mohammareh]. This morning Abadan have rung up to say a similar number went yesterday. Steamer loading and discharging is suffering, and the tin shed output is reduced from 4 to 2 thousand tins per day, which is only half of various government departments' demand for kerosene and petrol…We cannot stop Mohammerah Arabs leaving for Basra, unless coercion is applied to make them work at Abadan… [He then asked Wilson whether it was possible to arrange (press gang) a regular labor corps under government control, to supply us up to 800 collies from Basra], "but even 300 would do"[58].

Basra tried to cooperate by imposing some limits on labor movement, and defended itself by claiming wages in Basra were not higher than Abadan[59]. It was becoming clear that other factors were at work. By summer 1917 it had become evident that famine was as much a cause of labor shortage as wages, and Company correspondents began to admit that destitution and hunger were equally behind labor

[57] BP 68779, 9 March 1917; 10 October 1917.
[58] BP 68779, 3 March 2017.
[59] BP 68779, 9 March 1917

flight as wage opportunism[60]. The constant warfare, chronic insecurity, drought, and vast military acquisitions of food crops, labor power, and draft animals were wreaking havoc on the population (see chapters 2 and 3). Wilson received an urgent request for famine relief in northern Khuzestan, and had to scramble some emergency supplies of flour, grain, and straw (as fodder) there to avoid a disaster.[61]

To the extent that people had to resort to selling their labor for wages they were not doing so voluntarily to join the forward march to modernization! Rather, the restless movement between Basra, Abadan, Kuwait, and elsewhere seemed to have been a desperate attempt to survive the social disintegration that warfare, political insecurity, and oil capitalism had imposed on the local population.

It must be added that uncompetitive wages were a detriment not only to APOC, but also to the other major British firm in Iran at the time, the all-powerful Imperial Bank, which held a monopoly of banking and minting currency in Iran until 1928. Like APOC the Imperial Bank suffered from a high staff turnover and a general inability to retain its employees[62]. There were many similarities between the corporate cultures of both firms, some of which had to do with working and living conditions in Iran at the time, but also with the colonial Victorian attitudes that pervaded both organizations, as well as the type of professionals these firms preferred to recruit, mostly young men from middling public schools. "The first university graduates joined the Bank after WWI"; but neither the old staff nor the new recruits felt compatibility as the university-trained employees felt frustrated by the mediocrity of the senior staff above them. Geoffrey Jones provides a description of the recruitment process at the Imperial Bank, and how the personnel manager described the ideal types they sought to employ:

> "By 1930s the majority of the staff were school leavers from minor public schools, without prior work experience...The public school man was held to possess character to survive in the East, and the confidence to represent the Bank, and to assume authority over the local staff. The majority of the staff were recruited therefore [based on this type of recommendation given for] a

[60] BP 68779, 6 April 1917; See also the APOC correspondence with Arnold Wilson regarding the declining state of security on 28 January 1915; 16 December 2015.
[61] These included 90 tons of mensem (local flour), 300 t of barley, and 420 t of straw. 4 June 1917, BP 68799
[62] Geoffrey Jones, *Banking and Empire in Iran: Volume 1: The History of the British Bank of the Middle East*, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 140–156, 266–268.

> 17 year old boy at Cheltenham College: "Keen on cricket, tennis, rugger. Nearly 6' in height, healthy, cheerful, fairly good looking, pleasant manners, easily led, character undeveloped. Is anxious to go abroad, especially if riding would be possible" " [63].

While work for APOC required more technical qualifications, the social background of its British staff were similar to those of the Bank (see chapters 1 and 3). Like APOC, the staff at the Imperial Bank complained about low salaries, poor social lives, and dire living conditions; significant problems that affected employee loyalty among these expatriates. Between 1909 and 1926 the Imperial bank had opened branches across Iran, including Khuzestan's oil towns Abadan, Mohammareh, Ahvaz, and Masjed Soleyman; in order to benefit from APOC business[64]. The Bank faced serious personnel problems, with health issues and high mortality rates among its employees being a cause for concern. These were due to epidemics and disease, but also from depression, alcoholism, and psychological crises. Europeans, whether bankers or oilmen, found themselves highly isolated in these stark, alien, and isolated areas. They had no social life to which they had been accustomed, and given their public school education and their upbringing in institutionalized colonial racism, they systematically avoided meaningful social contact with the indigenous population on principle. This abhorrence of the racial contamination caused by any intermixing went so far as to make the Bank dismiss one of its employees, E.B. Soane, for the audacity of marrying an Iranian woman[65]. Later on Soane became British Consul in Dezful, as his stint was highly effective, and he was instrumental in mediating local disputes, especially over water rights, making him not only an influential and successful administrator during a trying period, but also highly popular among the local population[66].

Alcoholism was rife, and so was depression[67]. Leisure activities were minimal. Those who were accompanied by their wives suffered equally, as their spouses had

---

[63] Ibid., 1:273–274.
[64] Ibid., 1: 128, 201, 234.
[65] Ely Banister Soane met Arnold Wilson in Mohammareh and he arranged a job for him with APOC. See John Marlowe, *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London: Cresset, 1967), 60.
[66] Ahmad Latifpour, *Dezful dar Gozar-e Zaman* (Tehran: Farhang-e Maktoub, 2008), 129–131.
[67] High alcohol consumption remained a persistent concern. In 1931 a staff assessment by a visiting inspector stated that liquor consumption per English employee stood at 3.89 bottles of gin, 3 bottles of vermouth, 133 large beers, and 18.35 bottles of whiskey per six months. These were spirits supplied by

little to do and did not even benefit from the relief of challenging employment and long work hours. Illness and disease were a constant threat; especially as sanitary amenities and public health measures were minimal. This was especially the case in Abadan, where no sewerage or sanitary infrastructure had yet been put in place to cope with the huge population increase (see chapter 6)[68]. Waterborne diseases, in particular, were a serious concern where drinking water caused typhoid on a regular basis, a deadly disease prior to the invention of antibiotics. APOC physician Dr Young worked continuously to improve the supply of water in the Fields through various schemes. These involved attempts at building distillation plants, piping water from the brackish river Tembi, or considering the option of piping water all the way from Abadan, constructing filtration plants and so on. Eventually the inspiration was taken from a chlorination plant built in Ahvaz for the military (British) personnel. A water elevator was built at Tembi, with a pumping station and 30 kms of pipeline via Godar Landar to feed a chlorination plant at Masjed Soleyman. In the process "all native huts had to be removed from production areas" to make way for the water scheme[69]. The records do not contain any further details about the 'native huts' and the evicted people.

The provision of drinking water was vital for the survival of operations and "to keep labor at fields in summer"[70]. Working conditions were indeed infernal. Work was backbreaking and incessant, 9 to 12 hours a day, 6 or 7 days a week[71]. Temperatures were grueling during the long summers, and freezing in winter; humidity was at times unbearably high. In some ways work was a substitute for the near total absence of social life, at least for the Europeans.

> "The heat of the eight months summer ranges between 100 and 125 degrees in the shade (55C); the loneliness of the life, the almost total lack of social intercourse, and the absence of most of the ordinary social amenities of life make work a necessity as a relief from utter boredom. They do work"[72].

---

the Company, and excluded any additional liquor purchased elsewhere. "Visit to Persia; Staff Matters", November/December 1931, BP 096431

[68] Jones, *Banking and Empire in Iran*, 1:145–155, 278–283. See also Gerald Butt, *The Lion in the Sand; the British in the Middle East* (London: Bloombury, 1995), Chapter 5.

[69] BP 70146; "Letters Regarding the Fields and Pipelines, to and from Mohammerah and London", from 13 April 1916 to 27 March 1919.

[70] BP 70145, Letter #2717, 14 May 1919; Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 38–39.

[71] BP 70145, 24 June 1919; Thomson, "Abadan in Its Early Days."

[72] Cooper, "A Visit to the Anglo Persian Oilfields," 154.

Industrial time meant continuous work hours, regardless of season or climate, an unfamiliar practice to ordinary local workers, pastoralists and peasants whose whole mode of life was built around adjusting to the seasonal rhythms of nature[73]. But here they had to adapt to an altogether different universe, even in the highlands of Masjed Soleyman. The oilfields were a place of deafening noise, mortally dangerous conditions, and great pollution. Percussion drills pounded constantly at 40 beats per minute creating a deafening sound that echoeded in the mountains. Water and chemicals were pumped into boreholes and the spewed out waste was dumped. The workplace was highly dangerous as highly flammable oil and gas were released under great pressure. Then there was the pervasive smell of gas: "the oil is held in the rock under great pressure, and its discharge is heavily laden with gas. In its early days this was allowed to escape naturally, with resultant danger to the workmen; so much so that men who could not return to their huts by sundown had to remain where they were for the night, as the gas, being heavier than air, hung in the low lying ground and formed an impassable barrier; several lives were lost in that way". The author of these words was an aviation squadron leader who had served during the war and had been based in Iraq (1921-1924), and was now reporting to the Royal Central Asian Society during one of the increasingly common propaganda events held for APOC at colonial scientific venues.

Explaining that he was contributing to "writing the romance of the fields", Squadron leader Cooper went on to allay fears by mentioning that by this time the gas was no longer simply released, but was being flared. He described poetically and without irony the effect of tall pipes permanently spewing flames, heat, and smoke into the air as " a wonderful site at night time" that "would have given Dorée a wonderful inspiration for an illustration to the 'inferno'"! However, he went on to add "the smell of gas is a permanency in the fields; in some places it is worse than others, but you are never quite free from it; it brought back many unpleasant war memories, and at night it was difficult to refrain from instinctively reaching out to make sure your gas mask was round your neck"[74]. This alarmed the APOC chairman, John

---

[73] For the differentiation of labor time and industrial time see E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," in *Customs in Common* (New York: The New Press, 1993), 352–403.

[74] Cooper, "A Visit to the Anglo Persian Oilfields," 149-151. Other speakers at this session were also prominent luminaries, such as the chairmen of APOC, senior military commanders and parliamentarians. It is worth adding that once oil was depleted in Masjed Soleyman and Haftgel, the

Cadman, who interjected in the public meeting to contradict the Squadron Leader by emphasizing how clean, safe, and hygienic the operations were:

> "Anyone who has visited oilfields in different parts of the world, mostly controlled and carried on by foreigners, will have been struck by the dirty slovenly appearance of the spot from which oil is obtained. You do not see that in the Persian field. You see no oil and as I say, you smell no gas. All you see or hear is a busy hive of industry"[75].

In Abadan the smell of gas was not as acute, but working conditions were equally dangerous, as demonstrated by the devastating fire at the refinery in 1922[76]. Work was extremely demanding, and harsh; while living circumstances were if anything much worse for tens of thousands who lived in temporary shelters and in filthy circumstances. New neighborhoods were informally named after the temporary industrial refuse used to erect shelters, such as *Kaqaz Abad* (Made of Paper), *Halabi Abad* (made of Tin Drums), or *Hassir Abad* (Made of Reeds), *Chador Abad* (Made of Tents)[77]. Conditions were terrible, especially for the workers and migrants; but they improved considerably for the Europeans and the artisans and skilled workers, with visible dualism of the segregated city creating seething resentment. Manuchehr Farmanfarmaian, reminisced about the appalling conditions in the 1950s "In winter the earth flooded and became a flat, perspiring lake…[in summer] the dwellings of Kaghazabad, cobbled from rusted oil drums hammered flat, into sweltering ovens…In the British section of Abadan there were lawns, rose beds, tennis courts, swimming pools, and clubs; in Kaghazabad there was nothing – not a tea shop, not a bath, not a single tree"[78].

Since virtually everything had to be imported, including basic food items, economic life on the island was organized through market relations and money

---

problem of gas release became a deadly hazard for these historic oil cities. Masjed Soleyman, currently an industrial wasteland and shell of the city that once was, has population of more than quarter of a million, who suffer from chronic poverty and unemployment, and occasional deadly releases of gas that cause significant casualties. See Ehsani, "Social Engineering and Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns.".

[75] Ibid.: 160.

[76] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:430.

[77] Chamseddine Amiralaii, *Khal'e Yad az Sherkat-e Sabeq-e Naft-e Iran va Engelis (Dispossession of the Former Anglo Iranian Oil Company)* (Tehran: Dehkhoda, 1978), 126–137; Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:432.

[78] Manuchehr Farmanfarmayan, *Blood and Oil* (New York: Modern Library, 1997), 184-185.

exchange, where everything had a price. Under these circumstances it was not surprising that labor recruitment was a major challenge for the Company during these early years and in the aftermath of the war.

The negative image of APOC and apprehension about working conditions in the oil industry in Khuzestan are evident in the following list of questions from successful job applicants who had been offered a position in Iran. The Company's London Office forwarded these queries to Khuzestan, as the potential recruits were demanding further clarification before accepting the job offer. The questions reveal the foremost concerns among qualified recruits who were weighing whether to accept the position of oil well engineer: The inquiries were about the state of health in Khuzestan, death rates, average temperatures, social conditions, the number of white people, prospects for advancement, salaries, vacations, costs of living, prospects for savings, if the company provided free servants, whether individuals had to cook for themselves, had to eat in a general mess, or were going to be provided with personal cooks and servants, and so on[79]. The realization of the significant impact of its negative image in recruiting employees of various skills became one of the major inducements for the Company to evaluate the necessity of improving the working and living conditions in the oil areas, in order to create a less harsh environment where attracting employees would not be such a major challenge.

Soon after the war the nationality of the workforce became a politically sensitive topic, mainly for geopolitical reasons. The changing global landscape had began to effect the oil habitus in Abadan as political events beyond the local confines of Khuzestan affected the attitudes of workers, the Company management, the local population, and the political agents of the Iranian and British governments alike. While labor requirements in each job category had their own specifics dynamics, nevertheless a number of preferential treatments began to be observed, often informally. Initially, the prejudices were professional. For example, Canadian drillers began to be seen in a negative light as they kept having frictions with Iranians and others on the job[80]. After some clashes between the Canadians and Iranian workers in

[79] BP 70146; 29 July 1919
[80] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 23, 32.

1919, a follow up note a month later concluded that, "We should exercise a preference for men with experience in the east"[81].

But more was at stake than practical colonial knowhow in eastern settings. Regarding skilled workers and staff, the Company as well as the British Government's preference in the postwar years shifted toward excluding non-British nationals, especially the Americans, in light of heightened international rivalries and Britain's attempts to consolidate its exclusive sphere of influence in the Persian Gulf. Attempting to coordinate APOC policy with the interests of the British Government, Cadman (APOC Chairman), Loraine (Ambassador in Tehran), Chamberlain (Foreign Secretary) and Oliphant (his senior adviser) discussed how to counter Iran's deep distrust of Britain, and the rising danger of the US as a rival. They were not above using Iran's foreign debt, its long coveted railroads project, and the benefits and social programs initiated by the oil industry as pressure points to cajole or bully Iran back into British arms (chapter 2). In particular, they were apprehensive about the role of Arthur Millspaugh's financial reforms mission, and the danger that his "Pressure to interest the US in the revival of Persia means the balance will be tilted in favor of the American industry". They agreed to wait until Millspaugh was gone, and then the Iranians would have no option but come around to Britain[82].

APOC moved to reduce its dependence on American personnel and technology. Cadman wrote to Loraine to emphasize that the Company was doing its patriotic job by helping Iran build the strategic Dezful-Khoramabad road, "without any profit to the Company" (he enclosed an estimate of costs of surveying and construction), "to extend cheap petrol products in Northern Iran to counter Soviet influence". He also highlighted the Company's commitment to "education works in Khuzistan" by building two primary schools in the oilfields, maintaining the school at Ahvaz, adding a secondary school there; supporting the hard pressed government schools in Abadan, Mohammareh, and Ahvaz; and even selecting a few students from Iran and sending them to Britain for University training in petroleum sciences and engineering[83].

---

[81] BP 70146; "Letters Regarding the Fields and Pipelines, to and from Mohammerah and London", July 31, 1919; 21 August 1919
[82] "Loraine to Chamberlain", 14 January 1926, "Oliphant to Cadman", February 1926, BP 71183
[83] "Cadman to Loraine" 8 May 1926, BP 71183

Of course, there were severe limits on the strategy of keeping rivals out of the Iran market. International power rivalries had to be accommodated, nationalist feelings had to be acknowledged, and the severe financial limits of post war Britain had to be managed, especially as it came to the US which had become Britain's largest creditor as well as competitor (chapter 2). Thus Italian workers were allowed to be hired in several Trucial States[84] to accommodate Italy's demand as wartime Ally for a share of the spoils; in Iraq APOC had to accept shared ownership of the Turkish Petroleum Company, later Iraqi Petroleum Company, after the Germans and Ottomans had been expelled and replaced by Shell and Americans; and in Saudi Arabia APOC had to accommodate the American demands for a significant presence there[85]. However, in the case of Iran, by far the largest and the only proven producer of oil at the time, APOC accepted no such compromise, and the pressure was on to exclusively recruit British nationals and professionals for staffing the higher echelons of the oil operations.

Nevertheless, as we shall see, Iranian politicians and nationalists continued to exert pressure for the greater 'Iranianization' of the Company, including among the higher ranks. For the next six decades, until the 1979 revolution, the issue of greater participation and management by Iranian nationals over the hierarchy of oil operations remained a major ingredient of official Iranian nationalism, a dynamic that was very much shared with elite resource nationalism in most of the other post-colonies and developing nations that were producing raw materials for the global

---

[84] See I. J. Seccombe and R. I. Lawless, "Foreign Worker Dependence in the Gulf, and the International Oil Companies: 1910-50," *International Migration Review* 20, no. 3 (October 1, 1986): 548–74; Ian J. Seccombe, "A Disgrace to American Enterprise: Italian Labour and the Arabian American Oil Company in Saudi Arabia, 194454," *Immigrants & Minorities Immigrants & Minorities* 5, no. 3 (1986): 233–57. Trucial States refers to the City States carved out of the Arabian Peninsula's coast on the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. They were called thus because of the series of treaties (Truce) they signed with Britain in the 1820's - 1840's, becoming de facto its protectorates until they gained their independence in the mid 20th century. See W. Taylor Fain, *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Adelson, *London and the Middle East*; Glen Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's Relinquishment of Power in Her Last Three Arab Dependencies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Feroz Ahmad, "A Note on the International Status of Kuwait before November 1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 2 (1992): 181–87; John Marlowe, *The Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962).

[85] Helmut Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq 1910-1928* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976); Stephen Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East: Its Discovery and Development*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

market under the tutelage of multi national corporations[86] (see concluding section of this chapter).

As for unskilled workers, both the necessity of accommodating local allies, such as the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheikh Khaz'al, as well as the terms of the D'Arcy Concession, compelled the Company to hire Iranian workers. In the early years, hiring large numbers of unskilled tribesmen and pastoralists in work gangs that were subcontracted through tribal intermediaries was acceptable for the kind of manual labor involved in building the infrastructure of drilling, transporting rigs and pipelines, setting up drill towers, building pumping stations, and the equally backbreaking manual labor of road building, laying pipelines, and building the ports and the refinery[87].

> "The local laborer is well paid, but has to pay something to the head of his gang, and the head of his village, who in turn has to pay the tribal chiefs. It is rough and ready and very cheap system fo taxation, not so harsh as to discourage enterprise…it is much cheaper [and less troublesome and resentment-creating tan our Indian system] – no officials, no pensions, no paper."[88]

---

[86] The literature on the nationalist demands for the nativization of the management and ownership of extractive industries is vast. For Venezuelan oil see Miguel Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy: Oil, Culture, and Society in Venezuela* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). For copper in Zambia see Burawoy, *The Colour of Class on the Copper Mines, from African Advancement to Zambianization*; James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

For the case of Iran seMostafa Fateh, *Panjah Sal Naft-e Iran* (Tehran: Sherkat Sahami-e Chehr, 1956); Foad Rohani, *Tarikh-e Melli Shodan-e San'at-e Naft-e Iran* (Tehran: Jibi, 1973)e . In Iran the nationalist pressure for nativizing the management of transnational corporate operations was not limited to the oil industry, but also involved other economic concerns, such as banks. See for example Abolhassan Ebtehaj's discussion of the intense resentment of Iranians at their treatment as inferiors and for being excluded from the higher management of the Imperial Bank by the bank's British directors. Abolhassan Ebtehaj, *Khaterat-e Abolhassan Ebtehaj [The Memoirs of Abolhassan Ebtehaj]* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Elmi, 1996), Vol 1, Pp. 26–29.

[87] Touraj Atabaki, "From 'Amaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker): Recruitment, Work Discipline and Making of the Working Class in the Persian/Iranian Oil Industry," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84, (2013): 159–175.

[88] Wilson, *SW Persia*, 53

Photograph 10: Payday with Bakhtiyari Workers (1910)



Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Iran

Photograph 11: Bakhtiyari Oilworkers Leaving the Refinery



Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Iran

In these earlier years the transitory and impermanent nature of unskilled workers was an advantage to the Company. So long as work-gang captains supplied the numbers and maintained discipline the fact that nomad and peasant recruits were treating the wage work as a temporary and seasonal source of monetary revenue, and would return to their agrarian lives of sheep herding or planting and tending their fields during the migration or harvest season, was not a major concern and conveniently fit into and reinforced the convenient stereotype of the 'lazy native':

> "Food is so cheap that the Oil Company must, paradoxically, pay higher wages to get people to work at all. Men's needs are few and they are 'lazy'. In other words, their standards of living includes a large element of leisure, and who shall blame them?"[89]

The Company appreciated the cheapness of the casual labor, and the freedom to avoid any social obligations that risked to further burden it, such as providing housing, healthcare, or other costly demands and services that a more permanent labor force would require. In their arrangements with local magnates all such social obligations fell on the shoulders of Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheikh Khaz'al. The Company would simply pay them and expect them to supply, support, and discipline the workers through their own internal arrangements[90].

However, as soon as the initial stages of building the infrastructure were completed and the operations were in full flow, the labor situation began to change and the necessity of planning for a more permanent workforce could no longer be ignored. There were a number of even greater issues at stake: In 1908 when oil was first discovered in Masjed Soleyman, the global petroleum industry was in relative infancy. By 1918 this was no longer the case (See chapter 4) as oil was now a major global industrial, economic, and chemical enterprise that was fast becoming intertwined with the entire fabric of the Fordist regime of accumulation. As the scale of operations in Khuzestan expanded and became more sophisticated technically and scientifically, the nature of the 'unskilled' labor force required for carrying out the operations also changed. The Company could no longer afford to rely only on

---

[89] Wilson, *SW Persia*, 140

[90] Arnold Wilson, "Confidential: Bakhtiyari relations and land purchases", 24 February 1926; "Notes on conference held at Tehran", 22-27 April 1926, BP71183. See conclusion to chapter 3, and the discussion of the transition from formal to the real subsumption of labor to capital.

temporary workers and illiterate peasants and nomads to handle dangerous and expensive material, and to carry out sophisticated work processes. Nor could it afford to train workers only to see them disappear at harvest time or during the migration season. Workers in the new industry had to be time and motion disciplined. They had to become reliable for the industrial hierarchy and the fragmented and minute division of labor that characterized the new industrial relations. They needed to become solely dependent on wages and dependent on the market, so that alternative economic and social modes of existence would not offer them relative autonomy from the labor market.

The imperative to treat laborers as social beings, or as 'human capital' in the present day corporate parlance, rather than an anonymous and interchangeable mass of precariously employed raw material, was gradually emerging in the interwar years not only in Britain and Europe, but also in the colonies and semi colonies (chapter 4). Frederick Cooper in his study of changing labor relations with the dockworkers, miners, and railroad workers of Mombasa in the 1930s and 1940s[91] investigated the marked shift of attitude among large employees and colonial officials toward labor relations, in response to the surprising emergence of labor radicalism and waves of strikes.

Employers and colonial officials were caught off guard when confronted with the consequences of creating an anonymous mass of casual and cheap workers, together with floating populations in towns. The expectation among employers and colonial officials that this reserve army of labor was too atomized to act with unity and discipline was dispelled with shock, fear, and grudging admiration after the strike waves of 1939 and 1947. In Kenya, casual labor was seen as the culprit, and in response a process began to abolish the practice of daily hiring and replace it with an established core of regular workers. This change was accompanied by the increasing bureaucratization of labor relations as a way of regulating work conditions, giving an outlet to grievances, and generally alleviating class tensions and increasing productivity by giving a greater stake in society to workers. These adjustments were accompanied by municipal reform policies, to improve the urban social life of the

[91] Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

floating and anonymous masses by creating an orderly, contended, and hard working city free from the dangerous masses[92].

These 1930s and 1940s processes and reactions that Cooper investigates were not exceptional to colonial Africa; much earlier they had begun to enter the repertoire of corporate and governmental practices in wartime Europe and Britain (see chapter 4), and soon after they came to affect and shape the oil habitus in places like Abadan and Khuzestan. The 1929 Colonial Development Act had already recast the approach to labor and commodities markets in the colonies as an extension of the domestic British economy, rather than a mere source of surplus extraction[93]. However, local conditions have a habit of imposing their own imperatives and, as we saw in previous chapters, the questions of the boundaries of political sovereignty, and the ongoing frictions between the central government, local social dynamics in Khuzestan, and Oil Company needs and practices, were interacting to shape conditions in Abadan.

The process of turning Abadan from a chaotic boomtown into an orderly city began under these circumstances. It started with the Oil Company's realization that attracting adequate workers and employees would only get harder if the urban and living conditions continued as they were; and that the "dangerous masses" populating the island could no longer be ignored due to pressing public health hazards, and the potential political threats posed by intensifying class tensions, urban discontent, and political friction with the Iranian government. Oil workers living on the Island or in Masjed Soleyman were vital to the Company operation, yet they needed to be made reliable by proper training to acquire better skills, permanently accepting wage work and industrial discipline, and developing more solid loyalty to the Company rather than continuing the hybrid patterns of mixing occasional wage work with agrarian and pastoral lives that were sustained through tribal and kinship networks. The central government on the other hand, was coming to realize that it could wrest control and sovereignty over its border territories and populations only if it committed to

---

[92] Ibid. See also Frederick Cooper, "Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labor in Africa," in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa*, ed. Frederick Cooper (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983), 7–50; Robert Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London: E & FN Spon, 1997).

[93] George C. Abbott, "A Re-Examination of the 1929 Colonial Development Act," *Economic History Review* 24, no. 1 (1971): 68–81; Frederick Cooper, "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans. and the Development Concept," in *International Development and the Social Sciences*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 64–92; Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton, "The Invention of Development," in *Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crush (New York: Routledge, 1995), 27–43.

providing the minimal kinds of civic protections and social services that national citizenship claimed to provide. Workers and urban citizens of Abadan, who had to negotiate their difficult deracination from their former social lives with the new relations of urban proximity, industrial discipline, wage labor, and market relations, had to build new forms of urban solidarity in order to be able to stake a claim in the new city.

Having discussed the labor issues that emerged after the war, I will continue in the following sections to investigate several other key aspects of the changes that took place in the urban life of Abadan against the larger background of events that were outlined in the former chapters and the previous sections of this chapter. I will first investigate the public relations machinery set up by APOC as part of the attempt to improve its corporate reputation, in today's jargon to 'rebrand' itself, by inventing a new and more positive public image of the oil industry. This was not done purely through propaganda; it had to be accompanied by tangible actions toward improving actual conditions before it could become convincing. Next we will investigate the public education policies adopted and implemented by the Oil Company with the intention of creating modern citizens and workers. Public education was a double-edged sword, as it was also the prerequisite for complying with the intense political demands of the Iranian government and the public for the greater 'Iranianization' of the oil complex. The next chapter will continue the investigation of public health and sanitation measures as prerequisites for creating a safe and attractive city, and a healthy and productive population, and link these trends with the struggle over the bazaar of Abadan, as the competing visions of creating a safe built environment and a modern productive population came together with the aim of setting the stage for the future development of Abadan.

Mending a Blemished Image: Company Propaganda, Social Amenities, and Improving Material Conditions

APOC suffered from a poor image in the early years of its operations, and this caused problems with recruiting and retaining employees, not to mention with public opinion in Iran and the new political elite in the capital. While Britain had treated Iran as a sphere of influence, and so long as the southern parts of the country had been effectively controlled by British-organized militias like the South Persia Rifles and by

local allies like the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheikh Khaz'al, this poor image had not been of great concern (See chapters 2 & 3). The Company operated under the direct protective umbrella of the Empire, and enjoyed adequate cooperation and support from the Government of India. However, as we saw in the previous sections, the war had put strain on labor supplies, and the pervasive war-induced insecurity and severe hardship in Khuzestan had increased the Company's logistic difficulties. APOC was Britain's largest investment abroad, and it was playing a highly public role in wartime. But as a private corporation (even though it was majority owned by the British Government) it had to rely on the labor market for its recruitments. Already in 1910 and 1914 there had been some notable labor clashes in Khuzestan. The first instance occurred when workers reacted to abuse by European foremen; the latter when two workers were killed and the Company refused to compensate the families adequately and to improve safety conditions. In 1914 the Company relied on Skeikh Khaz'al to put down the strike[94]. There were other clashes following workers' abuse by foremen, or local pastoralists reacting to Company encroachment on their territories. In 1915 several Arab clans cooperated with German agents to sabotage Company pipelines and disrupt oil flows[95]. The Company's relations with local populations remained highly contentious[96]. In 1920 and 1922 there were two major strikes, this time in the refinery and by skilled workers and artisans, and not out on the fields by unskilled casual laborers. Indian skilled workers went on strike in 1920 over poor working and living conditions, low pay, and persisting complaints against racial discrimination and abuse. Some Iranian workers also joined (see below for further discussion). These labor confrontations, as well as urban clashes such as those that occurred over the forced evictions to clear the way for the construction of modern bazaars in Abadan (1924-1927) and Masjed Soleyman (1925, see chapter 3), rattled the stability of operations and made the Company conclude that these labor and social issues needed to be treated more seriously. As part of the solution APOC moved toward a systematic effort to improve its public image.

Even though the Company had a contract for protection by the Bakhtiyari Khans, the latter's hold on their clans and subsections became increasingly tenuous

---

[94] Floor, *Labor and Industry in Iran, 1850-1941*, 54.
[95] George Lenckowski, "Foreign Powers' Intervention in Iran during World War One," in *Qajar Iran*, ed. C. Hilenbradt (Edinburgh, 1983), 81–85.
[96] Atabaki, "From 'Amaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker)."

and the Khans began to be perceived as self serving and their legitimacy began to wane (chapter 3). The Company had dealt exclusively with the Khans, paying them through the Bakhtiyari Oil Company, and leaving the compensation of rank and file Bakhtiyaris to their leaders, being fully aware that they would pocket the payments and lose tribal legitimacy in the process[97]. As we saw in previous chapters, the policy of bypassing the central government and dealing directly with local magnates was an extension of the shifting geopolitics of Britain toward Iran, as well as the local circumstances there. However, as Mahmoud Mamdani has analyzed in his study of colonialism in Africa, the policy of reinforcing "traditional local rulers" as direct partners against the central governmental authority was part of the well established repertoire of British colonialism implemented across the empire, in India and especially in Africa[98]. Tribesmen regularly targeted company surveyors and geologists while out on the fields because they saw them as agents preparing the ground for military operations against themselves[99]. These were not isolated incidents; rather they demonstrated the hostility that marked the Company's relations with local people as it impinged on their territory, enclosed their common properties, disrupted their economies and migration patterns, recruited their valuable labor power, and co-opted their Khans.

The Iranian government was equally suspicious of Company intentions. From early on the telegraph reports (1908-1929) by the local representative of the Foreign Ministry (called *Kargozar*) in Khuzestan, effectively the main central government agents in a practically autonomous province, were replete with complaints, alarms, and expressions of frustration about perceived Company abuses and violations against Iran's territorial sovereignty, national laws, Iranian workers, its refusal to respect the terms of the Concession by hiring foreigners, and its suspicious dealings and perceived intrigues with local magnates against 'national interests'[100]. After the 1921

---

[97] A.W.Wilson, "Confidential: Bakhtiyari relations and land purchases" 24 February 1926; "Notes on conference held at Tehran", 22 April 1926, BP 71183

[98] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (6th printing) (Princeton University Press, 1996).

[99] BP 68779, "From Busk to Gillespie, Ahwaz", 16 January 1915.

[100] These telegraph reports are an un-numbered file available at the *Iran National Archives* (INA). The originals, which I have studied, were perishable thin telegraphic papers that had not been filed yet. The INA at my request typed the content into a 29-page document, and provided me with a copy in 2006. The reports contain the serial numbers of each telegraph and the date. INA, "Official Telegraphic Correspondence Regarding Labor Relations and Other Issues Concerning the Anglo Iranian Oil

coup d'état and the eventual change in the strategic relation between Britain and Iran (chapter 2), this predominantly negative image became a major obstacle and even a threat to the Company's successful operation.

In response to this predominantly negative perception, during the 1926 re-organization the Company made the improvement of its image a priority. But the effort went beyond mere propaganda and a concerted effort at conducting better public relations; it also involved major investment in improving the social life of its employees as well as the general conditions in the oil areas, in particular Abadan. APOC also began to aggressively and systematically respond to any and all criticisms of its activities, whether by the popular press, by employees, private citizens, or statesmen and politicians. Its tone was belligerent and defensive; its responses were relentless and often abrasive. They revealed a mentality that considered any objections to the Company as malicious and unfounded, and undertaken with morally and politically questionable motives. This defensive inflexibility did not win it many friends, however its major efforts at expanding social services, and its relentless use of propaganda to publicize its efforts and actions did create a more positive image of its accomplishments and operations.

As cinema was becoming a major medium of public entertainment as well as propaganda, APOC commissioned a film in 1921 to depict its operations in a positive image. However, the film was only edited in 1938 and finally released under the title "Anglo Iranian Oil Operations in Iran". Its next venture fared better, and was titled "The Persian Oil Industry; the Story of a Great National Enterprise", a 98 minute silent documentary made by one J.D. Kelley in 1925. It provided flowing views of the fields, the refinery, pipelines, and the workers' good lives[101]. Hamid Naficy, in his comprehensive social history of Iranian cinema highlights the close collaboration between APOC and Reza Shah's central government in the production of cinematic propaganda that would fit and enhance both the image of grand state-sponsored projects, such as the transnational railways, as well as the oil industry. Oil films and railroad films in the interwar years projected an epic image of modernization, partly

---

Company's Operations in the Province of Khuzestan (1908-1937)" (Iran National Archives, 1908-1937).

[101] Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 1: The Artisanal Era, 1897–1941* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 183; Mona Damluji, "The Oil City in Focus: The Cinematic Spaces of Abadan in the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's Persian Story," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, no. 1 (April 25, 2013): 75–88.

by juxtaposing these grand industrial ventures against the existing lives of Iranians, and by framing the latter as 'traditional', 'backward' and trapped in a timeless and repetitive cycle that negated any historical progress[102].

The epic film *Grass*, made by the Hollywood director Merian Cooper before he made his blockbuster *King Kong*, was the counterpoint to the APOC film, both of which were made in the same year (1925)[103]. While "The Persian Oil Industry" depicted the epic modernity of the oil complex, *Grass* exoticized the 'primordial' seasonal migration of the Babayari branch of the Bakhtiyaris from Chahar Mahal to Khuzestan, over the nearly 4000m high peak of Zardeh Kouh. Cooper probably exaggerated when he claimed there were 50 thousand people and half a million animals making the grueling seven-week long trek in the snow and over rushing rivers[104]. His spectacular film framed the Bakhtiyari as a people standing outside history, a "timeless people" struggling heroically against nature to eek out an existence against all odds. Both films orientalized the local population as a "people without history" (chapter 1)[105], a theme that had been repeated since the 19th century by a string of British and European travelers, spies, and adventurers[106], and was now accepted as self-evident. Although *Grass* depicted the Bakhtiyari as noble and heroic savages, nevertheless, the audiences viewing the two films in cinemas in London, Tehran, as well as in Abadan, Masjed Soleyman, and Ahvaz, could not help but wonder at the gulf between the two, and how the spectacular smokestacks of Abadan, its snaking pipelines, the grand jetties and modern tankers, were spearheading the primitive region into the future. The combination of the two films evoked *King Kong*'s final tragic scene atop the Empire State Building as the mighty beast succumbs to the power of airplanes and machine guns.

---

[102] On the framing of 'tradition' in modernization projects see Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 1*; Kaveh Ehsani, "Tabar Shenasi-e Tarh-ha-ye Bozorg-e Tose'eh dar Iran-e Mo'aser (Genealogy of large scale development projects in contemporary Iran)," *Goftogu*, no. 54 (2009): 113–32; Home, *Of Planting and Planning*; Mitchell, *Rule of Expert*.
[103] Merian C Cooper and Ernest Schoedsack, *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life* (Milestone Collection, 2000).
[104] Cooper, *Grass*.
[105] Eric Wolf, *Europe and People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
[106] Austen Henry Layard, *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, Including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes Before the Discovery of Nineveh* (London: J. Murray, 1887); Elizabeth Ness MacBean Ross, James Ness MacBean Ross, *A Lady Doctor in Bakhtiyari Land* (London: L. Parsons, 1921); George Nathaniel Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 vols. (London: Elibron, 2005 [1892]); Arnold T Wilson, "The Bakhtiyaris," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 3 (1926): 205–223; Vita Sackville-West, *Twelve Days in Persia: Across the Mountains with the Bakhtiyari Tribe* (London: Tauris Parke, 2009 [1928]).

Naficy notes that APOC established its first public film-screening program in Abadan in 1926, and projected its film in Abadan before it built a film theater in London[107]. This implies that some of the likely film audience in Abadan included Bakhtiyari workers who were witnessing their own reification in this cinematic juxtaposition of tradition versus modernity. In Europe the APOC film was released under a different title, "In the Land of the Shah", and was viewed by a million people in theaters, and copies of it were sold in 9.5mm format for home consumption[108]. The film was released to coincide with Reza Shah's coronation, and the changed title was to highlight the new monarch's role, rather than make the film appear as corporate propaganda.

Cinematic propaganda was not the only venue where the Oil Company tried to improve relations with the Government. The Company prepared special guest quarters in Abadan and the fields and began to host all official and influential visitors, including journalists and writers, with organized tours and lavish hospitality[109]. Sometimes the public relations efforts were embarrassingly sycophantic, such as the large monument of Reza Shah, designed and built by the Company architect J.M.Wilson, and installed in Ahvaz in 1930[110]. A year later on the anniversary of the coronation the monument was officially unveiled by the Provincial Governor in Naseri Square in the presence of 200 invited guests and 2,000 soldiers standing guard. Company Manager E. Elkington made a public speech, emphasizing that the bronze statue's base was made of local stone from Khuzestan, and dedicated the bust to Reza Shah's first visit to Khuzestan as a monarch[111]. Overall, the effort was made to present to the public as well as to policymakers a consistently clean, modern, and progressive image of the Company, and to emphasize its modernizing effect on the people and landscape of Khuzestan and Iran.

Cinematic propaganda suited the government and the Oil Company alike. Both followed calculated scripts with instrumental agendas. John Taylor, a director hired by AIOC (Anglo Iranian Oil Company, as APOC had been renamed after 1935) to make the first propaganda sound film *Dawn of Iran* (1937) recalled later that he

---

[107] Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 1*, 186.
[108] Ibid., 183.
[109] Jalal Al-e Ahmad, "Gozareshi Az Khouzestan," in *Karname-Ye Seh Saleh*, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Ravaq, 1978), 66–94. Khalil Maleki, "Asarati keh do Mosaferat Yeki beh Landan va Digari beh Abadan dar Khatereh Man Baqi Gozasht", *Nameh Mardom*, no.70, vol.4, 13 April 1247
[110] "Monument at Ahwaz to the Shah", 19 May 1930, BP 68848
[111] "Bust of H.I.M. unveiled", *Naft*, 7:3 (May 1931): 5-6

was given a list of subjects by the Iranian government that he was forbidden to film, including camel caravans and carpet weaving, because they would depict Iran as primitive. The film crew was assigned a police officer that accompanied them across the country as they filmed, and checked every shot through the camera before allowing them to proceed[112]. However, the rosy and modernist propaganda films were not universally accepted. In 1927 the newspaper *Ettela'at* published a harsh critique of the original APOC film by someone named Khouzestani who wrote,

> " In Tehran they show you the beautiful films of the oil operations in the south. Of course they tell of the enormity of the Company's buildings and facilities and of the importance of the oil pipelines, and naturally you and your journalist colleagues enjoy them and perhaps think this Company is serving and benefiting Iran. But have these films ever shown the wretched lives of those lowly Iranian workers who for three Qrans a day toil in highly dangerous conditions and in really heart wrenching manner? Have these films ever shown you the manner in which in the southern oil regions a group of Indian workers are made superior to, and rule over, Iranian workers in their own homeland? Have these films ever shown you the dictatorial manner in which the [British] managers govern your fellow citizens and push and shove them around and stifle those who raise the slightest complaint?"[113]

Photograph 12: Cinema Hall (late 1920s)



Source: BP Archives

[112] Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 1*, 184.
[113] Quoted in Ibid., 183–184.

Cinema as entertainment, an effective social venue, and a powerful propaganda tool was incorporated into the 1926 reorganization of APOC. A proposal was made by Company directors to circulate and screen films in different locations across Khuzestan based similar to the military and the YMCA[114] model. The Company had already set up a "Neilson Cinema" and a Staff Club earlier, but now it proposed to replace the obsolete projectors and improve the screenings[115]. New projectors cost £50 each, but the Chairman John Cadman enthusiastically sanctioned their purchase and took personal responsibility for seeing to their delivery and to ensuring the regular supply of films. It was proposed to establish a cinema at the Fields Central Hall in Masjed Soleyman and to organize either daily performances or regular visits by the permanent projectionist from Abadan. Initially only senior staff would have had access to film viewing in the Fields, but soon cinema was to become a general form of entertainment[116].

The scope of the Company's efforts at improving its image went well beyond cinema. It also involved publishing a regular journal with glossy graphics, along with regular newsletters. Establishing a wireless (radio) station proved to be probably the most effective way of improving moral. The Company also began to systematically plan the building of social clubs and libraries, organizing sports teams and orchestras, and building entertainment halls and gymnasiums. It proposed to open a restaurant. It was felt that the current 4-member orchestra of Indian musicians were "incompetent", so Cadman suggested hiring musicians from Rumania or Poland instead. All these amenities were intended for Europeans. A few were made available to senior Indians; none yet to the ordinary workers and Iranians, although Cadman suggested that the Company should make an effort "to get Persians more involved"[117]. [Iranian] Armenians already had built a club and now "Persian Clerks" were asking for one of their own. Cadman strongly supported the idea[118]. However, when Iranian workers tried to organize their own athletic club in 1928, and obtained a permit from the Cultural Office of the Provincial Government, they were shut down by the police with

---

[114] Young Men's Christian Association
[115] "Item 21, Social Activities", p.77-79, 18 March 1926, BP 71183.
[116] BP 71183, "Field Matters; Meeting at Abadan on 18 March 1926"; "Minutes and agenda of meetings held at Ahwaz and the Fields during Sir John Cadman's visit to Persia 1926", 2 April 1926.
[117] BP 71183, "Field Matters; Meeting at Abadan on 18 March 1926".
[118] BP 71183, 2 April 1926.

the urging of the Company, because they feared the club would be used for trade union organization and become an autonomous place for the propagation of subversive political ideas against the Company[119].

The Company magazine that began publication was initially called *APOC*, and later renamed *Naft* (Oil) and contained up to date news, photos, and articles in English. It was intended to forge an "imagined community" among all those working for the Company, across its widespread geography. The magazine provided news and photographs about Company activities in Khuzestan as well as London or Basra. Senior staff reminisced about the early days of their "pioneering endeavors"[120]. There were reports and news about the "ladies" activities, sports events, scientific advances, official visits, etc. Later on there appeared photo essays about housing accommodations and married couple's bungalows. Regular news of sporting events and competitions were published. The magazine created ties between scientists, engineers, managers, technicians, administrators, and workers; it relived somewhat the suffocating sense of isolation, while offering potential job applicants a glossy picture of a vibrant and pleasant working and living environment. The wireless (radio) however, seemed to have been highly prized:

> "Recent scientific improvements in wireless have indeed proved a boon and blessing to the men working some 160 miles from any civilization, and one can imagine the feeling of hundreds of young men from home, many from our universities and public schools, listening to the Savoy band playing the latest dance music."[121]

The organized sports activities and social clubs were among the most important policies affecting employee morale. They were meant to create a spirit of teamwork, discipline, and competitiveness; and to reinforce a sense of identity and belonging[122]. However, much like organized sports and social activities in highly class segregated and class conscious Britain and its colonies, these social activities were

---

[119] Yusof Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e Dowran-e Separi Shodeh*, ed. Kaveh Bayat and Majid Tafreshi (Tehran: Ferdows Publishers, 1991), 35, 126–129.
[120] Scott, "The First Survey of the Persian Oil Fields"; Thomson, "Abadan in Its Early Days.". See BP 71183, "Item 27: APOC magazine and publicity", 22 March 1926, p.86
[121] Cooper, "A Visit to the Anglo Persian Oilfields," 154.
[122] Andrei Markovits, "The Other 'American Exceptionalism': Why is there no Soccer in the United States?" *Praxis International*, no. 2 (1988): 125–50; Christian Bromberger, "Football as World-View and as Ritual.," *French Cultural Studies* 6 (1995): 293–311.

almost completely organized around rigid racial, national, and status lines. In Masjed Soleyman there were four social clubs by 1926, "extensively used especially in the summer". Saturday afternoons had been dedicated for athletic activities and clubs. Clerks had their own clubs, including, "Two good clubs for Indians, and one more humble type for Armenians". It seems there were some Iranians who had gained membership to the Indian clubs, and were now asking discreetly to form their own. "Every effort was being made to encourage sports among them…unfortunately they show no interest in games, but this might be developed later…[their desire to form a club] is good to bear in mind for purposes of effect in Tehran and on Persians generally".

There was no official policy requiring employees to seek membership in clubs, but there was peer pressure to join. Newcomers were given an application upon arrival, but the "40 or 50" who had not joined stood out as awkward exceptions. What was interesting in Masjed Soleyman was the aversion to introducing open class distinctions within social clubs, at least among the Europeans. Reporting on the popular Gymkhana Club, the Fields' Manager stated, "it is desirable that it should not develop into a private club, as this would introduce class divisions, which at present are non-existent in Fields"[123]. However, this egalitarianism among the Europeans in the dangerous and rugged "Fields" did not last, and all social clubs were eventually segregated as a way of keeping races separate, and enforcing rank consciousness among employees.

The Company's proposed libraries created some tension. A discussion had started with the McKenzie Bookshop in Baghdad to establish a bookstore and library in Abadan and the Fields, and also to manage the club library at Abadan. However, as soon as subscription rates of 1 Rupee/month had been imposed the membership in the fields had dropped from 250 to 100. In addition, racial segregation became a point of tension as a certain Mr. Armstrong, presumably in charge of the library, denied Indian clerks who had asked to be allowed access because "I feel this might prevent some Europeans from using the library". He went on to suggest, "…A separate, smaller

[123] "Dossier 12: Social Services Department" 2 April 1926, BP 71183

library may be established for the Indians, and supplied by used and discarded books from the main library"[124].

Improving the image of the Oil Company among the public in Iran and abroad, the prospective job applicants from Europe, and the Iranian government, was a centerpiece of the Company's post war reorganization. APOC hired a professional "Welfare Officer… to organize social activities of clerks, artisans as well as Europeans"[125], making this probably one of the earlier instances of a multi national corporation establishing a specialist public relations office to shape and improve a corporate brand. The Company also tried to create a strong internal corporate culture and to strengthen employee loyalty to the Company by establishing social facilities and launching a set of organized social activities and entertainment programs intended to alleviate boredom and the sense of isolation, while improving productivity, competitiveness, cohesion, and a desire for upward mobility.

However, these efforts also revealed an ingrained institutional racism within the corporate culture of APOC, a feature that was an integral attribute of its colonial links. This was by no means unique to APOC or to British overseas businesses, as Vitalis' study of SoCal/Aramco has shown in the case of American oil companies in Saudi Arabia[126]. The fallout from this institutional racism would later come to haunt APOC and cause continuous friction with its employees, the local population, and the state bureaucracy. It was a contributing factor in stirring the so called 'resource nationalism' in Iran, or of the nationalist political sentiments formed around several demands: First, the demand for greater national sovereignty over natural resources by increasing royalties or even wresting ownership; second, for the equal treatment of Iranian nationals working for the oil complex; and third, for increasing tangibly the control exerted by Iranian nationals over technical and managerial operations. As a result, 'resource nationalism' and calls for greater 'Iranianization' of the oil industry became one of the major bones of contention between successive Iranian administrations and multinational concerns that controlled the oil complex; first APOC/AIOC until 1953; followed by the Consortium of multinational oil corporations until 1973 when the oil industry was formally nationalized (with

[124] "Item 21; Social Activities", 18 March 1926; "Item 5; Conference at Fields Manager's Office" 2 April 1926; "Dossier 12; Social Services Department- Fields" 2 April 1926", BP 71183
[125] "Item 21", p.79, 18 March 1926, BP 71183
[126] Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2009).

multinationals kept on as "consultants"); and eventually the 1979 revolution when all foreign national corporations were expelled from the Iranian oil industry[127].

APOC's decision to improve its corporate image would not have carried much credibility if it were not accompanied by a meaningful commitment to improving living and working conditions. Initially these efforts were targeted exclusively to benefit European employees, along with skilled workers, artisans, and technicians. The latter categories included Indians, as well as some Iranians (including Iranian Armenians). The masses of casual and unskilled workers were completely excluded from these improvements (until after WW2 in the 1940s). However, as class frictions mounted successive layers of subaltern workers and residents of oil cities succeeded in wresting concessions from the Oil Company and the Iranian government to extend the circle of these social benefits and municipal amenities. This expansion of social services was gradual and highly uneven. Thus, the provision of a number of sanitary and public health improvements, such as safe drinking water, the building of latrines and a sewerage system, access to Company hospital and public health facilities, etc. initially began as services for the permanent employees within Company enclaves, although Company hospitals and dispensaries did treat the indigenous population in separate wards. However, once the process had started, the extension of these social and municipal services to a wider urban public became increasingly unavoidable due to public pressure and for practical reasons (see next chapter). Likewise, the support and subsidizing of formal schools and technical education began as exclusively Company affairs, but were soon extended to the larger urban public (see next section).

By mid 1920s APOC had made some progress toward improving its hitherto abysmal image. In this rebranding the Company was aided by politicians and senior soldiers who used scientific venues such as the Royal Central Asian Society to extol the virtues of the Company and wrap it in a patriotic veneer. Sir Harry Brittain, a

---

[127] Mohammad 'Ali Movahed, *Naft-e Ma va Masa'el-e Hoquqi-e An (Our Oil and Its Legal Issues)* (Tehran: Kharazmi, 1978); Peyman Jafari, "Reasons to Revolt: Iranian Oil Workers in the 1970s," *International Labor and Working Class History* 84, no. 1 (2013): 195–217; Maral Jefroudi, "Revisiting 'the Long Night' of Iranian Workers: Labor Activism in the Iranian Oil Industry in the 1960s," *International Labor and Working Class History* 84 (Fall 2013): 176–94; Mostafa Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992); Valerie Marcel, *Oil Titans* (London: Chattam House, 2006); Peter Nore and Terisa Turner, eds., *Oil and Class Struggle* (New York: Zed Books, 1980). On the issue of resource nationalism in the comparable case of Venezuela see Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy*; Bernard Mommer, *Global Oil and the Nation State* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2002); Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1997).

conservative MP, told his audience that he had just returned from a 35,000 mile pilgrimage of the British Empire which had included a visit to Khuzestan:

> "This is not only the finest oilfield that I have seen, but it is absolutely beyond all praise from the point of view of organization…some people [talk about] the decadence of the British Empire, [I would] suggest that if they want a tonic they should get out to Southern Persia, and see what Englishmen and Scotts in cooperation can do together… [People at APOC] work, and work hard. But I do not think it is right to say that they have nothing else to do and no relaxation. When I arrived at Christmas day there was a very first-class race meeting…in this appalling looking region. I found in my tour round this district everything in the way of tennis, polo, athletics, even a regatta on the miserable little pond you saw by the first pumping station… [In this venture] the British Government has got one of the finest investments it ever made."[128]

Photograph 13: Sailing on the "Miserable Little Pond"



Source: BP Archives

To these remarks Admiral Richmond added "[APOC] must not be looked upon as a purely business proposition. It is of the greatest national importance…not only as giving work at home, but from the point of view of imperial defense it is a matter upon which too much importance cannot be laid". He went on to emphasize

[128] Cooper, "A Visit to the Anglo Persian Oilfields."

"the great care that was taken in Abadan by the Company to look after all its employees…every effort is made by the Company to make their people comfortable in every way. It is a beastly place in itself. But everything done is truly on a lavish scale showing that the Company have the interests of their employees at heart and are not afraid to spend money on making them comfortable (Applause)". Anthony Eden, another conservative MP and parliamentary secretary to Austen Chamberlain at the time, highlighted the Company's hospitals as a great public relations factor with the local people, and because of it "the Company is not only a great business enterprise, but a great humanitarian agency in Southwestern Persia (Hear, hear)". Eden continued to extol the great sense of national pride generated by the scale of APOC and the great economic benefit it was generating through "a very large measure of employment to be given directly and indirectly, through manufacture of appliances and stores of every kind, to tens of thousands of British workmen".[129]

It will be recalled that this was the year 1926, with unemployment and labor strife reaching a boiling point in postwar Britain, that would explode in the general strike three months after this lecture was delivered (Chapter 4). These presentations wrapped the oil venture in Iran in the flag of patriotic pride and the grandeur of industry and empire, all at the same time. They presented APOC as a grand humanitarian venture, and a great contributor to the British economy and its working class suffering from unemployment and poverty. They framed Khuzestan as an abysmal place, which was being rescued by the civilizing mission undertaken by APOC. This combination of a sense of moral mission and material opportunity framed Khuzestan as a great place to work and to live comfortably. The Chairman of the event, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the former Lieutenant governor of Punjab (1912-1919) who had presided over the Amritsar massacre in 1919 before being relieved of duty, concluded the proceedings by framing Abadan as a tourist destination for "Gentlemen from Baghdad, when they want a weekend holiday, go to Maidan-i Naftun [Masjed Soleyman]. When they go there they find excellent shows going on, races where they can back a winner…and in fact the amenities of civilization in such abundance that in a year or two Maidan-i Naftun will draw people like Algiers or Egypt. We are all proud of this great outpost of civilization in the East"[130].

---

[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid., 161.

By mid 1920s APOC was hard at work rebranding its corporate public image and the perceptions of the living and working conditions in Khuzestan. Corporate propaganda associating large industrial and commercial companies with patriotic and humanitarian accomplishments had become an integral part of strategic planning by large businesses during WWI (chapter 4). But after the war the advent of Fordism, the rise of multi national corporations, intensifying mass politics, labor radicalism, and nationalist and revolutionary fervor, further consolidated this trend. APOC badly needed this boost in public image to improve its recruitment drives, and to reduce and ward off criticism. To get this boost it relied on the magic of the seventh art, cinema; it mobilized politicians, military veterans, journalists, geographers, and technical professionals to praise its accomplishments in respected scientific settings closely associated with the Empire; it published a glossy magazine, and set up a public relations office to refute any and all criticism, disseminate information, and shpae public opinion in its favor.

However, without some real commitment to improving the abysmal working and living conditions in Khuzestan it is unlikely that any of this extensive propaganda and rebranding would have produced the desired results. Consequently, aside from technical and managerial changes in the workplace, and the acceleration of its international marketing and explorations, what came to define APOC's post-war restructuring was its newfound reluctant paternalism, as it found itself obligated to commit to dealing and engaging with 'the social question' in Khuzestan's oil complex.

The Making of Skilled and Permanent Iranian Workers: Education, Discipline, and 'Iranianization'.

In the interwar years mass education of Iranian workers and their children became a pressing concern for APOC, and it entered its repertoire of reluctant paternalism. On the other hand, Iranian nationalists and the state came to conceptualize and to measure the extent of national sovereignty over natural resources, national territory, and the oil industry, in terms of the *Iranianization* of those working in the oil industry, and especially the number of Iranian nationals in the managerial and upper echelons of the Company. Given the almost completely undeveloped modern national education infrastructure in the interwar period (see below), the establishment of basic education as well as technical training to qualify

Iranians for employment in the oil industry became an inevitable policy priority and a highly sensitive issue in Khuzestan.

As for the local population, once the local socio-economic structures had been significantly undermined gaining permanent paid employment in the oil industry became their preferred, sometimes the only, option. Once the established system of tribal work gang levies established between APOC and the local magnates[131] began to wane, job applicants increasingly had to seek work at the Company as individuals rather than as members of a community. They faced competition from skilled Indian workers and artisans, as well as other qualified Iranians. Consequently, gaining formal education and accreditation over time became a significant social and economic strategy among the local population. Needless to say, the gradual establishment of modern institutions of education had profound socializing impact; especially in the urban centers where Company sponsored schools were established to teach literacy, technical training, some English, modern sciences, technical knowhow, and an almost military discipline and modes of regimented behavior, to the boys who were preparing to work for the oil industry or for the growing bureaucracy and the private sector.

The Company had established a technical school in Ahvaz in 1916 to train skilled adult workers. But now it began investing in the establishment, funding, and managing a growing number of elementary as well as technical schools and apprenticeship programs across its areas of operation, but especially in Abadan, Ahvaz, Mohammareh, and Masjed Soleyman. There were several reasons behind this commitment by a private corporation to a social program that historically and conventionally had fallen within the purview religious establishments, but since 1870s, and especially in the post war era, was being taken over by the central states[132]. First, the technical and organizational shifts in modern industry demanded workers

---

[131] Touraj Atabaki, "From 'Amaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker): Recruitment, Work Discipline and Making of the Working Class in the Persian/Iranian Oil Industry," *International Labor and Working Class History* 84 (Fall 2013): 159–75.

[132] The historical role of religious establishments in education began to be replaced by the modern state toward the end of 19th century. For Britain and France see Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*; Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*. On the educational change under Reza Shah in Iran see Issa Khan Sadiq, *Modern Persia and her Educational System* (New York: International Institute of Teachers College; Columbia University, 1931); David Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Banani, *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941.*; Michael P. Zirinsky, "Render Therefore Unto Caesar the Things Which Are Caesar's: American Presbyterian Educators and Reza Shah," *Iranian Studies* 26, no. 3/4 (July 1, 1993): 337–356.

with different skill sets and the ability to work under a more detailed and atomized division of labor (see chapter 4)[133]. Second, the chronic labor shortages during wartime and in its immediate aftermath discussed in previous sections led APOC to make a strategic decision to bring casual and unskilled Iranian workers up to the standards of Indian and some European skilled workers and artisans to alleviate this chronic shortage. Third, and more significant still, were the political calculations behind this decision. The terms of the D'Arcy concession required all manual labor and non-managerial employees to be Iranian[134], and the continued hiring of Indians and non-Iranians (including Iraqis) was increasingly becoming a major bone of contention with the Iranian government, as well as with local people migrating to the growing oil towns, and demanding some tangible benefit from the industry that had so affected their lives.

Prior to the 1921 coup d'état the Company could safely ignore these complaints, but once the paternalistic control of Khaz'al and Bakhtiyari khans had been diminished or removed and a strong central government with a nationalistic agenda had been established, APOC found itself under increasing pressure to comply with the letter of its contract. Another political concern was the implicit subversive threat of rising nationalism in India, a factor that worried APOC officials that work-related grievances by Indian employees could be also radicalized by this political backdrop. Fourth, was the quandary of the absence of any modern educational infrastructure in the country, and especially in Khuzestan: In 1918 there were only 45 modern elementary schools and 11 high schools throughout Iran. By 1925 the numbers had increased to 648 and 86 respectively; with 2,260 pupils graduating from elementary schools and 110 from high schools. In 1925 there were some 1,301 traditional schools (*maktabkhaneh)* across the country, run by 1,500 religious scholars (*ulama)*, and training 29,000 pupils in literacy and basic religious subjects. There

[133] On the transformation of he scientific, managerial, technical, and labor requirements of the oil industry, and its globally interconnected nature, see Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:397–460.
[134] Article 12 of the 1901 D'Arcy Concession: "The workmen employed in the service of the Company shall be subjects of His Imperial Majesty the Shah, except the technical staff such as managers, engineers, borers, and foremen". Ibid., 1:642.

were also 282 religious seminaries, training nearly 6,000 pupils (*tollab)* in advanced religious instruction[135].

The plain fact was that at that stage the upstart Iranian state neither had the financial means nor the institutional wherewithal, or the personnel to provide adequate educational instruction on a large scale. As we saw in chapter 2, the political priorities of the new political regime also lay elsewhere, with the bulk of the annual budget after 1921 geared to developing the military, with education being a paltry 3% of the meager budget (chapter 2)[136]. Heavy national debt, post war chronic poverty, and the fact that the central government had virtually no significant institutional presence in the autonomous province until 1925, put APOC in the unenviable position of reluctantly shouldering the responsibility of funding and managing educational institutions, albeit with the explicit intent of gearing all training toward eventually serving the needs of the Company. Although the Company kept pressing the central government to shoulder more of this responsibility Tehran resisted, and while it did not reject its responsibility outright it kept insinuating that since the flood of migrants population to the oil towns of Khuzestan was being caused by the oil industry the Company ought to shoulder partial responsibility for social services, such as education, municipal services, and public health[137]. In 1926, before leaving for Iran to preside over the reorganization of APOC, John Cadman the Company Chairman told an audience in London at the Royal Central Asian Society:

> "One other phase of the oil-field I wish to speak of, and that is the human side. It is the conversion of a fairly crude material in the form of the Persian laborer into the skilled artisan. The schools which the Company have set up have introduced a method which would be difficult to implement in this country, I will admit; but the pay of a workman is dependent upon his capacity to pass a test, and the schools are so developed that a man passes into the schools and back to the works, and by that means he can only get his increase of pay by increase of efficiency. The operations, such as boiler work, done by what

---

[135] *Bayan-e Amari-ye Tahavolat-e Eqtesadi va Ejtema'i-e Iran dar Doran-e Por Eftekhar-e Doudeman-e Pahlavi [Statistical Performance of the Social and Economic Developments of Iran During the Glorious Reign of the Pahlavi Dynasty]* (Tehran: The Statistical Center of Iran, 1976), 42–47.
[136] *Persia, Annual Report 1925*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 382–384.
[137] Ironically, this haggling over the extent of the social responsibility of the oil industry to local society became a permanent feature of the oil complex in Iran, one that persists to this day Kaveh Ehsani, "Naft na Estebdad Misazad, na Democracy" *Tarikh Irani*, 2012, http://www.tarikhirani.ir/fa/files/13/bodyView/131/.

> appears to be quite crude natives would astonish a Scotch dockyard skilled workman, It is remarkable how these people can be got to work by proper training. It is all done by carefully thought out plan."[138]

The decision to bring Iranian workers up to standard by establishing training programs and formal schools was in part precipitated by the Indian labor strikes of 1920, 1922, and 1924. In 1920 the future of Abadan as a refinery was still uncertain. Despite its critical importance during the war the management and the technical conditions of the refinery were very poor. "The state of the refinery was very unsatisfactory, caused by inadequate management struggling to bring new plans into operation, whilst coping with a backlog of imperfect maintenance…the role of the chemist was virtually neglected and so the performance of the refinery suffered in consequence… In 1922 there was a disastrous fire…the plant was suffering from exceeding deterioration with an adverse effect on performance"[139]. In addition, the Company was uneasy over the terms of the D'Arcy Concession, the perceived instability of Iran under the perceived 'the Bolshevik threat', and its ongoing frictions with the government of Iran over royalties (chapters 2 & 3). There were serious debates among directors to relocate the refinery to India, where labor was cheaper, and far better infrastructure and a ready market were available.

Once the decision to remain in Abadan was made on technical grounds[140] the city inevitably became the primary industrial and shipping center of the oil industry where, at any time, between one third to one half of all APOC employees in Iran worked and lived (see table 3). In the early 1920s some 2700 Indians made up 70% of all those working for oil in Abadan; their work was vital to continued operations, and consequently their protests and strikes had significant repercussions for APOC. Many scholars have connected the 1920 strike, spearheaded by Sikh artisans and skilled workers, to the Amritsar massacre of 1919. Although without a doubt this was an important factor in the politically charged post-war era, the fact remains that living and working conditions in Abadan were abysmal[141] and solidarity with fellow

---

[138] Cooper, "A Visit to the Anglo Persian Oilfields," 160–161.
[139] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:430.
[140] "Technical and economic, not political reasons ultimately decided the fate of Abadan. The 'balance' of products had to be maintained in relation to market demand and productive proximity" *Ibid.*
[141] Atabaki, "Far from Home, but at Home; Indian Migrant Workers in the Iranian Oil Industry"; Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:432–433.

Punjabis was in all likelihood a catalyst but not the primary cause of the strike. Indian strikers were joined by Iranians, demanding improved wages, reduction of working hours, overtime pay, better sanitary conditions, and an end to mistreatment and humiliation by staff. The Company director H. Nichols who had just arrived for a visit quickly agreed to their demands and increased their pay by 80%[142].

The compromise ended the strike, but it had become clear to Company directors that "a comprehensive solution was required"[143]. Arnold Wilson, ironically a profoundly Victorian personality who had been hired as Company Manager in Mohammareh after having served as acting Viceroy of Iraq, now called for reorganizing the management structure in favor of "a modern approach, to break with the 19th century management practices"[144]. The comprehensive corporate restructuring was accompanied by a reluctant commitment to erecting a paternalistic and hierarchical social welfare structure. The structural reforms of management, operations, administration, and the reluctant limited commitment to what amounted to 'urban' social welfare were the main components of the comprehensive solution upon which APOC settled in the interwar years.

---

[142] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:432–433; Floor, *Labor and Industry in Iran, 1850-1941*, 54–55; Cosroe Chakeri, *The Condition of the Working Class in Iran: A Documentary History* (Florence: European Committee for the Defence of the Democratic Rights of the Workers in Iran, 1978), 41; Dobe, "A Long Slow Tutelage in Western Ways of Work: Industrial Education and the Containement of Nationalism in Anglo-Iranian and ARAMCO, 1923-1963," 29–32.
[143] Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:432.
[144] Dobe, "A Long Slow Tutelage in Western Ways of Work: Industrial Education and the Containement of Nationalism in Anglo-Iranian and ARAMCO, 1923-1963," 31. On Arnold Wilson see chapters 1, 3, 6, and Marlowe, *Late Victorian*.

Photograph 14: Indian and Iranian Workers in an Abadan Workshop (1920s)



Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Iran

As discussed in the previous section, this reorganization included improving public relations, housing accommodations, married quarters, public health and medical services, leisure amenities, establishing company stores as a way of controling inflation and assure food safety, and investing in a growing program of training and educating Iranians eventually to replace Indians. When a second strike by Indian workers occurred in 1922, the Company was more hardnosed in its response and refused to compromise. It called on Sheikh Khaz'al to suppress the strike, and once that was accomplished it evicted the strikers to India[145]. The strikers again had demanded better accommodation, decent latrines and cooking facilities, more humane work hours, improved pay, and an end to racial abuse and humiliation by Europeans. By then, although the overall number of Indians had remained the same (table 3) and their work continued to be crucial, they formed a much reduced 30% of the total labor force in Abadan. Another Indian strike occurred in 1924, but it was suppressed more easily. The Company decided to keep Indian employees as clerical staff, cooks, orderlies, and household servants; but "by 1925 Persianization

[145] Floor, *Labor and Industry in Iran, 1850-1941*, 53–58.

was a major concern for APOC management"[146], and the commitment to the long term process of Iranianizing the industrial labor force had started.

Initially the Company devised an education plan in 1925, after consulting Isa Khan, the provincial Director of Education[147]. In addition to the technical school that had been built in Ahvaz in 1916 the Company built a new apprentice training center in Abadan to train, test, and grade enough qualified fitters, drivers, firemen, mechanics, turners, electricians, and other skilled personnel to replace departing Indians. Soon the construction of a number of elementary schools in Mohammareh, Abadan, Ahvaz, Masjed Soleyman, and Shushtar were added to these initial efforts. Some of these were technical schools, for example Masjed Soleyman, where 50 boys between the ages of 10 and 18 trained as artisans. Other schools were hybrid organizations, combining elementary education using the formal textbooks and curriculum of the Iranian Ministry of Education, in addition to lessons in English language and technical instructions. The Hamidiyeh and Khayam schools in Ahvaz were among these, with 142 pupils. The Company supplied the boys with uniforms, and hired an army sergeant to teach sports, physical training, discipline, and football. In some cases the Company subsidized the government schools, as in Mohammareh where it paid 100 Touman to keep the local public school open. In Abadan the Company estimated that the Danesh Pahlavi School had the potential to double its enrollment to 300. It also funded the Stuart Memorial College in Isfahan for training more advanced technicians and engineers, by providing an initial investment of £3,000 and an annual subsidy of £500. Altogether the Company was investing £3600 annually in education, but it was willing to substantially raise that figure to £10 thousand/ year[148].

---

[146] James Bamberg, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 94.
[147] Dobe, "A Long Slow Tutelage in Western Ways of Work: Industrial Education and the Containement of Nationalism in Anglo-Iranian and ARAMCO, 1923-1963," 37.
[148] "Dossier 5: Education in Khuzistan", 15 February 1926, BP71183

Photograph 15: Abadan Technical School



Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Iran

Photograph 16: Military Style Public School



Source: BP Archives

However, direct Company involvement in education was a double bind: It could potentially become a political minefield, as well as being a major public relations boon. The Iranian state from the onset had always objected to the Company's hiring practices and demanded greater 'Iranianization' as an indication of the Company's compliance with the terms of its contract. In 1909 the Kargozar in

Mohammareh alarmed the Foreign Ministry by reporting about the hiring of Ottoman, Indian, and Chinese workers, and the building of a railroad, jetties, and a brick factoring in Abadan and Mohammareh (29 September). The Foreign Ministry (11 October) asked the Ministry of General Welfare to post its own agent to the province and to demand APOC to appoint an attorney in Tehran to answer the governments' concerns about hiring foreign nationals as well as "importing trucks, hot air balloons, building permanent structures in Ebbadan (Abadan) and Mohammareh". It also asked Sadiq al-Saltaneh, the Iranian ambassador in London, to inquire APOC about these "violations of the contract" (14 November). The Ambassador replied that " the hiring of Portuguese, Australian, and Ottomans by the Company was due to the shortage of equivalent Iranians, and the building of permanent structures was within the terms of the 60 year concession" (11 December)[149].

Nevertheless, the tone of suspicion and mistrust were set, and these diplomatic and bureaucratic frictions were to become a permanent feature of Company-state relations. The Kargozar expressed concern about the Company dealing in landed property with local magnates (June 1909). Clearly there was concern over territorial sovereignty and the powerlessness of the central government to do anything about it.

> "The British consul must be made aware that they need to obtain the approval of the Kargozari before they deal directly with the local population…This is a report on the vast authority that the British consulate is exercising in its dealings with [Khaz'al]… It is necessary to establish Kargozaris in Masjed-Soleyman, Shushtar, and Abadan in order to control the Company's behavior, especially regarding their actions in arresting, trying, punishing, and incarcerating Iranian nationals" (Winter and Spring 1911).

The mounting concern about the loss of sovereignty extended to the Company's labor practices and the intermediary role played by local magnates: "There are repeated meetings between the British consul and [Khaz'al], they are plotting against the Bakhtiary Tribe and Sheikh Farhan…We report on the excellent relations between the British consul and [Khaz'al] and their reliance on his support in hiring Iranian workers".

---

[149] INA, "Telegraph Reports."

The Foreign Ministry was incensed and reprimanded the Kargozar of Khuzestan for "remaining passive and failing to object to the punishment of Iranian workers by the Oil Company, and to the latter's establishing of a criminal court" (20 April 1911). The Majles inquired (14 November 1909) about the "building of railroads and steam engines on the Braim Island without government permission". This was before any construction had actually begun in Abadan, and revealed the profound lack of knowledge in the capital about local geography and the actual goings on there. On the other hand, as we saw in chapters 2 and 3, the suspicion and paranoia seemed not to be unfounded. On 11 April 1911 APOC informed the government about its progress, and the appointment of Dr Young as intermediary for negotiations with the Bakhtiyaris. It also insisted on its right to continue to hire skilled foreign workers until Iranians had been adequately trained[150].

These encounters from the early days of the oil industry show the extent of the deep-seated suspicion by Tehran and its handful of local agents in Khuzestan about British and APOC intentions and activities in the south. The Oil Company had been acting like a sovereign state on Iranian territory, shielded by the British military might. At the same time, the central government had become acutely aware of its own impotence when it came to exercising any authority over the Company, the local magnates, or its own territory. Its near total lack of reliable and systematic first hand knowledge about the region itself, its populations, and the goings on there only highlighted this weakness and added to its suspicions.

To Iranian nationalist and the central government the Iranianization of the Company's workforce appeared as a tangible measure of exerting sovereignty over the country's most important and modern industry. However, the education of the next generation of Iranians under the tutelage of the Oil Company, was a paradoxical issue, and highly sensitive for a central state intent on imposing universal education as an instrument of homogenizing national identity by instilling an official nationalism and patriotism among a highly diverse and heterogeneous population.

APOC was aware of this sensitivity and thread carefully. H. Nichols, the Company Director, was conscious that when the Prime Minister Reza Khan had first visited Abadan in 1924, he had not seen a single Persian employed in the refinery[151].

---

[150] INA, "Telegraphic Reports."
[151] 8 August, 1925, BP 54495

The building of schools and educational facilities in Masjed Soleyman were speeded up but there were disagreements over where to build and what the curriculum should be. The Company policymakers feared objections would be raised over religious grounds if the curriculum were not purely technical. Should Armenians be allowed to participate next to Muslims? Who should pay for the education of Iranian children? Should they build secondary schools as well? Ultimately, another question was also raised implicitly, but left hanging with some resignation and even resentment: Why should a private corporation get involved in public schooling of children and young adults in Iran?

As the political situation in Khuzestan became more wrought with the intent of the central government to challenge autonomous local magnates once and for all becoming unmistakably clear, the Company became more aware of the risks that its problematic public image would pose, especially when it came to the hiring of Indians and other foreigners in lieu of Iranians. Director Nichols suggested the Company was not getting enough credit for hiring Iranian contract laborers, and proposed a number of book keeping modifications as a strategy of improving their public image. These included the issuing of monthly instead of quarterly personnel reports, changing the labor classifications to include the casually and precariously employed in the permanent roster of the Company, and classifying employees under general national categories – 'Persians', 'Indians', 'Europeans', 'Others'.[152]

The continued discontent of the central government was evident in Cadman's meeting the following year with the cabinet, including the Prime Minister Forouqi, Finance Minister M.Q. Bayat, the American Financial Tsar Arthur Millspaugh, Davar the Minister of Public Works, along with Cadman, Jacks, and Dr Young, representing APOC. Davar set the tone for relations in the new era by stating that Iran's two major grievances were the low royalty receipts, and that still after nearly twenty years of activity in Iran there were not enough Iranians employed in the oil industry. Forouqi the Premier also echoed the complaint about low royalties, and added that Iranians were not receiving enough benefits from their national oil resources, and the

[152] BP 54499; Dobe, "A Long Slow Tutelage in Western Ways of Work: Industrial Education and the Containement of Nationalism in Anglo-Iranian and ARAMCO, 1923-1963," 35–37. It is amusing that at present the Iranian Petroleum Ministry is resorting to similar tactics to present a better public image regarding its questionable labor practices in large oil and gas installations like Assalouyeh. See Mohammad Maljoo, "Ta'dil-e Nirou-ye Ensani dar Doereh-ye Eslahat [Adjusting the Labor Force during the Reformist Era]," *Naqde-e Eqtesad-e Siasi*, September 2012, http://pecritique.com/2012.

Company was not devoting enough attention to the general welfare of the public in the areas it was operating. Cadman replied that APOC was not predatory and did take Iranianization very seriously. As to the other objections, he replied that D'Arcy had taken a risk over many years with his capital investment and the current Company's success was a just reward for that early entrepreneurship as well as hard work. At present 80% of employees were Iranian, and there would be more in the future as the education program would start bearing results[153]. The dicussions proved inconclusive, as will be seen in the next chapter. Nevertheless, by 1926 it had become clear that Company commitment to developing the education program in general literacy, formal primary schools, and technical training were essential to the continued operations of APOC in Iran.

However, there were disagreements as how to proceed. Resident Director in Tehran, T.L. Jacks, believed that "Opening up of primary schools at Fields is essential because the 140 children of local employees have no facilities… The sympathy and appreciation of the Persian Government must be insured. The Company should control [the educational] expenditures, but also adopt the [formal government] curriculum and give the direction to the Ministry of Education…The Government must bear the pressure…but we might as well perform our duty". Dr Young maintained that the Company ought to build a secondary school in Ahvaz; however Arnold Wilson strongly disagreed, arguing that secondary schools were of little interest to the Company and they would only irritate the government[154].

As formal education was becoming a centerpiece of modern nation state building how schools were operated would become increasingly politicized. In the government run *Danesh Pahlavi School* in Ahvaz teachers expressed a desire to leave public service and get hired by APOC for better pay. Alarmed by the possible implications of how this might be misinterpreted by the Iranian governemnt, the Company refused and instead offered to subsidize the school with 100 Touman/month to maintain it as a public institution. Overtime the Company was approached by the government, or volunteered itself to subsidize teachers and schools, offering them company housing and access to some Company supplied amenities and services, as a

[153] 4 and 6 May, 1926, BP 71183
[154] 15 January 1926; 23 February 1926, BP 71183

way of keeping good relations, but to also continue supporting the training of its future labor force and employees.

However, the issue of educating the next generation of Iranians continued to remain politically sensitive. Arnold Wilson proved to be astute in his warning against Company commitment to secondary education, as the socialization of high school students and their curriculum would prove to be a highly sensitive issue for the state. Over the next 15 years the increasingly authoritarian central government would issue decrees and launch a series of cultural and educational programs intended to modernize the Iranian public through pedagogy, education, indoctrination, as well as through coercive cultural policies, such as the obligatory national dress code[155]. Formal school education was a central tenet of this program of authoritarian modernization. In 1930 the government established the first modern university in Tehran, and began sending students abroad to study engineering, natural sciences, medicine, modern agriculture, and law. There were nearly 150 schools in Tehran, with an enrollment of 19 thousand boys and 10 thousand girls. By 1936 there were nearly 260 thousand students across the country, studying in 5,340 schools and colleges. By 1939 the government formally Iranianized/nationalized all schools and closed down all foreign run educational establishments, with the intention of establishing a firm grip over the acculturation of all pupils and students[156]. However, APOC's reluctant engagement with public education, technical training, organized sports and embodied disciplines, proved an important step toward gradually preparing the ground for more qualified skilled Iranians to join the ranks of Company employees, even if its resistance to open its more senior ranks to Iranians remained a major bone of contention until 1951 when Iranian oil was nationalized.

Conclusion: A cautionary note on the paradoxical politics of 'Iranianization'

This chapter explored the context of the rise of the 'social question' in Khuzestan from the perspective of the Oil Company and the fledgling central government. This important paradigm shift did not take place in a vacuum, but was a

[155] Camron Michael Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman: Gender, State Policy, and Popular Culture, 1865-1946* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002); Chehabi, "Staging the Emperor's New Cloths: Dress Codes and Nation Building under Reza Shah"; Baker, "Politics of Dress: The Dress Reform Laws of 1920s and 1930s Iran"; Matthee, "Transforming Dangerous Nomads into Useful Artisans, Technicians, Agriculturalists: Education in the Reza Shah Period"; Bayat, "Riza Shah and the Tribes"; Cronin, "Re-Interpreting Modern Iran."
[156] Burrell, *IPD*, Vol. 8, 532, 538; Vol. 9, 583; Vol.10 , 231.

consequence of global, national, and local changes taking place in the interwar years (chapters 2,3,4). At the end of WWI the oil complex in Iran faced a turning point where much was at stake. First, there was the changing relation of Britain with the post coup d'état central government in Tehran. At the same time Britain and APOC were intent to ward off of powerful global competitors, especially the US, from encroaching on a strategic monopoly resource. Meanwhile, the considerable threats of labor radicalism and of socialist and nationalist anti imperialist sentiments to consider were being felt at all levels of the Company and the British government. More locally, there were even greater challenges to deal with, ranging from handling the consequences of the social and political vacuum left by the demise of APOC's local allies the Bakhtyari Khans and Sheikh Khaz'al, to the strategic questions of where to locate the world's largest refinery, how to maneuver the new regional geopolitics of a sensitive borderland, and above all, to manage the massive growth of boomtowns with teaming populations of destitute migrants deracinated from their social and economic lives and forming new place-based bonds of solidarity in the urban spaces created by oil, and making increasingly vocal demands for tangible improvements in their lives.

The Oil Company's poor public image and its growing need for a permanent, qualified, and docile workforce could no longer be ignored. The central government's desire to impose its sovereignty on the national territory, populations, and resources was irreversible. The realization by the growing populations of the oil boomtowns that their lives were now permanently tied to the transformations imposed by the rising nation state, and oil capitalism generated a new range of social expectations that amounted to demands for what Lefebvre called "the right to the city"[157]. This chapter analyzed the dynamics behind the comprehensive re-organization of APOC in the post WWI decade, by investigating the dynamics behind the efforts by APOC to improve its public image, to reduce its reliance on foreign workers, to train and educate permanent Iranian workers and employees, as well as their children, and to provide social an leisure amenities that would make life and work more tolerable. These efforts were not made in isolation, but through the recurring encounters and constant frictions with other key social actors in the oil complex. The result was the transformation of what I have called 'the oil habitus' in Khuzestan. The next chapter

[157] Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la Ville*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Anthropos, 2009).

will analyze the dynamics of urban change in Abadan by investigating the contestations over making Abadan a ‘sanitary city’ through the adoption of public health measures and municipal reforms, and the resistance of the workers and the urban residents to the segregation and dispossession that underlay these measures.

Chapter 6
The Making of an Oil City (1924-1927)

Abadan; Building a Sanitary City

Reza Khan concluded his important military campaign against Skeikh Khaz'al in 1924 with a formal visit to Abadan and the Fields. During the visit APOC officials asked the Prime Minister for his assistance for the reconstruction of sections of Abadan. The Company pointed out a neighborhood adjacent to the refinery, called "Sheikh" as a desirable site for building a modern sanitary bazaar for the growing boomtown. They highlighted the accomplishments of the oil industry in turning "a desolate wasteland" into a hive of modern industry that was employing 25 thousand "native" workers[1]. The need for improving general sanitary conditions in the teaming boomtown was highlighted to the Prime Minister. The Company had recently asked Sheikh Khaz'al to sell them the land for the purpose, and he had agreed also to oversee the eviction of the current residents. Now Khaz'al was effectively out of the picture, and the Company was becoming concerned about dealing with the increasingly sensitive issue of property transfers in a manner that would avoid alienating the central government. The designated land was adjacent to the refinery and by then it had become a densely populated maze of shops, teahouses, hovels, and shanties where workers and migrants were renting rooms or had found a place to live.

The issue seemed straightforward. Abadan was a filthy boomtown, overflowing with destitute migrants and devoid of the most elementary public infrastructure such as latrines, cleans water, safe and sufficient food supplies, and a minimum of decent housing for the general population. Two major epidemics of cholera and plague had devastated the twin towns of Mohammareh and Abadan, adjacent to each other across the river Karun, and other epidemics and diseases were also a recurring scourge in the region (more on this below). The closely packed population, and the dreadful living conditions as good as guaranteed the fast spread of contagious diseases, with potentially devastating effects on oil operations. Since the War, recurring famines had weakened the population considerably, as had endemic

---

[1] Ronald Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 394–396; Michael E. Dobe, "A Long Slow Tutelage in Western Ways of Work: Industrial Education and the Constainement of Nationalism in Anglo- Iranian and ARAMCO, 1923-1963" (PhD Dissertation, Rutgers, 2008), 33–34.

poverty caused by the endless warfare and the demise of existing social structures. The massive movement of military recruits and soldiers from India, Europe, and the Persian Gulf region through Mesopotamia and Southern Iran had significantly increased the dangers of epidemics. Pilgrims on their road to Hajj, or to and from the holy cities of Iraq and Iran were another major carrier of epidemics, as were the practice of transferring corpses cross borders for burial in these holy cities[2]. Dr. A.R. Neligan, the influential British physician working at the legation in Tehran and serving on Iran's Sanitary Council said of the situation in Abadan :

> "In the early days of the rush of native labor and shopkeepers to the island huts and bazaars sprang up on no definite plan on land outside the Company's control, and on which it was not allowed to interfere. When, therefore, plague was imported into Mohammerah in 1923 and thence spread to Abadan there was a sharp epidemic. The Company has taken most energetic measures since then."[3]

Displacing the population did not appear to be a major obstacle. The residents of Abadan hardly had any political influence to oppose their eviction since, by and large, they were poor migrants from the Persian Gulf Coast, indigenous Arabs, or Bakhtiyaris and Arab tribesmen from the province; scarcely the political constituency of Reza Khan or the nationalist modernizers in Tehran who were intent on patching together a uniform and modern nation out of the heterogeneous population of the country. Furthermore, few issues were more commonly shared among Company officials and Iranian modernizers and politicians as public health and sanitation. The topic embodied everything that was positive about 'modernity' and progress, and highlighted all that was abhorrent in unscientific and superstitious 'tradition'[4]. In addition, collaboration between Britain and Iran over sanitary policies and disease prevention had a long precedence from the early 19th Century[5]. Therefore, Reza

---

[2] Floor, *Public Health in Qajar Iran*.
[3] Neligan, "Public Health in Persia, Part2," 690.
[4] Schayegh, *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong*; Afkhami, "The Sick Men of Persia: The Importance of Illness as a Factor in the Interpretation of Modern Iranian Diplomatic History."
[5] Laurence-Donia Kotobi, "L'émergence d'une Politique de Santé Publique en Perse Qajar; un Aperçu Historique de la Vaccinattion," *Studia Iranica*, no. 24 (1995): 261–84; Cyril Elgood, *A Medical History of Persia and the Eastern Caliphate. The Development of Persian and Arabic Medical Sciences from the Earliest Times until the Year A.D. 1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 437–537; Afkhami, "The Sick Men of Persia: The Importance of Illness as a Factor in the

Photograph 17: Reza Khan Visits Abadan, with Officers and APOC Officials (1925)



Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Iran

Photograph 18: APOC Bazaar in Masjed Soleyman (1925)



Interpretation of Modern Iranian Diplomatic History"; Neligan, "Public Health in Persia, Part 1"; Floor, *Public Health in Qajar Iran*, 202–204, 210–212.

Khan's approval of sanitary improvements in Abadan and Masjed Soleyman by the Company seemed a foregone conclusion and was readily given.

However, the issue proved more controversial than appeared initially. First, urban residents put up significant resistance against their eviction and demanded better compensation than the Company was willing to provide. Without Sheikh Khaz'al there to crush the resistance, the army keeping its presence to a minimum near the Company areas (see chapters 2, 3, 5), and with the Company itself threading cautiously, the neighborhood defiance had a chance to solidify. Soon the intensifying urban resistance prompted local bureaucrats and politicians in Tehran to question the unanticipated political implications of the proposed spatial measures, to evaluate the emerging role of municipal policies, and to come to terms with facing an unprecedented political demand by a newly emerging social actor, the urban citizens of Abadan who were insisting on their "right to the city". This collective urban resistance and negotiation by residents over their forced displacement and the terms and conditions of their reallocation became part of the repertoire of the ongoing urban politics in Abadan. The provision of sanitary urban infrastructure was accompanied by the re-engineering of the built environment of the city. This spatial re-organization gave rise to a number of fundamental questions: whom should it serve? (European expatriates? the more skilled echelons of Company employees? all Company employees? all urban residents?) How should it be paid for and managed? The question of who would be entitled to what amenities of urban living, and how the responsibly should be distributed and decisions made, became part of the abrasive dynamics of municipal and urban negotiations that lasted until mid century and the oil nationalization movement, and in the process shaped the built environment of Abadan.

The pressing issue of the provision of social amenities, especially housing and public health measures, fit within a larger political picture: that of the effective disappearance from the scene of Sheikh Khaz'al and the political and social order he had embodied. The new political context meant that the Oil Company and the newly arriving central government bureaucrats faced a social and political vacuum which had to be filled by new institutions of municipal governance and social services that in most cases existed only in name and now had to be assembled from scratch. While initially the topic of urban planning, municipal services, public health and the general

improvement of sanitary conditions, appeared as straightforward and mutually acceptable to all parties as universally lauded progressive and scientific measures benefiting the general welfare, in practice they proved to be controversial and imbued with significant consequences for the changing relations of power in the oil complex. The reasons were simple: These measures directly affected the intimate everyday lives of residents and individuals, and imposed on them changes that were drastic, highly personal, and often very costly. They lay at the core of a new regime of disciplinary power that sought to re-engineer in minute details the spatial arrangements, collective lives, the bodily behaviors, and the mentalities of the inhabitants, in order to transform them into safe and productive extensions of the oil complex, as well as docile and contented subjects of a modern nation state. The rest of this chapter will investigate the micro history of the emergence of the social question in Abadan during the interwar period, and how the issues of public health and sanitation, urban planning, and property relations shaped the built environment of the city, the working population, and of the oil complex.

It is safe to say that few issues concerned the APOC management as much as the sanitary conditions in Khuzestan. As we saw in the previous chapter, horrid living conditions, and the poor reputation of Iran, Khuzestan, and APOC were a major deterrence when it came to recruiting skilled employees and even unskilled workmen in the early post war era. The Oil Company took the matter very seriously and had invested heavily in the construction and maintenance of two major hospitals in Masjed Soleyman and Abadan, and 12 dispensaries throughout the Fields. The hospitals were the best equipped in the country, in particular the one in Masjed Soleyman managed by Dr M. Young, was reputed to be "better equipped than are the majority of hospitals of a like size in India"[6]. The 1924 APOC report to the Sanitary Council showed:

> "What a large amount of free medical treatment the company was giving to the natives, but also showed that a very excellent sanitary service had been built up…the fact which, however, impressed the Sanitary Council above all others, was that the Company in spending £40,000 in a single year on its

[6] John W. Williamson, *In a Persian Oilfield* (New York: Arno Press, 1977), 132.

> medical services, as opposed to its sanitary section) had considerably exceeded the total sanitary budget for the whole of Persia"[7].

The claim was no exaggeration. The Sanitary Council (*Showra-ye Sehhi*), initially a consultative body set up in 1874, was made into a permanent body in 1904, and had been assigned the task of overseeing medical affairs and public health in Iran. However, given its restricted financial and institutional resources, most of its reform policies were concentrated in Tehran, and its annual budget for the entire country was no more than £27,000, which was still a marked improvement from the annual £5,000 it used to receive prior to WWI for combating epidemics[8]. Furthermore, given the state of the national economy, and the fact that the lion's share of the state finances were regularly being funneled to the new army, even this meager annual budget was constantly in arrears for months. The Majles had tried to impose a tax on transport vehicles in order to fund vaccinations and public health measures, but the tax collection was a practical nightmare and did not produce many results[9].

The provision of medical services in Khuzestan was a pressing necessity, but also of great value in terms of public relations. From the 19th century western medicine had been a less politicized and more successful avenue of western penetration into Iran[10]. Aside from American missionaries, and highly influential court physicians like the famous Frenchman Dr Tholozan who had been instrumental in establishing a medical school in Tehran and organizing the Sanitary Council at the end of the 19th century as the first serious efforts toward western medical practices[11], the British legations were also known to provide medical care and medicine to the public. The Ahvaz Legation, for example, on average treated a hundred patients per day[12]. The APOC physician, Dr M. Young in particular, had amassed great credit among Iranian politicians, Bakhtiyari Khans, his colleagues at APOC, as well as

---

[7] *Persia, Annual Report 1924*, R. M. Burrell, ed., *Iran Political Diaries 1881-1965* (London: Archive Editions Ltd, 1997), Vol.7, 239.
[8] Neligan, "Public Health in Persia, Part 1," 635–636.
[9] *Persia, Annual Report 1923*, Burrell, *IPD*, 723.
[10] Kotobi, "L'émergence D'une Politique de Santé Publique En Perse Qajar; Un Aperçu Historique de La Vaccinattion," 280–283.
[11] Afkhami, "The Sick Men of Persia: The Importance of Illness as a Factor in the Interpretation of Modern Iranian Diplomatic History."; Elgood, *A Medical History of Persia and the Eastern Caliphate. The Development of Persian and Arabic Medical Sciences from the Earliest Times until the Year A.D. 1932*, 494–537.
[12] Dennis Wright, *The English Among the Persians: Imperial Lives in 19th Century Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 126.

among the general public, for the medical services he had been rendering as well as his outstanding administrative skills[13]. But, as we have seen (Chapters 3, 5) his medical position also had placed him in a situation of acting as a skilled political negotiator at the highest level, and one who had exercised great influence on behalf of Britain and APOC on the course of events in Khuzestan since 1910. However, the tremendous resources that were being spent on medical treatment were a significant burden for the ever financially prudent Company, and it was clear that the prevention of diseases and epidemics had to take priority as the means of reducing risks, as well as cutting costs.

The fear of disease and contamination was one of the major concerns deterring European recruits from accepting employment in Khuzestan in the post war period (Chapter 5). The apprehension was well grounded. The 1918 Spanish Flue pandemic had cut a global swath of death[14], and southern Iran had been badly affected. In Fars, Percy Sykes estimated that a third of the population of the Qashqai pastoralists perished in 1918, as did a tenth of the urban population of Shiraz[15]. Afkhami, who has studied the trajectory of the pandemic, estimated that up to 22 percent of the total population of the country perished by 1920[16]. The deadly effect of the pandemic was exacerbated by the endemic warfare of marauding armies and warlords (chapters 2, 5), famine, drought, and debilitating poverty especially in the west and the south of the country. Nor had British troops been spared (especially the Indian infantries)[17]. In southern Iran, especially, the overall casualties were devastating; in Mohammareh alone 6,000 had been afflicted out of an estimated population of 20 thousand, with 240 officially recorded deaths[18].

---

[13] Dr. Elizabeth MacBean Ross had spent a year prior to WWI among the Bakhtiyaris as the physician to the Bibis (elite Bakhtiyari women). See her fascinating memoirs in Elizabeth Ness MacBean Ross, *A Lady Doctor in Bakhtiyari Land* (London: L. Parsons, 1921).
[14] K D Patterson and G F Pyle, "The Geography and Mortality of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 65, no. 1 (1991): 4–21. It is highly interesting that the authors of this insightful research completely neglect the Persian Gulf and the Middle East (with the exception of Jordan) from their analysis, a strange omission given that the region was a major theater of WWI, with the Ottoman Empire as one of the primary belligerents, and troops from India forming the core of the fighting men under the British flag. On the latter point see Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
[15] Percy Sykes, *History of Persia* (London: McMillan, 1915), Vol.2, 515.
[16] Amir Afkhami, "Compromised Constitutions: The Iranian Experience with the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 77 (2003): 383.
[17] Ibid., 390–392.
[18] Ibid., 384. For estimated population of Mohammareh at the time see table 7 in chapter 7

If the influenza pandemic had been a global phenomenon, there were other widespread maladies in Iran that made living conditions in a congested place like Abadan equally hazardous. Although plague rarely originated in Iran and was often brought in from India and Mesopotamian through the ports of the Persian Gulf, Shatt al-Arab, and the long border with Ottoman Mesopotamia (Iraq), nevertheless it had deadly effects when it struck. From the 19th century seven major deadly plague pandemics had struck Iran[19] with devastating results. Since the outbreak of WWI plague had been recurring yet again in southern Khuzestan, erupting into a particularly bad outbreak during 1923-1924, when it afflicted approximately 1000 reported cases in Abadan and Mohammareh, with more than half fatalities[20]. Discussing the period of 1914-1924, Dr Neligan, the British representative on Iran's Sanitary Council and physician to the British Legation, reported:

> "…In spite of the regular appearance of plague on her frontiers the name of only one place in Persia recurs with any frequency (Mohammerah)…It used to be said that plague was always imported from Basra only 25 miles higher up the river Shatt al Arab, with communications by land as well as by water. It has been suggested that plague by now is endemic in Mohammerah town, but the facts are, on the whole, against this supposition. *Abadan town*, on the island of that name, six miles down the stream from Mohammerah, has, however, come to cause anxiety. The name appears in the years 1923 and 1924 only, and yet some 700 cases have occurred there. *The explanation is that between 1909 and 1912 the APOC set up a refinery on the island, and that, instead of a few huts, there is now a considerable town and several villages, with a total population of some 50,000 souls* [my italics]".[21]

Persian Gulf and the Iraqi border were particularly vulnerable areas, more so than the inland plateau that was hard to reach over the Zagros Mountains. Percy Loraine, the Minister in Tehran reported: "next to the littoral of the Gulf, the Perso-

---

[19] Kotobi, "L'Emergence d'une Politique de Santé Publique en Perse Qajar; un Aperçu Historique de la Vaccinattion," 264–265; Xavier de Planhol, "Cholera: 1. In Persia," *Encyclopeadia Iranica* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1991); Homa Nateq, "Ta'sir-e Ejtema'i va Eqtesadi-ye Bimari-ye Vaba dar Dowreh-ye Qajar," *Tarikh* 1, no. 2 (1977): 30–62.
[20] A.R. Neligan, "Public Health in Persia; 1914-24. Part 2," *The Lancet* 207, no. 5352 (March 27, 1926): 691; *Persia Annual Report, 1924*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 236–237.
[21] Neligan, "Public Health in Persia, Part2," 690.

Iraqi frontier is the greatest cause of anxiety to the Persian authorities"[22]. Indeed, since the opening of Suez Canal in 1869, with its fast and direct route linking the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, "the health of the Persian Gulf had become a matter of concern to the shipping of the world"[23]. Britain controlled most of Iran's border quarantine stations along the Gulf and the Iraqi borders until 1927, when the notion of British and Indian officers regulating and controlling the bodies of Iranians on the national borders became intolerable to nationalists[24]. In fact, the border stations' quarantine system were the first instances of the kind of racial segregation that began to color preventive practices and create great resentment at the visible inequality. Floor's description of the British controlled quarantines stations on the Gulf and Khuzestan makes clear that these not always operated rigorously, and sometimes they were highly discriminatory, letting Europeans pass without serious inspection while interring Asians, including Iranians, in a 'purgatory' state, under poor conditions, for extended periods, which caused great resentment among the travelers[25]. The failure of the British run quarantine system in the south to prevent the devastating plague and cholera epidemics of 1923-1924 contributed to the resentment. The *1923 Annual Report* of the British Minister in Tehran was as always defensive in tone, but could not fully justify why the epidemics had come from a British colony, via ships flying the British flag or regulated by the Government of India, to territories under the effective command of the British military (Khuzestan and Iraq), through British operated quarantine systems.

> "The [quarantine] service has continued to perform its important duties in its quietly efficient way, and has successfully prevented the introduction of plague and cholera, except at Mohammerah, where – it must be understood – the quarantine officer is responsible for the Port only. A good deal of criticism has, however, been leveled at our administration, most of it uninformed…The local Kargozars apparently under orders from Tehran, have begun to report on sanitary matters, and indeed criticize medical officers. There have been difficulties too in the way of getting the Persian authorities to pay their share of the expenses…On the whole, the impression left by the events of the past

[22] *Persia, Annual Report 1924*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 238.
[23] Elgood, *A Medical History of Persia and the Eastern Caliphate. The Development of Persian and Arabic Medical Sciences from the Earliest Times until the Year A.D. 1932*, 520–521.
[24] Kotobi, "L'émergence d'une Politique de Santé Publique en Perse Qajar" 270.
[25] See Floor, *Public Health in Qajar Iran*, 207, 210–211.

> two years [1921-1923] is that of a purposeful mobilization for an attack on the service, and its replacement by a Persian service"[26].

There were other equally deadly contagious diseases that plagued Iran. Cholera was "a much more anxious problem for Persia than the plague", especially in port cities like Abadan and Mohammareh[27]. The particularly deadly epidemics of 1850 and 1852 devastated Mohammareh[28]. Earlier in 1822 and 1833 Dezful had been equally devastated by cholera and the plague[29]. These towns were again hit by successive epidemics over the course of the 19th century. Mohammareh was again struck hard by a major cholera epidemic in 1910-1911, just as the oil industry was getting off the ground. Initially 23 cases of cholera were detected in Mohammareh in December 1910; by the following year this had turned into a severe epidemic, killing several Europeans as well as uncounted indigenous people.[30] This was in spite of the efforts of Arnold Wilson, acting consul in Mohammareh at the time, whose "main concern was to ensure it did not spread to Ahvaz or get among the Company's imported labor at Abadan"[31]. The town was hit by another wave of cholera in 1917, but the 1923 epidemic was on another scale, especially as it was accompanied by the killer plague (see above). It came, as usual, via ships from India:

> "Cholera broke out at Abadan on the 3rd of August. At Basra on the 6th of August, and at Mohammerah on the 21st... The epidemic at Abadan quickly assumed big proportions. There were, for instance, 553 cases with 528 deaths between the 10th-16th August. The Oil Company and the Sheikh of Mohammerah did all that was possible to prevent the epidemic extending. From Basra, however it spread up the Tigris and reached Baghdad at the end of August."[32]

---

[26] *Persia, Annual Report 1923*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6, 725.
[27] Neligan, "Public Health in Persia, Part2," 691.
[28] Mohammadi Yousefi, *Tarikh-e Khorramshahr* (Tehran: Nil, 1971), 134–136.
[29] Latifpour, *Tarikh-e Dezful*, 121–123; Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Pansad Saleh Khouzestan*, 162.
[30] FO, *Summary Reports, Tehran to London,* 19 December 1910; 2 November 1911, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.5, 81, 342.
[31] Arnold T Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 133.
[32] *Persia, Annual Report 1923,* Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6, 724.

The previous month the plague had already affected 481 people, killing 409 in Abadan[33]; highlighting the critical state of the sanitary situation there:

> "The question of Abadan is a new and serious one. It appears that there is overcrowding in the considerable native town which has sprung up, and that sanitation is indifferent. The Oil Company's representatives were closely questioned as to the measures adopted when the epidemics broke out, and were able to report favorably. The town, however, and Iraq generally, are a menace to Persia."[34]

Cholera and the plague recurred in Abadan and Khorramshahr over the following years prior to WW2, in 1927, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1939; but by then more rigorous preventive measures were being put in place and the outbreaks although worrisome and deadly, were not causing as many fatalities[35].

Malaria was "the chief cause of death and ill health in Persia"[36], infecting nearly all the rural population according to most contemporary reports[37]. Neligan believed it not to be very prevalent in Abadan, Khorramshahr, or Ahvaz; but surveys conducted in 1925 revealed that both Khuzestan and the northern provinces of Azarbaijan and Gilan were hyper endemic foci for malaria[38]. Smallpox, typhus, typhoid, anemia, tuberculosis, were some of the other rampant diseases prevalent at the time. Skin diseases, trachoma, and other afflictions caused by contamination and poor hygiene were widespread, and afflicted some of the more established historical towns in Khuzestan, especially Shushtar and Dezful[39]. According to one estimate, between 20 to 40 percent of the country's urban population in 1925 suffered from some form of venereal diseases[40].

---

[33] Ibid; Neligan, "Public Health in Persia, Part2," 691.
[34] *Persia, Annual Report 1923*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6, 725.
[35] *Persia/Iran Summary Reports*, 26 September 1927; 7 April 1930; 13 September 1939, in Ibid., Vol.8, 48, 514; Vol.9, 61, 63; Vol.10 518, 354; Vol.11, 77.; *Persia Annual Report 1927*, Ibid., V.8, 153-4; "APOC to the Department of Industry, Tehran", 6 March 1932, p.1, INA 240005548
[36] *Persia, Annual Report 1922*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.6, 415.
[37] Afkhami, "Compromised Constitutions: The Iranian Experience with the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," 388.
[38] Neligan, "Public Health in Persia, Part2," 693; Afkhami, "Compromised Constitutions: The Iranian Experience with the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," 386.
[39] Daneshvar, *Didani-ha va Shenidaniha-ye Iran*.
[40] Cyrus Schayegh, "Hygiene, Eugenics, Genetics, and the Perception of Demographic Crisis in Iran, 1910s-1940s.," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 13, no. 3 (2004): 342–343. There may be a misconception that the prevalence of venereal diseases reflects certain patterns of sexual behavior. This is unlikely. Venereal diseases were equally prevelant among Russian peasants in the 19th century. In

In all these cases the main culprit in the tremendous vulnerability to epidemics and diseases was poverty and political disarray; and not an inherent cultural defect or racial deficiency, as many European observers maintained at the time. The answer must be sought in the turbulent political and economic history of Iran since the 17th century, riddled with recurring drought and famine, political insecurity, endemic poverty and destitution, inept and inadequate political leaders, and deficient knowledge of preventive hygienic and medical practices, which disproportionally affected the working population and the poor. The appalling state of the general standards of hygiene and public health, and the decrepit and undeveloped social infrastructure of waste treatment, food safety standards, decent housing, and basic health care were a result of this poverty and insecurity, not the cause of it.

Contagions and Sanitary Practices in Iran:

In chapter 4 we discussed the history of sanitary public health reforms and the innovations in municipal policies and urban practices that were formulated by a range of technical experts in response to the fears of contagion and disease in the colonies and Europe from mid 19th century. In particular, chapter 4 explained how the conceptualization of spatial strategies of defense against contagion overlapped with class and racial exercises of hierarchic power, and led to the scientific justifications for the implementation of spatial segregation in cities on scientific and sanitary grounds. Post war urban developments in Abadan were very much part of this crossed history of social reformist practices, as we shall discuss in this and the following section.

The Sanitary Idea was not new to Iran. In fact, social reformers and some among the political elites had conceptualized modernity and national progress as intimately connected to sanitary improvement and the adoption of modern European medicine since the middle of the 19th century[41]. Dar al-Fonun (the Polythechnic), the first modern western style school established in 1851 by Amir Kabir, the modernizing Vazir, included a curriculum of medical instruction. Amir Afkhami argues that from

---

their case, as most likely in the Iranian case, this was a syndrome of extreme poverty and poor hygiene, coupled with living habits that let to the proliferation of skin diseases that targeted human genitalia. See Laura Engelstein, "Morality and the Wooden Spoon; Russian Doctors View Syphilis, Social Class, and Sexual Behavior, 1890-1905," in *The Making of the Modern Body*, ed. Chathryn Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 169–208.

[41] Hormoz Ebrahimnejad, "Épidémies, Médecine et Politique dans l'Iran du XIXe siècle," *Studia Iranica* 30, no. 1 (2001): 105–34.

mid 19th century the growing Iranian nationalism was intertwined with a sense of shame about the state of the population's health and of government responsibility to improve the situation[42]. As an indication of this trend he cites the formation of a series of administrative boards and consultative bodies that did little more than hold meetings for a number of years, but eventually culminated with the establishment of the permanent Sanitary Council (*Showra-ye Sehhiyeh*) in 1904 on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution. Reflecting underlying social concerns the Sanitary Council began to take a number of public health measures, such as vaccination against smallpox in some cities, and setting up more quarantine stations on national borders. However, these efforts remained limited amidst the chronic economic and political crises of the first two decades of the 20th century (chapter 2). Nevertheless, the sanitary idea played a prominent role in shaping the growing secular middle class reformist culture, especially the constructivist Lamarckian notions that associated progress with the improvement of the quality of the population[43]. For these reformers the population was the source of national power, on which depended the progress of the nation. A diseased, impoverished, and uneducated population was unable to work and to be productive, making it into an impediment to progress[44].

For Iranian reformers and modernizers, steeped in this Lamarckian discourse of biopower, there was little redemption in the existing patterns of urban life or the medical "quackery" of traditional healers. By and large they agreed with the drastic measures in municipal renovation and coercive public health measures that the state began to adopt under Reza Shah. Like many of their western counterparts, modernizing Iranian reformers embraced the notion of trusteeship, which provided them with positions of authority, as well as a market position, and allowed them to implement often-aggressive administrative measures to reform social conditions through correct education and the provision of modern sanitary infrastructure.

Sanitation, Segregation, and the Politics of Property in Abadan:

In February 1926 APOC medical director Dr. M. Young provided an assessment of the sanitary challenges facing the urban situation in Abadan:

---

[42] Amir Arsalan Afkhami, "Iran in the Age of Epidemics. Nationalism and the Struggle for Public Health: 1889--1926," PhD Dissertation, Yale University (2003).
[43] Schayegh, "Hygiene, Eugenics, Genetics."
[44] Ibid. See chapter 4 for the emergence of parallel and similar ideas in Britain about poverty and the poor quality of military recruits following the Boer War.

> "Even with the construction of our new lines [company housing for Indian skilled laborers] and with such modern sanitary measures as we may have taken, the position from the point of view of the outbreak and spread of disease cannot be effectively remedied unless we have the complete cooperation of the Persian authorities in Abadan Town…We must turn to the Municipality, which the Persian authorities are most anxious to develop…At the moment, the Municipality consists of individuals with no knowledge or experience of the proper conduct of municipal affairs, and with no financial means to support the municipality. I can see no good result from their work unless assisted by us with definite control behind the scenes, and also with funds. We cannot assume open control of municipal work as it is invariably misinterpreted in Tehran as interference in their internal affairs. The fact remains however, that by putting the Municipality here on its feet, we would provide the essential stimulus, and so hope in time to withdraw to our correct capacity of advisers and nothing else"[45].

The awareness that the oil company by itself was incapable of implementing effective sanitary measures and create a safe city had become evident, and so had the necessity of threading cautiously in dealing with the boundaries of sovereignty between the Iranian government institutions and the Company. The 'target' of concern was the "native town" of Abadan, the boomtown that had grown quickly to an estimated population of 40-60 thousand. The military language and imagery (as will become evident) often used in describing sanitary and municipal policies reflected the attitudes of both state institutions as well as the Oil Company. Given that the built environment of oil in Abadan and the Fields was already highly segregated and was on its way to becoming more so, the belligerent language simply reflected the militarized geography of oil that was taking shape in Abadan and throughout Khuzestan.

In 1909 APOC had leased the refinery land as well as the adjacent village of Braim from Sheikh Khaz'al, for £1/jerib (Chapter3). In 1914 they leased more land for the same rental[46]. Braim, initially known as "Bungalow Area", was upwind from

[45] Extract from Dr Young, "Memorandum", 16 February 1926, Pp.58-59, BP 71138
[46] "Percy Cox to A.T.Wilson" 1 September 1918, BP 68779

the refinery. The local villagers were evicted, and initially a simple structure was erected made of tin to house the handful of Europeans preparing the ground for the refinery and shipping docks. Soon after this structure was replaced by a brick bungalow (later named No.1 Bungalow). As the refinery came on line during WWI three other bungalows were added. The imported skilled laborers, mostly from Rangoon and India, lived and slept in tents and mat houses[47]. By the end of WWI most of Braim had become an exclusive expatriate community, separated from the indigenous population by the vast refinery to the south, the Shatt al-Arab River to the west, and stretches of land increasingly evacuated of population on its east flank. The European village also had an exclusive access road that was used during the 1929 labor strike to secretly transport the arrested labor strikers out of the island:

> " The English had a special road called the "Braim Road". Nobody was allowed to use it except the English and those who worked for them and they trusted. A large number of soldiers and policemen who had entered the island [to crush the labor strike] used this road to transport the prisoners in the middle of the night to Mohammareh and then onto Ahvaz"[48].

By the end of the war the Company constructed some housing for its Indian skilled workers in equally segregated areas to the east of the refinery, that came to be known as Sikh Lane and Indian Quarters (see Figure 1). The Company also had entered negotiations with Khaz'al in 1918 to take hold of a village called Bawarda, situated on the riverfront[49]. However, there had been difficulties in negotiations since suddenly land, which previously was a collective resource but not an exchange value with a market price, had now become a scarce commodity with a rapidly rising price, although the Company refused to see it that way. Percy Cox, the British Resident in the Persian Gulf, reacted to this marketization of land in 1918:

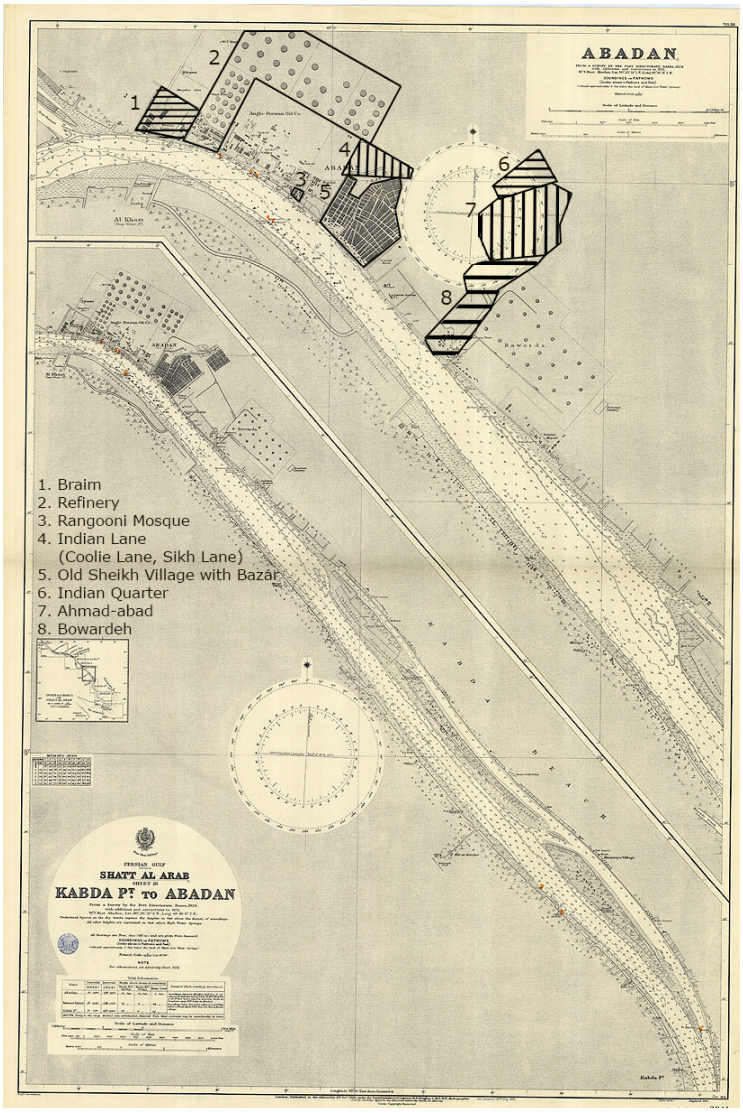
> "Thanks for letting me now about the purchase price of land on the right bank of the river, at £100 - £150 per acre. This is too much compared to the lease we already have from the Sheikh of Mohammareh on Abadan [refinery land],

---

[47] George Thompson, "Abadan in its early days", *Naft* 7:4 (July 1931),14-18
[48] Yusof Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e Dowran-e Separi Shodeh*, ed. Kaveh Bayat and Majid Tafreshi (Tehran: Ferdows Publishers, 1991), 141.
[49] "The land we wish to take up is situated a little below a place called 'Barwairda'; one square mile; to set up a jetty and extension to lead dangerous oil away from the refinery". A.T.Wilson to Percy Cox, 2 June 1918, BP 68779

which is £1 per Jerib (1909 and 1914 agreements). In 1914 we got additional land for the same rental"[50].

Map 1 Abadan in 1925



Source: British Library; Modifications in Atabaki (2014)

This was disingenuous since Cox was well aware, as were other political officers, APOC managers, and local people, that since 1908 and the advent of oil capitalism land in all the oil areas of Khuzestan had become a scarce commodity with its monetary value rising exponentially. When Arnold Wilson was presented in 1911

[50] Percy Cox to A.T.Wilson, 1 September 1918, BP 68779

with a 4 volume printed version of the *Intelligence Reports* that he had collected and authored, titled "SW Persia"[51] he felt that the information had already been outdated:

> "What was said to me then [by local Khuzestanis] as to the ownership and value of land and crops is more likely to be true than what is said now, when the advent of the [Oil] Company has trebled and quadrupled prices."[52]

In fact the Company was actively trying to designate and quickly take hold of all the land it wanted to acquire for its operations, in Abadan as well as in the Fields. Up to this point its agreements had been struck with the local magnates. The Company had established contracts with the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheikh Khaz'al according to the terms of concession, which stated that uncultivated land should be given to APOC for free, and cultivate land sold at local prices. But, how these vague categories of property and land-use were to be applied to pastoral territories that were used seasonally, to populated riverside areas where land was of shifting and mixed use, or to dry-land areas left fallow for long periods or used as collective source of fodder and brush fuel, remained highly contested. Access to these lands was exercised through customary rights, and their enclosure was putting strain on local communities and creating anger and resistance[53]. Furthermore, once land had become commodified following the emergence of the oil industry and the urbanization that had followed in its wake, the notion of a fixed price for vacant land had become a fiction, especially in areas where massive numbers of migrants had settled, hoping to enter the wage labor market, and having to pay for housing, food, and other necessities.

In 1926 Arnold Wilson reported, "To date 20 square miles have been purchased [in Masjed Soleyman] for the period of concession at £48 thousand, and a further 4 square miles at £14,500 are shortly to be bought"[54]. The price of 'uncultivated land' in 'unpopulated' Bakhtiyari country had increased from £2,400 to £3,625, or by 66 percent. However, by 1926 the issue of the Company purchase of

---

[51] These were later incorporated in the remarkable collection that is John Gordon Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*, 6 vols. (Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, Eng.: Archive Editions, 1986). See also the selected and briefer version incorporated in Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*.

[52] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 124–125.

[53] For the criminalization of resistance to enclosures of common rights to land in Britain see Douglas Hay, "Property, Authority, and the Criminal Law," ed. Douglas Hay, et.al. (New York: Pantheon, 1976), 17–64.

[54] "A.T.Wilson, "Confidential: Bakhtiyari relations and land purchases", 24 February 1926, BP 71183

land had become highly contentious as both the central government was claiming ownership of all land, and rank and file Bakhtiyaris and local Arabs farmers and tribesmen in Abadan were angered at being cheated out of their collective access to their territory and vital resources (chapters 3, 7).

As the Company was carving out its exclusive enclaves on the island, the teaming areas variably called "Abadan Town", the "Traditional Village", or "Shahr" by the locals, stayed beyond the control of both the Company and the central government, especially now that the political order embodied in Sheikh Khaz'al had disappeared from the scene. The prospective purchase of Bawarda, and the planned eviction of the so-called "Sheikh Village" on the immediate southern border of the refinery became focal points of an urban struggle that was fought in the name of sanitation by the Company, and the "right to the city"[55] by the heterogeneous population of the city.

By all counts the living conditions of the population of migrants, oil workers, casual laborers of various kind, and the indigenous population in the "Shahr" were appalling. There are virtually no detailed personal or ethnographic accounts of the period that I am aware of, with the noted exception of the memoirs of the socialist labor activist, Yousef Eftekhari, orally collected (in 1988) by Kaveh Bayat and Majid Tafreshi. Eftekhari had gone to Abadan in 1927 in order to organize and unionize oil workers, and stayed there until he was exiled in 1929, after having organized and led the oil workers' strike. Originally from Azarbaijan, Eftekhari was trained as a professional labor organizer in the Soviet Union. He made his way with considerable difficulty to Abadan in 1927, via Boushehr and a sea voyage to Mohammareh. He managed to visit Aghajari, and eventually found work in the Oil Company's Technical Workshop in Abadan (chapter 5). Initially he helped organize a short-lived demand by Iranian workers to establish their own sports club, which they had named "Kaveh Club", but the Company was alarmed and shut it down after a few weeks with the help of the police[56]. By 1929 Eftekhari had mobilized nearly 50 workers to form the nucleus of an organized trade union[57]. Their call for a strike was met with widespread support in 1929, not only by oil workers, but also by their wives, as well

[55] Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la Ville*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Anthropos, 2009).
[56] Yusof Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e Dowran-e Separi Shodeh*, ed. Kaveh Bayat and Majid Tafreshi (Tehran: Ferdows Publishers, 1991), 141.
[57] Ibid., 130–139.

as a wide array of townspeople from Abadan and Mohammareh, turning the initial labor action into a more widely based urban protest movement[58]. Eftekhari's sketchy and brief descriptions of life in Abadan are one of the few documents that provide a first hand voice from the perspective of a migrant worker (and a political activist and professional union organizer) to the refinery city, and of the living conditions under the Oil Company rule:

> "The English had their exclusive neighborhood in Abadan, called Braim, where nobody was allowed to enter. If an Englishman married an Iranian woman he would be shunned and expelled from there. Truly they had built a paradise in the middle of that island where everything was available to them – swimming pool, clubs, and beautiful houses. There was another neighborhood called Bawarda, where Arabs lived, but the English wanted to grab it out of their hands. Most Arab dwellings were made of reeds; and the English set them on fire on numerous occasions, and forbade people from rebuilding or repairing what they had destroyed. There was another neighborhood called Ahmadabad…it was the filthiest place I have seen in my life. There weren't even any toilets and people just squatted next to the water [ditches]. Abadan was generally filthy, but they [?] had dug some ditches that would wash away the filth with the [river] tide. Ahmadabad did not even have these ditches… nor did it have any drinking water. Epidemics usually started there… Other workers had made temporary shelters near the Shatt al-Arab…the most miserable workers in the world were those working for APOC. They never had enough food and clothing, or decent shelter. Some simply lived their bitter lives in open air under palm trees; others had made temporary shelters out of reeds, where in each room several households lived together…The Oil Company had constructed a few, no more than 150, workers housing for those with more experience and skills. In those each married family had two rooms, while single workers lived 6 to one room.[59]

Abadan had become a highly segregated town by the middle of the decade, and Company officials intended to consolidate that segregation based on sanitary

[58] Ibid., 39–40.
[59] Ibid., 31–32, 117.

principles, with the help of Iranian government institutions that they hoped to control discreetly. Arnold Wilson, APOC Resident Director in Mohammareh, supported Dr. Young's plans by highlighting the indigenous population as the culprit for the abysmal sanitary situation: "As Dr Young points out, the crux of the problem in the control of epidemic disease in Abadan lies, now that our own house has been put in order, in the Persian Town itself". However, the awareness that no degree of racial spatial segregation could avert the dangers of contagion was now being admitted:

> "The areas controlled by the Company and the Persian Government are so dependent upon each other that the isolation of one from the other is an impossibility. We are thus faced with the necessity if we are to protect ourselves and if we are to reap the benefits of improved housing and sanitation…of compelling the local Persian authority to take definite steps to organize a municipality capable of dealing efficiently with public health"[60].

Photograph 19: Abadan. Workers' Living Conditions



Open Source

[60] A.T.Wilson, Mohammerah to APOC, London, Letter #356, 8 March 1926, BP 71183

Wilson corresponded with Harold Homan, an American assistant to Millspaugh, who was acting as Provincial Director of Finance for Khuzestan, to offer Company financial assistance of an annual £2,500 for shoring up a functioning municipality in Abadan[61]. It was clear from the proposal of financial and practical assistance that it was conditional, and the Company expected to have an active say so in setting the parameters of urban change in the city. Foremost in their list of conditions was for the Government to confirm the Company's acquisition of a significant neighborhood adjacent to the refinery for building a modern bazaar, as well as its extensive plans to take over significant new parcels of land on the Island for developing exclusive Company areas.

Since the virulent epidemic outbreaks of 1923 the Company had resolved to confront the sanitary situation head on. It had brought in professional rat catchers from India, who managed to destroy 12,000 rats between April and July 1924. It began building brick and steel huts for its "10,000 permanent workers"[62] (mostly skilled Indians) in India Lane and Sikh Lane, isolated well away from "the native Town". The challenging problem of drainage in the waterlogged island, where subsoil water stood at 2 feet below surface began to be addressed by pumps. A piped water supply was being completed for the new Indian workers' quarters from the river Bahmanshir, 6 kms away. The water was transported to a large reservoir to be treated chemically and piped to standalone pumps in "the [Indian] workers' village", or the area that became known as the "Indian Quarter". "The Company is also planning a site for a new town, and the inhabitants of the old are being encouraged to remove to it. A piped water supply has been led to this site also. Everything possible is, therefore, being done to keep out cholera as well as plague"[63]. Garbage disposal was another area rigorously attended to, "with large number of sweepers temporarily employed to keep *Company areas* well swept". In Masjed Soleyman,

> "Owing to the strictest sanitary discipline and constant supervision and inspection by trained sanitary squads, both European and Persian, the incidence of disease has been small. One of the reasons for this is the abundance of incinerators for destroying garbage and refuse. Scattered all over the fields one finds lengths of 17 inch piping, into one of which the refuse is

[61] Ibid.
[62] Neligan, "Public Health in Persia, Part2," 690.
[63] Ibid.

> tipped, and at the other a very large jet of gas… Squads are employed in nothing else but this, and the incinerators are constantly at work, complete destruction of rubbish taking about 15 minutes" [64].

However, few of these measures, publicized by Dr Neligan in the medical journal *The Lancet*, or Squadron Leader Cooper at the Royal Asiatic Society, had been actually aimed at improving conditions in the so-called "Persian Village" in Abadan, "**…** aside from the erection of 7 water points". The purified piped water supply was for the Braim, the hospital, and the segregated living quarters of clerks, shift engineers, artisans, and Chittagonians (skilled Indian workers from Burma)[65].

The same held true for the critically important sewage system. In Braim "all programmed sewers are working…each bungalow has a septic tank. Six water flush native latrines will be built in the area". A rigorous plan was in place for "the new village" being erected for skilled workers to "convert all latrines to water flush system. Collecting tanks have been constructed, and the outlet pipes laid, and pumps arranged. The system needs electricity to start. As this is a matter of urgency the electrical department have arranged to give a temporary line within the next month"[66]. The fact that the water flush sewage system carried the untreated filth to the river where the rest of the Island, as well as the indigenous population downstream along the delta relied on the river for irrigation and drinking water was not considered relevant.

The Company was not unaware that ignoring the indigenous city was highly risky and planned to add more water points and piping, and to build a bridge over the creek that separated the Shahr from the refinery to facilitate access for workers coming to work at the refinery. However, the Company's plan also involved major projects to clear out the population from several strategic areas in order to remake a *cordon sanitaire* that could be more easily monitored and controlled: "Other 1926-1927 proposals include…building a roadway through the center of one of the most unsanitary areas…connecting the proposed bazaar site to the proposed customs site"[67].

---

[64] Cooper, "A Visit to the Anglo Persian Oilfields," 152.
[65] "Item 24: Water Supply", 18 March 1926, p.82, BP 71183
[66] "Item 23: Sewerage", p.81, 18 March 1926, BP 71183
[67] "Item 24: Water Supply", 18 March 1926, p.82, BP 71183

Oil capitalism had created a new built environment in Khuzestan for the accumulation of capital in oil, by the dispossession of the local agrarian and tribal societies. This process had transformed the geography and social lives of the local population and created nightmarish urban landscapes of destitution, immense inequality, and industrial and human filth. Company officials were blaming the victims for the unhygienic conditions that had accompanied this new political economy, and constantly reminded themselves and anyone who cared to listen of the civilizing work they were undertaking: "… it [should be] realized that 10,000 natives are employed in the fields alone, and that not one of these has even an elementary knowledge of the principles of sanitation, the danger from infections and contagious diseases is very great"[68].

Photograph 20: Abadan - Market in Ahmadabad (1920s)



Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Iran

As we have discussed (chapter 4, previous sections of this chapter), the sanitary concerns over public hygiene and urban congestion had come to pre-occupy professional middle classes, corporate employers, colonial officials, and policymakers

[68] Cooper, "A Visit to the Anglo Persian Oilfields," 152.

in the interwar era. In Britain, the pressure of mass politics and working class mobilization were leading to negotiations over the establishment of a range of welfare institutions and municipal improvements. In the colonies like India or large parts of Africa, the sanitary measures being adopted had a more explicitly coercive and racist slant (chapter 4). Reflecting on the draconian 1920 anti-vagrancy laws aimed at controlling the effects of sanitary conditions and labor radicalism in Nairobi, Frederick Cooper remarks:

> "In trying to build cities on the basis of cheap migrant labor states have had to face the different questions of what kind of urban order they were likely to create. They built mining and railroad cities, but not as they would have liked. The society that resulted was not a social category known as 'urban'…having helped build a society in which Africans might choose to live in an outhouse or a shed, the colonial state forbade them to do so"[69].

In a non-colonial and yet highly dependent context like southern Iran, where APOC was a powerful private corporation faced with a new central government that was increasingly and jealously laying claim to its sovereignty over territory and the population, the biopolitical challenge of making a sanitary city had to be negotiated in a different manner, both with the state as well as with the indigenous population. For the local population the new and unfamiliar categories such as 'garbage' and 'sewage' were the byproducts of the alien industrial landscape[70]; paying for access to filtered and chemically treated piped water was an amenity well beyond their means or capabilities; and observing the unfamiliar codes of urban sanitation was a novel practice that would have been more readily embraced had it not been imposed as obnoxiously and intrusively by a highly disruptive oil capitalism, or an authoritarian central government. Consequently, the draconian proposals of urban sanitization that involved massive displacements for the population and coercive attempts to regulate their bodies and their everyday lives were received with considerable skepticism and

---

[69] Frederick Cooper, "Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labor in Africa," in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa*, ed. Frederick Cooper (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983), 7–8.

[70] Much as they had been in the fast-industrializing European cities of the 19th century. See chapter 4. For a historical view of how cities came to be categorized as 'chemical systems' by scientific experts utilizing categories of filth, waste, and pollution, among others, see Christopher Hamlin, "The City as a Chemical System? The Chemist as Urban Environmental Professional in France and Britain, 1780-1880," *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 5 (2007): 702–28.

resistance, since they felt to be unjustly the targets and victims, and not the beneficiaries, of these grand schemes.

Again, Eftekhari's recollections are disturbing, as they reveal the sense of daily humiliation experienced by the population in their interactions with Company officials or abusive government bureaucrats. What constituted "garbage" from a Company perspective was often a vital "resource" in the lives of destitute migrants. The evidence of poverty was a reminder for the expatriates of their superiority, and affirmed their "civilizing mission", but it only enhanced the resentment of the residents who felt humiliated by their objectification:

> "The scenes of working women using the oil sludge were heart-breaking. Workers' wives would fill oil drums with that black liquid and carry it on their heads to use as cooking fuel for baking bread and filling the bellies of their naked kids living in those reed shacks. These women wore a long piece of ragged fabric that only partially managed to cover their bodies. The black sludge they carried on their heads would slosh all over their faces and bodies. The English and their well-dressed wives would stop these women, who were the real owners of the oil wealth, in order to photograph their misery… These were humiliating photographs of skeletal and emaciated women and workers. Anyone would be outraged, but unfortunately these scenes were the source of amusement for the English. For the workers, these humiliations were harder to tolerate than their nakedness, hunger, and the wretchedness of their lives; it made them resentful and furious, and mobilized them against the Company"[71].

The Company Director T.L. Jacks reported to his Chairman John Cadman, expressing his concerns:

> "We have demolished the old village and built a new one for Company staff under controlled conditions. The value of this will be lost unless similar control is imposed in the Abadan Township proper. Now the Municipality is inadequate, with no Government of Iran budget for its 'correct maintenace', [creating]… the danger of epidemics spreading throughout the Company controlled areas, which is a grave menace to the Company's operations"[72].

---

[71] Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e Dowran-e Separi Shodeh*, 119.
[72] "Dossier 8: Notes of meetings held in Tehran", 22 April 1926, BP 71183

Jacks was referring to company housing built for artisans and clerks (Indians and Europeans). These plans were costly and well behind schedule. The Company had planned to complete 95 buildings for artisans to accommodate nearly 2,700 men (including 380 married couples), but only 89 had been completed (costing £51 per person). Housing for clerks was even more costly, with only half of the 67 buildings planned for nearly 500 men completed, at £277 per head. The urban infrastructure for these projects was estimated to be 20 percent of the overall staggering anticipated cost of £177,000[73].

The cooperation of the Iranian municipality and government institutions had become crucial for the whole scheme to proceed, and the Company was offering to finance and assist the bureaucracy to accelerate the process. However, this offer of assistance was being questioned within the Company and, were it to be followed through, it could become a double edged sword, as it would delegate the power over the chaotic and abysmal urban situation to the municipality, and run the risk of it failing to cope with the considerable challenges involved. In the margins of the minutes of the meeting between Jacks, Cadman, and other senior APOC managers the following hesitations and conditions are jotted down in handwriting:

> "- Do we give active and financial aid to municipality?
> - Unemployment and starvation is the responsibility of the local municipality, who should act with our guidance and financial support
> - Cadman: Financial aid should be linked to Government of Iran contributions "so long as it functions in a proper manner"
> - Need for formal arrangement with Ministry of Interior detailing procedures, detailed budget.
> - Involve the Governor, keep low profile. Have issues raised by local authorities and not the Company"[74].

To provide a perspective on the situation, while the Company was planning to allocate £177,000 for housing 3,200 employees, it was offering £2,500 to the municipality to deal with the nearly insurmountable issues facing a boomtown of

[73] Dossier 5, Item 14, 20-22 March 1926, Pp.55-61, BP 71183
[74] Handwritten notes on the margin of 22 March 1926 meeting with Cadman, Dossier 6, Pp.55-56, BP 71183

more than 50,000 destitute migrants and local people, in the aftermath of devastating epidemics and famine. The government budget at the time, it will be recalled from chapter 2, was under severe stress, much of it allocated to the military or beholden to debt repayments. Although oil royalties had increased in 1924-1925, other major crises had put a severe strain on the budget. The devastating famine of 1925 had incurred heavy debts from emergency loans; the military operations against Sheikh Khaz'al, and the subsequent political disturbances over the change of dynasty had left little room for financial maneuver. The share of the Ministry of Interior from the budget was a paltry 6 percent of the government expenditures[75], and little of it trickled its way to areas such as Abadan or Masjed Soleyman that were considered frontier regions, and under the tutelage of the Oil Company. The limited municipal budget, at the time, was supplemented by provincial taxe revenues from state land (*khalesehjat*), a portion of the provincial customs revenues, and a consumption tax on alcohol. Given the intense disputes over land between the central government and local magnates, and the generally unstable situation in the province that adversely affected agricultural production, these were hardly secure or sufficient sources of revenue for the scale of work that was being discussed.

"State lands" (*khalesehjat*) were a highly disputed category (as the central government was in the process of reclaiming land formerly controlled by the local magnates) and wielding little income due the poor state of agriculture and the continuing insecurity in the province. On the other hand, the newly imposed 'banderol tax' [fees charged for the government seal on individual liquor bottles] on bottled alcohol had become a major source of contraband and smuggling, with the systematic collusion of ill paid border guards and policemen in the frontier towns of Abadan and Mohammareh, leaving little reliable surplus for funding municipal projects[76].

However, the Iranian state bureaucrats were not ready to turn down the financial offer of assistance by APOC, nor could they afford to refuse their responsibility for municipal and sanitary improvements since these were the spheres of authority that the new state institutions were jealously claiming from the former

[75] For the annual budget of 1925 see Persia Annual Report 1925, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 382–384.
[76] On the extent of smuggling in Abadan, who was involved, the extent of the collusion of state officials, and its impact on municipal tax revenues see "Illegal activities of border guards (counterfeit labels, illicit and diluted alcoholic drinks, smuggling of alcohol without banderol, etc.)" 1930-1932, INA 240008497; "Assessing the tax revenues of Khuzestan; consequences of the reduction of revenues from alcoholic drinks and state lands", 1927-1929, INA 240010128

local elites and the Oil Company. Hence, the Company's conditions and proposed plans were accepted. The proposal letter from APOC to the Ministry of Interior is worth quoting in some detail (my translation):

> "The Public Health of Abadan requires a municipality…There have been a number of serious outbreaks of epidemic diseases over the past two years. The Company as a result was forced to build modern housing for several thousand workers at great expense to itself, in a new neighborhood… the maintenance of public cleanliness is expensive and requires adequate personnel, organization, and professional management to control waterborne diseases… As for the welfare of the 25,000 people of Abadan who live next to us, little has been done for their sanitation by the municipality [I assume this figure refers to the posrtion of the local population who were not directly employed by the Oil Company]. They mostly live in dwellings made of reed and face grave danger, as there are no sanitary facilities or adequate sewerage. Regardless of what the Company does in its own area the danger of epidemic outbreak in the Bazaar and the Town is constant… [The situation creates the] need for the municipality to provide electricity, sewage, housing, waterways. The Company is willing to help with financial assistance until the municipality can stand on its own"[77].

The letter proceeds to offer a detailed proposed budget for the municipality, probably drafted by the urban planner and architect J.M. Wilson, who had been asked to consult on the situation. The Company suggested that it was willing to subsidize a 70 percent raise in the salary of the director of the municipality to 100 Touman, and offer further assistance free of charge for the construction of free public toilets; garbage collection, incineration, and landfills throughout the city; fire stations; quarantine centers for those afflicted with contagious diseases; and an annual subsidy budget of 2,000T "until the Municipality can stand on its own, but only if the government commits to make up the rest [of the required budget], and the funds are allocated exclusively to municipal issues"[78].

---

[77] APOC to Ministry of Interior, 27 April 1926, INA 240009253
[78] APOC to Ministry of Interior, 27 April 1926, INA 240009253

The built environment of the oil industry and the reproduction of its working class began to take shape in a conjuncture that was intimately linking the global with the national and the local. On the one hand the transnational concerns and requirements of corporate extractive capitalism had begun to be guided by the lessons in social reform, governance, management, and the scientific discourses of sanitation and professional urban planning. These scientific praxes were not politically neutral, as they were shaped by, and reinforced the notions of segregation by race and social class that underlay class conflict in the west and racial domination in the colonies. New modern nation-state institutions taking shape in Iran, such as municipalities, public health authorities, schools, individual record keeping, and property registration, were deeply influenced by the interaction with these global practices in Khuzestan's oil industry; as they were by the increasingly vocal pressures from a new subaltern social actor, the urban residents and industrial working classes in Abadan and across the oil industry in Khuzestan. These heterogeneous subaltern social actors had to invent collective ways to negotiate and struggle to improve their lot in the novel urban setting where they found themselves. The frictions around the remaking of the urban space of Abadan embodied these scalar dynamics, and contributed to shaping the built environment of oil there.

The Bazaar of Abadan:

Prior to 1925 when the new central government institutions began to be set up in Khuzestan, APOC would routinely take drastic coercive measures to evacuate and expel squatters or settled populations out of the way of its projects with the help of its local allies. In Masjed Soleyman and Bawarda it set fire to reed houses and shops and demolished huts to clear the path for oil installations or company neighborhoods (see above, and chapter 3). When necessary it relied on the assistance of local magnates to enforce its projects. These actions were justified on two bases: first, the recurring theme of "empty land" which presented seasonally or collectively used territories as uncultivated or dead land and; second, the contractual deals with the local magnates, as well as the legal clause in the D'Arcy Concession, which gave the Company the right to obtain uncultivated land free of charge, or to purchase cultivated land at the established local price from its owners (chapter 3). Since these contractual property categories were vague, incongruous with local realities, or highly disputed, they created resentment among the dispossessed, which were left with few options but to

move to the urban spaces created by oil in search of wage labor or some form of livelihood on the margins of the oil industry.

The handful of central government officials stationed in Khuzestan also resented these Company actions, not so much out of sympathy with the plight of the local population as for the contempt toward their own nominal authority, as shown by this report of the Kargozar in 1923: " The Company acts as it pleases with Iranian citizens. There are no government agents at present to deal with complaints, except at Mohammareh. To monitor the Company we need offices in Masjed Soleyman, Naseri [Ahvaz], and Ebbadan [Abadan]"[79].

However, with the fear of Sheikh Khaz'al gone, the remaining residents of the Bazaar neighborhood resisted intimidation when the Company tried to evict them. By May 1925 the Company had destroyed some 140 dwellings, but demolitions and evictions ground to a halt when the rest refused to move or be intimidated. The residents were from all over. At least 20 of those demolished dwellings housed Indians who had come there from Mesopotamia. Others came from Bushehr, Shiraz, Kazeroun, Isfahan, and elsewhere, mostly it seems from southern Iran, as evidenced from the names of signatories on the petitions. The Kargozar in Mohammareh received 57 written complaints demanding justice and protection[80]. The Company was refusing to pay compensation and threatened to take matters to Tehran[81]; but the conflict was becoming politicized, with some "troublemakers" urging residents to resist eviction:

> "The Company is asking the government permission to build a bazaar in the so-called Sheikh area. Previously, the Company and Sardar Aqdas' [one of Khaz'al's tiles] agents had demolished the houses there. Whoever does not have a compensation contract from the Company can get paid according to the type of room they had: Brick room 175 Rupees, Mud brick 88 Rps, Mud 55 Rps. There are some troublemakers involved. The Company persists. It has held multiple meetings and refuses to acknowledge any claims, stating that they have already purchased the titles [to the land], and if they agree to pay anything it will be only out of goodwill"[82].

---

[79] Kargozar to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran, 29 December 1923, INA 240009253
[80] Kargozar to Foreign Ministry, 5 May 1925, INA 240009253
[81] Mohammareh to Foreign Ministry, 8 May 1925, INA 240009253
[82] Mohammareh to Foreign Ministry, 8 May 1925; 12 May 1925, INA 240009253

The oil workers living in the neighborhood were intimidated and did not appear to be willing to confront the Company openly, fearing for their jobs and livelihood. The Kargozar arranged a meeting, but in spite of official invitations by the Company for them to participate oil workers and Company employees kept a low profile:

> "A final meeting was held with the Company on the 20th of May. Some of the plaintiffs are employees of the Company, and thus refused to appear in the commission, in spite of multiple invitations from the personnel office. It was determined that the Company has to pay an additional compensation of 18,000Rupees, or 6,000Touman to those displaced"[83].

"An atmosphere of fear and surveillance reigned in Khuzestan, and especially in Abadan"[84]. At the same time, Company public relations and propaganda was lauding the place as a pleasant and safe destination for visits, and a great place for Europeans to work (Chapter 5). However, things were rather different from the perspective of migrants and unskilled workers:

> "My difficulty was how to travel in Khuzestan because the English had put up barbed wire everywhere and forbade anyone from entering [any of the Company controlled areas]…wherever you went you would be interrogated: Where are you going? Why have you come? Who are you here to see? ... I wanted to go to Aghajari, but it was all fenced in and there was a guard at the gate. The place was in the middle of the mountains…In Khuzestan everything was forbidden. Iranians couldn't start a club, a cooperative, or any associations. We received permission from the Abadan Cultural Office to establish a sports club for Iranians…The English immediately put us under surveillance…we had only athletic activities, but the club became very popular and the whole town was participating, so the Provincial Government shut us down after two months… Things were very difficult for migrants and newcomers to Abadan and Masjed Soleyman. Masjed Soleyman was all

[83] Mohammareh to Foreign Ministry, No. 295, 21 May1925, INA 240009253
[84] Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e Dowran-e Separi Shodeh*, 129.

> fenced in, and you couldn't enter without government permission. Abadan was equally bad."[85]

APOC was creating fortified enclaves by enclosing its areas with fences, behind which the business of accumulation in oil capitalism could operate according to its own rules of social, spatial, and economic behavior. In these de-territorialized spaces carved out by the Company those higher up the corporate hierarchy had a different experience of everyday life than the masses of casual unskilled workers and urban migrants. For some the fences and barbed wires represented a sense of safety and comfort behind defensive fortifications, for others they evoked fear, alieanation, and incarceration. However, they all had to live by the rules being imposed by the Oil Company. Marx drew attention to the stark contrast between the geographies of market exchange versus the domain of production when labor is commodified under capitalism[86]. We can broaden this geographic contrasts and think of Company towns as corporate extensions of the disciplinary power exercised in coercive work spaces into the everyday urban spaces of reproduction:

APOC was attempting to carve out an isolated, enclosed, militarized, and de-territorialized geography of oil extraction to contain and defuse the frictions caused with labor relations, national laws, and popular resistance[87]. In isolated locales, such as Masjed Soleyman and Aghajari, which were in fact mining towns with a limited life span and utility beyond the productive phase of the oilfields, the Company had

---

[85] Ibid., 34, 123–124. See also the fictional masterpiece of Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt* (New York: Vintage, 1989). Set in a fictional kingdom in the Persian Gulf, the story recreates a similar haunting landscape of fear and estrangement among the indigenous population confronted with the Leviatan of oil capitalism.

[86] "This sphere that we are deserting, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labor power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham…On leaving this sphere of simple circulation or of exchange of commodities, which furnishes the "free-trader vulgaris" with his views and ideas, and with the standard by which he judges a society based on capital and wages, we think we can perceive a change in the physiognomy of our dramatis personae. He, who before was the money-owner, now strides in front as capitalist; the possessor of labor-power follows as his laborer. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the other, timid and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but — a hiding". Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1976), 281.

[87] This segregated and enclosed geography has become a common feature of late capitalism, both in mining and extraction, but also in the free trade zones of various kind. See Dara Orenstein, "Foreign-Trade Zones and the Cultural Logic of Frictionless Production," *Radical History Review* 2011, no. 109 (2010): 36–61; Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2009); Hannah Appel, "Offshore Work: Oil, Modularity, and the How of Capitalism in Equatorial Guinea," *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 4 (2012): 692–709; James Ferguson, "Seeing like an Oil Company: Space, Security, and Global Capital in Neoliberal Africa," *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3 (2005): 377–82.

greater freedom of action to create company towns under its more or less exclusive disciplinary control[88]. However, the sheer scale of Abadan, and the fact that as a city it was becoming many things at the same time -- an industrial city built around the world's largest refinery, a strategic border town, a major port, a city of desperate immigrants, expatriate employees, and of increasingly desperate indigenous population witnessing the dismantling of their customary rights and familiar social structures -- simply limited the ability of the Company to completely hegemonize the spatial order. Furthermore, the frictions with the emerging state institutions and the teaming local population, not all of whom worked for the Oil Company, were to force the Company to negotiate more than it had anticipated, and shaped the built environment of Abadan in a highly contested dynamic[89].

Although oil workers may have been too intimidated to participate openly in negotiations over their eviction from the "Sheikh Neighborhood", their neighbors and others did; forcing the Kargozar in Mohammareh to form a committee to address the losses incurred by "Iranian citizens". The Company claimed its actions were humanitarian, and refused to enter into any formal negotiations since it considered its dealings to have been proper and contractual. The Grievance Committee set up by the Kargozar was informed y the Company that the evicted people had signed a contract and been compensated; their signatures had been witnessed by the Municipality, and that concluded the deal. Any further action on the part of the Company would be purely voluntary and undertaken solely on humanitarian grounds[90].

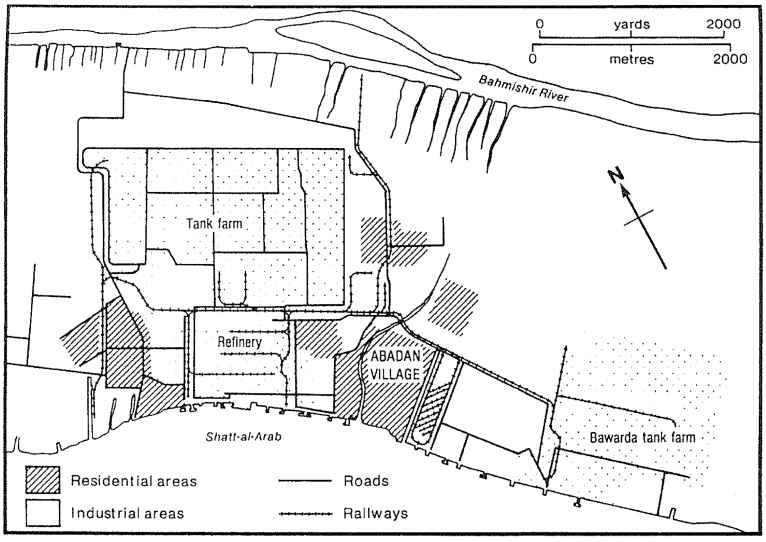
---

[88] I have extensively discussed the comparative dynamics of company towns in Ehsani, "Social Engineering and Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns."

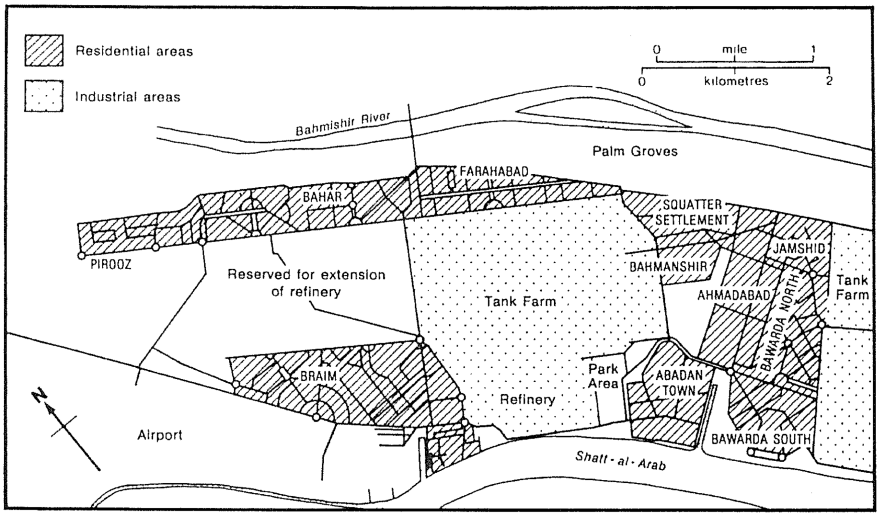
[89] Questioning the reductive notion of "dual city" that explains the spatial logic of colonial and industrial cities as Europeans versus the indigenous, or employers versus employees, Marcuse suggests the alternative notion of "a quartered city", where multiple forms of distinction and hierarchy are simultaneously at work shaping a divided urban space along more fragmented lines than a simple binary dichotomy. See Peter Marcuse, "'Dual City': A Muddy Metaphor for a Quartered City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 13, no. 4 (1989): 697–708.

[90] Kargozar to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 May 1925, INA 240009253

Map 2: Abadan in the 1930s



Map 3: Abadan in the 1960s



Source for Maps: Lawless and Seccombe (1987), 49, 50. The shaded area southeast of Braim was designated for the new Bazaar of Abadan.

Meanwhile trouble had reached the capital and Teymourtash, the powerful Minister of Agriculture, Trade, and General Welfare inquired from his counterpart at the Foreign Ministry "whether or not the rights and privileges *of the Government and of citizens* had been respected according to the article 3 of the D'Arcy Concession"[91]. It was clear from the message that the primary concern was the dignity of the Government, and whether the Company had ignored its sovereignty. The Kargozar was asked to provide a full account to his superiors, who were becoming uneasy. His report is an important document worthy of quotation, as it reveals the views and anxieties of state officials, especially at the local level:

> "Shaykh Abdollah and the Company have demolished a number of houses situated in the so-called "Company Area". In fact Abadan has two neighborhoods, respectively called 'Company' and 'Sheikh'. Most houses and shops are in the latter, which are left to their own, although people are constantly trying to improve things. In the Company area homes were demolished and people were forced to sign consent forms. The Company's motives in demolishing houses is unclear. Some believe they intend to expel all Iranians from Khuzestan, others think they want to dig a canal to separate their buildings and factories from the city. In your servant's opinion they intend to turn Abadan into something like Masjed Soleyman, where they own everything and nobody else has any authority… They intend to replicate that situation in Abadan and undermine the current city, as once the bazaar is completed the Company will control all transactions through its own lackeys. We should resist allowing the situation in Abadan coming to resemble that of Masjed Soleyman. On the other hand, since the municipality has some revenues and is under the control of the government it needs to work hard to pave roads and keep the city clean in order not to give any excuses to the Company"[92].

---

[91] Minister of Agriculture, Trade, and General Welfare to Minister of Foreign Affairs, No. 1881, 6 June 1925, INA 240009253. Clause 3 of D'Arcy Concession is available in Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:640.

[92] To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Ebbadan Houses and Company Actions". (Abadan is spelled two different ways in the same letter), 3 June 1926, INA 240009253; Kargozar to Foreign Ministry, No.474, 6 June1925, INA 240009253

The Kargozar was alarmed about the absence of any tangible government authority in Masjed Soleyman, which appeared to him as occupied territory. He felt the Company had similar plans for Abadan, and his primary concern was to impose government sovereignty over the city and to check the mysterious and questionable machinations of the Company. The fate of the evicted population did not appear to overly concern him. However, he was clear that if the government were to exercise any authority it needed to work hard to perform certain social tasks, such as building and maintaining an urban infrastructure, and to insure that sanitary concerns were being addressed. "The state" as such was not an institutional presence in the city, but *to make a state* and to claim sovereignty over the territory and the population required performing certain social tasks that were now being defined as general welfare. The Kargozar followed his report with a further note, this time providing a historical background to the conflict, and framed the frictions with the Company within the changing political situation of the demise of Sheikh Khaz'al and the new order being imposed by the central government in Khuzestan. Again, it is an important historical document worthy of full quotation:

> "Last June (June 1924) The Company warned some home owners to vacate their premises to clear way for demolition. We have objected to the Company and to the [British] Consulate [in Mohammareh] that the Company had no right to so threaten the residents. We demanded to know how the Company intended to proceed with the evictions if residents ignored the warning? For now they say they do not intend to be unjust, and they will wait while [their] workers look for alternative housing. *Meanwhile the revolution had begun in Khuzestan*. Sheikh Khaz'al was openly challenging the government. The Company took advantage of this situation and without informing this office or the Foreign Ministry asked Sheikh Abdollah who, at the time, was Khaz'al's appointed governor in Ebbadan [Abadan], to demolish the houses and transfer the land to the Company. They employed the services of a Company secretary, a certain Mirza Hossein Shushtari, to give a veneer of legality to these proceedings. When I objected to this, Sheikh Abdollah showed up at the Kargozari with a number of Arabs and threatened me not to interfere. The houses were demolished. Residents were complaining in secret but we couldn't do anything. We held seven meetings with the Company. Finally, [the General Manager in Mohammareh, T.L.] Jacks agreed to pay

> compensation, but [APOC Chairman Charles Greenaway] his boss refused and insisted the issue must be resolved in Tehran [my emphasis]."[93]

The accusation of threatening and intimidating government officials did not sit well in Tehran, nor did the impression that the Company was acting like a state; although a confrontation could be avoided by blaming Sheikh Khaz'al and his rogue agents acting with impunity; and now that a "revolution" had taken place and Khaz'al had been removed by the army and Reza Khan, everything would be different. The conflict with Sheikh Khaz'al had focused public attention on Khuzestan, by highlighting the state of Iranian oil workers and the details of the oil concessions in the growing national press at a time when nationalist sentiment was running high following the rejection of the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement by the Majles and the increasing centralization of the state under Reza Khan (Chapter 2). The newspaper *Tajadod* published a series of seven reports titled "Naft" [Oil] that reviewed the history of oil concessions granted to the British and Americans, and how Iranian statesmen had handled these agreements[94]. The newspaper received a critical reply to its coverage, titled "About Oil", which it published, and then proceeded to publish a longer series of more critical assessments titled "The history of the Anglo Persian Oil Company[95]. Bad publicity in the nationalist press, at a time of transition when the British Government and APOC were trying to reconfigure their long term strategy and felt highly threatened by Soviet influence, American competition, and the radicalization of the masses was a headache that the Oil Company wished to avoid.

July 1925 became a pivotal month in the struggle over the Abadan Bazaar and the evictions planned by the Company. The Prime Minister, his cabinet, and the Majles received a series of telegraph petitions from "Ruined Abadanis made homeless" (*Khaneh Kharaban-e Abadan*), which declared their patriotism and claimed, "The Company intends to demolish our homes and has caused us 150 thousand Rupees of damages. The former Kargozar was useless and refused to carry out serious investigations or make accurate reports. We plead for your assistance". Other telegraphs arrived complaining, "We have been made homeless for more than a

---

[93] Kargozar to Foreign Ministry, No. 490, 16 June 1925, INA 240009253
[94] "Naft", *Tajadod*, Nos.9-12, 14, 16-17, from 25 June 25 to first of July 1924
[95] "Dar Atraf-e Naft", No.15, 9 July 1924; "Tarikh-e Company-e Naft-e Iran va Inglis", Nos. 62, 71-75, October to 18 November 1924, in *Tajadod*

year. Please investigate and follow up on this complaint". The pleas were signed by a coterie of people whose names indicated they were immigrants from other cities and regions (Hassan *Shirazi*, Mohammad Javad *Qomsheyi,* Seyyed Mohammad *Shirazi*). Some of their names indicate a degree of literacy, carrying the title *Mirza* which means secretary/notary (*Mirza* Jani, *Mirza* Hossein Isfahani); many petitioners were shop owners (*Qahvehchi*). It is unclear if any were employees of the Company, since this was the era before the universal compulsory registration of individual information, the adoption of formal last names, and the issuance of birth certificates[96]. But since the Kargozar's reports highlighted the residence of many oil workers in the neighborhood, and their intimidation by the fear of retribution by the Company, we can surmise that this was a collective neighborhood movement, publicly fronted by those individuals who felt less vulnerable to direct Company intimidation.

Petitioning authorities for justice in the name of loyalty and patriotism had a long tradition in popular politics during the Qajar period. It was one of the few ways that ordinary people could seek justice against abusive officials by petitioning higher placed members of elites and pleading for their protection; but now the strategy had begun to become part of the repertoire of the new wage working class of the industrial proletariat and urban subalterns in industrial towns[97].Teymourtash, who was becoming Reza Khan's right hand man, was alarmed by these mounting frictions and demanded an investigation by the Foreign Minister[98]. At stake were the potential political repercussions stemming from the unexpected resistance of local residents, the bad publicity in the press during a critical period of uncertainty and crisis, and concern over the actions of the Company that was acting like a sovereign government:

> "The Majlis has received numerous complaints from shopkeepers and residents of the so called "Company" neighborhood of Abadan against the demolition of their property. At present a commission made of the representative of the Provincial Military Government and the Cabinet of Ministers is negotiating for adequate compensation of the residents. What is

---

[96] 14 July 1925, INA 240009253
[97] Irene Schneider, *The Petitioning System in Iran: State, Society and Power Relations in the Late 19th Century*, Iranica 11 (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006); Serhan Afacan, "Revisiting Labour Activism in Iran: Some Notes on the Vatan Factory Strike in 1931," *International Labor and Working Class History*, Forthcoming.
[98] No. 4250, 21 July1925, INA 240009253

> alarming is the collection of the so-called public health taxes by the Company. This seems to be the same as municipal taxes that the Company was collecting and spending until recently due to the absence of a municipality in Abadan. You ought to establish a regular municipality as soon as possible in the city in order to end this irregular state of affairs, which is contrary to the national regulations. Until this happens it will be impossible to resolve the disputes between the Company and residents"[99].

On 24th July 1925 matters came to head and the whole region erupted. After the military had displaced Khaz'al the Arab populations of Mohammareh, Abadan, and southwestern Khuzestan were apprehensive and resentful of the humiliating manner in which they were being treated by the government soldiers and bureaucrats. The non-Arab migrants were initially glad to be rid of the oppressive yoke of Khaz'al, but soon discovered that the new government agents and soldiers had little leeway with the Company to offer them effective protection; or were equally abusive as Khaz'al and the Company lackeys. The notion of the Company funding the Municipality's budget, building schools (chapter 5), subsidizing the wages of mayors and school teachers, etc. did not exactly give credibility to the autonomy and impartiality of government officials: "The Iranian Police Department in Khuzestan was very weak…and because they were funded by the Oil Company and were their lackeys, they were busy intimidating and extorting the wretched people of Khuzestan… the Oil Company supported the Police Department only to intimidate and suppress any opposition"[100]. Eftekahri, who was trying to organize the oil workers in Abadan in 1927-1929 felt the only significant threat against the secret nucleus of labor activists he had managed to set up came from the Company's own secret police, and not from any intelligence gathered by the thuggish and ineffective Iranian police[101].

When the military government of Khuzestan refused to pay compensation for requisitioning food and pack animals, and began to impose a new tax on date trees, a major tribal insurgency ensued among the rural Arab population (see Chapter 7). The British Minister Percy Loraine, as was to be expected, claimed that a sinister

---

[99] Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Interior, No. 1350, 6 July 1925, INA 240009253
[100] Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e Dowran-e Separi Shodeh*, 126–127.
[101] Ibid.

conspiracy was at play: "they were further agitated by the intrigues and incitement of the agents of the parties whose interest is to create trouble for the Central Government or to provoke disorder that would affect British interests and Anglo-Persian relations". However, he did concede that, "circumstances were, on the whole, favorable to such a general uprising"[102]. In spite of this, a "general tribal uprising" did not materialize because in the absence of the unifying power of Khaz'al some of the insurgents broke rank and acted prematurely. The Company and the army had been alerted by,

> " The isolated and premature outbreak of a band of 400 hungry Arabs, who broke into Mohammareh on the 24th of July, temporarily immobilized the small garrison and had possession of the town for a few hours. His Majesty's consul was isolated and unable to enter into communication with the APOC, whose senior official, Sir Arnold Wilson, considered that the seriousness of the situation justified a direct request for the urgent dispatch of a gunboat of troops from Iraq for the protection of the Company's interests. At the same time, he placed his [APOC's] transport at the disposal of the Persian military authorities for the transport of reinforcements from Ahvaz. These arrived with commendable promptitude during the night, and had so far restored the situation before the arrival of troops from Iraq that it was found unnecessary to disembark them"[103].

This event catalyzed a significant change in the provincial dynamic (see more detailed discussion in Chapter 7). It made the Company more convinced of the "efficacy of Persian methods in tribal warfare" and came to trust that the Central Government could effectively impose security and safeguard Company operations. It formalized the Company's change of alliance with the government against its erstwhile local allies, the Arab tribes. The use of motorized transport revolutionized the logistical geography of the region, as Iranian troops were transported within hours to confront the popular protests instead of taking days to arrive on foot and horseback. It also signaled how oil, or more precisely fuel oil for motorcars, produced in Abadan refinery, was facilitating new political alliances and the application of modern

---

[102] "Military Operations – Khuzestan", *Persia Annual Report 1925*, Burrell, *IPD*, 432.
[103] Ibid.

technology to engineer a whole new built environment of access roads and rapid transportation and communication. Last, it alerted the Oil Company as well as the provincial junta of the simmering danger of popular discontent, and the necessity of preventing further insurgencies, especially in congested and destitute urban areas with a teaming population of anonymous and desperate denizens.

In Mohammareh a new attaché replaced the former Kargozar, Haj Mirza Moqaddam, who was re-assigned to Tehran, thus conveniently annulling all the provisional agreements he had drawn out during his mediations between the residents and the Company: "The former Kargozar had several friendly meetings with the Company, which cannot be acknowledged as formal agreements"[104]. By insinuating, perhaps unfairly, a lack of integrity in his predecessor, the new Kargozar reported,

> "The Company claims all negotiations with the former Kargozar were informal and merely a good-will gesture, since the plaintiffs had all signed over their property titles to the Company. Report #295 claimed that APOC had agreed to pay a compensation of 18 thousand Rupees [indicating the Indian currency was more prevalent in the province and widely used by the Company instead of the Iranian national money], but they now deny this. Nor do we have any document proving the Company had ever agreed to pay such a sum. It may be appropriate to ask Hajj Mirza…Moghaddam, the former Kargozar, whether he has any legal proof in support of his report"[105]

The situation in Abadan had stayed relatively calm during the July events, but simmering anger now threatened to spill over into open confrontation in the highly tense city, as former allies and subjects of Sheikh Khaz'al felt betrayed and their anger added to an already confrontational situation:

> "Approximately a hundred evicted people gather on a daily basis to pressure the Kargozari. Some local thugs, who used to be formerly in the pay of the Company, are now causing trouble and agitating. A few days ago Seyyed Jaani Shirazi, a leader of Ebbadan [Abadan] thugs, attacked Mr… [illegible] the Company's head of operations with a stone. The latter was almost killed,

[104] No. 1369, 13 July 1925, INA 240009253
[105] Kargozar to Foreign Ministry, No. 889, 10 August 1925, INA 240009253

but managed to escape. The military government has made several arrests, but the situation is unruly"[106].

In spite of the tense situation, and encouraged by their newly established cooperative alliance with the government and the dismissal of the over-critical former Kargozar, APOC decided to dig in its heels. They informed Tehran that they had legally purchased these properties from their former owners with their signed consent, and paid a fair price that according to the terms of the concession was not to exceed the local fair market value of similar land[107]. It was conveniently overlooked that land prices had changed since 1921, when a "fair market value of land" had been last agreed with Khaz'al. The Acting Director F.C. Greenhouse met Teymourtash at his house in Tehran to hammer out a resolution.

"Following the 2nd of August meeting of the committee investigating the situation in Abadan at your home we arrived at the following conclusions:

- The demolition of buildings in the Company area of Abadan was deemed necessary and was carried out for the general welfare of the population and according to the recommendations of the Company physicians and public health professionals.

- Concerning the demolished houses that had been previously compensated it is unnecessary to carry out any further investigation. Beware that the same troubles that are being created for the Company in its small area may soon bedevil the Government in the city of Abadan

- The refusal of some Iranians in the Company Area to pay rent or Sanitation Duties. Company does not make any profit on these dues, and they are all spent on sanitation expenses.

- The new and large bazaar of Abadan: The area had been previously delineated and cleared by Khaz'al and the Company was supposed to build a bazaar for the Sheikh. To insure safety and sanitation it is best to complete the construction before the start of the rainy season"[108].

---

[106] Ibid.
[107] APOC to Foreign Ministry, Nos. 25/79/27/637, 15 August 1925, INA 240009253
[108] Greenhouse to Teymourtash, No.9/251, 18 August 1925,

The remainder of 1925 and 1926 were the short-lived period of honeymoon between the British Government, APOC, and the Central Government of Iran. By 1927 relations became testier, eventually breaking down during the acrimonious re-negotiations of the D'Arcy Concession between 1928-1933[109]. In the above cited summary of his meeting with Teymourtash, Greenhouse made several claims: That the whole idea of the Bazaar and the subsequent evictions had been the work of Sheikh Khaz'al and not APOC; that the Company's sole aim was the improvement of the general welfare and public sanitation, based on the recommendations of scientific and sanitary experts. He implied that the plaintiffs demanding redress were opportunists out to extort the Company, which had already paid fair compensation. He warned that opening the Pandora's box of compensations for confiscated property would be just as harmful to the Government that was now busy reclaiming all customary held land and properties as state land. He eased the Minister's mind by implying that the Company was not acting as a political authority by collecting taxes which, he acknowledged, was the purview of the government only, but merely charging rent and sanitary fees within its own area to maintain and improve the generally beneficial infrastructure. The urgency in Greenhouse's missive was evident, and he followed it up with another pressing request a month later when the government stayed cautious and did not act quickly enough:

> "[We had made an] arrangement last year (1924) to build a new bazaar in Abadan town at the request of the Shyakh of Mohammerah…The need for the bazaar is very urgent in the interest of the public and of the good sanitation and hygienic control…The Company would consent to build the bazaar if the government so wishes…It is suggested that the shopkeepers displaced by the recent demolitions be given first refusal of shops, and permission be given to the Company to lease out these shops at a rent to be agreed with the military governor sufficient to pay the cost of electric light, water, sanitation, and administration plus 10% per annum to cover the original cost of construction. The bazaar is designed for the sale of foodstuffs…and is almost as important as the provision of a good water supply"[110].

---

[109] Nasrollah Fatemi, *Oil Diplomacy; Powderkeg in Iran* (New York: Whittier Books, 1954); Mostafa Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992); Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:588–635.

[110] "Greenhouse to Ministry of Agriculture", No. P/316, 15 September 1925, INA 240029099

The Politics of Food:

The Company's claim about food supplies being of vital importance, on an equal par with clean water, housing, and sanitation were not off the mark. As long as Mohammareh had been a "dirty little village"[111] and Abadan, its rural island hinterland, food supplies were not yet a vital concern. As the oil industry was taking shape food supplies of Europeans were imported in tin cans by the sea, or as grain purchased locally or from Iraq. However, by mid 1920s, with post war conflicts, droughts, epidemics, famines, and the substantial growth of the population, the quantitative supply of basic foodstuff, as well as its quality, had become of vital and strategic importance. Khuzestan had been the historical grain basket of Iran and Mesopotamia until the 9th and 10th centuries (see chapter 1), but land degradation, water-logging due to lack of proper drainage, and political crises had drastically reduced the region's agricultural production, making it prone to recurring famines (see Chapters 2, 3, 5, 7). The problem of famine did not affect the Europeans as much as workers and the local population who were unable to afford market prices.

Since the opening of Karun to commercial shipping in late 19th century, much of the local food crops were exported to more lucrative markets. Ella Sykes in 1901 recorded 15 prominent merchants in Basra who controlled the date trade, and exported wool and wheat from Ahvaz. She also noted the drastic ecological changes that had taken place all along Karun, comparing Henry Layard's description of the thickly wooded banks of Karun with the "totally deforested" landscape she saw in her visit: "no gazelle, or even a hyena, let alone a lion"[112]. No shooting for Lady Ella! The combination of the voracious requirements of the oil industry for brick kilns and energy prior to the completion of the refinery, and the growing needs of the local population for cooking fuels had put great pressure on the already fragile ecology of the region[113].

---

[111] Ella Sykes, *Through Persia on a Side Saddle* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Georgias Press, 2008), 263–264.
[112] Ibid., 267–271.
[113] Working class families in Abadan used charcoal for cooking well into the 1940s. Poor Rural villagers, to this day, use a mixture of cow patties and straw, fuel still being too costly for their subsistence lives. Given Eftekhari's account of oil sludge being used as a cooking fuel in the 1920s we can surmise that the working population used whatever was available as cooking fuel. Nasim Khaksar, Oral Interview about everyday life in Abadan in the 1950s, Amersfoort, March 2014; Author's fieldnotes, Khuzestan, 1988-1990.

Arnold Wilson during his military service in Khuzestan had been very active in identifying potential irrigation schemes for large-scale food production in southwest Khuzestan[114]. The logistical awareness that the growing oil industry, as well as the British military, would require a secure, substantial, and sufficient, supply of food was already evident prior to WWI. Even the Qajar state had become aware of the commercial agrarian potential of the region after the noticeable interests of European prospectors in the late 19th Century[115], and sent Najm al-Molk, an able engineer, to Khuzestan in the 1880s, to assess the possibility of rebuilding broken irrigation dykes and waterworks on Karkheh and lower Karun (see Chapter 5). In 1904 a Major Morton was dispatched by the Government of India to investigate the feasibility of establishing a commercial irrigation scheme around Ahvaz[116]. In 1909 alarms rang when the British Legation learned that a Dutch syndicate had obtained an option for developing an irrigation scheme on the Karun, and warned off the Iranian government from considering the scheme because "A project of the character above stated is evidently calculated to produce a very considerable change, both commercial and political, in the existing situation on the Karun"[117]. Sheikh Khaz'al became interested in soliciting British help to develop such a scheme himself, and in March 1909 Sir Wiliam Willcocks, "a great engineer from Egypt"[118] arrived to assess the regional potential for irrigated agriculture on a large scale.

Willcocks was impressed and claimed that rebuilding the dam at Nahr-e Hashem on the Karkheh that had fallen into disrepair in mid 19th century would unleash the agricultural potential of 1.5 million acres, especially in northern Khuzestan, but would cost an estimated £500 thousand to develop. While Willcocks felt that better natural drainage and soil quality made Khuzestan's commercial agricultural potential greater than Mesopotamia's, he also warned that any such scheme would adversely affect date gardens downstream, around Mohammareh, which relied on siltation and downstream water flow[119]. What the European

---

[114] Arnold T Wilson, *A Precis of the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes and Shaikhs of Arabistan*, 1911, Appendix A.
[115] Curzon, "The Karun River and the Commercial Geography of Southwest Persia"; W.F. Ainsworth, *The River Karun* (London, 1888); Lynch, "Notes on the Present State of the Karun River, between Shuster and the Shatel-Arab"; Shahnavaz, *Britain and the Opening of South-West Persia 1880-1914*.
[116] A.T.Wilson to Cadman, 18 February 1926, BP 71183
[117] *Persia Annual Report 1909,* Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.4, 423–424.
[118] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 96–97.
[119] *Persia Annual Report 1909,* Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.4, 423–424.

prospectors, as well as the engineer Najm al-Molk who had made similar assessments four decades before, all shared was the conviction that the land was a wasted resource, left negligently underdeveloped by 'the natives':

> "[Karkheh] is the finest site for a dam I have ever seen. It has of course been used in the long distance past and was unsuccessfully repaired some 50 years ago. Now a great vested interest has grown up in the marshes [reference to the Arab tribes inhabiting the wetlands] in which the river wastes itself. A little rice, a little maize, and thousands of miles of reed beds are all that the river serves. It might water 50,000 acres of wheat, and still leave plenty for rice fields."[120]

The following year a Russian national also obtained an irrigation concession on the Karun, this time prompting the British Foreign Office to step in directly and apply pressure on the Shah to put aside, once and for all, the idea of granting any foreign concessions for irrigation works in Khuzestan[121].Wilson felt frustrated and blamed the mistrust between Tehran and Sheikh Khaz'al for the failure of any attempt to develop the full agricultural and food potential of the wasted land and water. However, his insightful comments demonstrate the awareness that this was not simply an issue to be resolved among political elites and governments. Wilson already foresaw in 1911 that local people and collective social structures would resist their dispossession if drastic changes in landownership, irrigation systems, and agricultural development, were implemented at their expense instead of for them:

> "This country is evidently easy to irrigate and would be extremely fertile, but the obstacles are many. The *land is in communal ownership*, and a redesigned system of agriculture would benefit one tribe and community at the expense of another. It is harder to deal with communities than individuals. The government is an alien government, i.e. of Tehrani Persians. If their authority was supreme here they would get all the revenue and spend it elsewhere.

---

[120] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 97.
[121] *Persia, Annual Report 1910*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.5, 116–117; Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 101

> Irrigation works need organization, honesty, and steady outgoings on maintenance. None of these are to be expected in Persia"[122]

However, none of these modernizing agrarian and irrigation schemes for commercial food production on a large scale came to fruition, and the quantity as well as the safe quality of food in Khuzestan remained primary concerns, and directly linked to political stability. In 1926 Arnold Wilson urged APOC to approach the Iranian Government and ask it to entrust the Company with building irrigation schemes and large scale food production projects, by offering the added incentive of funding the project with a loan, to the tune of £100-£150 thousand, at a "low interest rate of 6%, as long as the construction is entrusted to us. This would benefit the Company by reducing food prices, and increase tranquility of the area, and create a steadier labor market"[123].

The inevitable reliance of Abadanis on the market for food supplies was a double-edged sword. On the one hand the dispossessed peasants, pastoralists, and migrants became a reserve army of cheap and interchangeable labor, congregated in town, and eager to get hired for low wages to feed themselves by purchasing all their necessities in the market. On the other hand, food insecurity, coupled with epidemics, chronic poverty, and social dislocations, created a cauldron of resentment and potential insurgency. Yousef Eftekhari, who managed to get hired at the Technical Workshop in Abadan, one of the pet educational schemes of the Company for training skilled Iranian workers (chapter 5) recalls his wages, and his living and working conditions as permanently precarious:

> "My wages were 8 Touman, which eventually increased to 10T. Rahim Hamdad [his comrade] also received 8T. Together we rented a house for ourselves [as a safe house] for 4T. The two of us had to live on the remaining 14T for the whole month. We were truly under duress… Back then a bag of

---

[122] Ibid., 142. This power struggle over land, water, and agriculture has remained very much part of the present day dynamics of authoritarian development in Khuzestan. See Grace Goodell, *Elementary Structures of Political Life: Rural Development in Pahlavi Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Kaveh Ehsani, "Sweet Dreams; Sugarcane and the Politics of Development in Pre and Post-Revolution Iran" (Conference presented at the Development After Development, New York University, 2003); Kaveh Ehsani, "Rural Society and Agricultural Development in Post-Revolution Iran: The First Two Decades.," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006); Kaveh Ehsani, "Urban Provincial Periphery in Iran: Revolution and War in Ramhormoz," in *Contemporary Iran*, ed. Ali Gheissari (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 38–76.

[123] A.T.Wilson to Cadman, 18 February 1926, BP 71183

> flour alone cost 5T in Abadan. Workers couldn't pay in cash and had to get credit; and the unscrupulous shopkeepers charged them 6T for a bag of flour… Casual workers couldn't afford anything besides bread. Most of them never had warm food, tea, fruits, let alone any meat…Life in Khuzestan was nearly impossible without ice and water, especially in summertime, and for those who had to work more than eight hours under the blazing sun. The Company did not provide any water; let alone ice…the luckier workers managed to get hold of a clay pot or a canvas bag. This helped filtrate the murky water a little bit, and also to keep it cooler. If you weren't so lucky as to have a clay jar or a canvas bag you ended up having to drink water that tasted like oil and was hot"[124].

However, food provision was not a problem only for the poor, but even affected Indians and Europeans. "The local community pays any price for high quality vegetables… [one of the main reasons why] the cost of living is increasing"[125]. In the days before container refrigeration or climate controlled railroad and truck transport made possible the transfer of large quantities of relatively fresh food[126], the absence of fresh produce, dairies, and normal food was a major issue affecting the quality of life, even for Europeans. In the late 1930s, long after a modern bazaar had been finally built in Abadan, the problem of safe and sufficient food supplies persisted. To assess the rising costs and mounting discontent a food and nutrition expert by the name of William Jardine was hired to provide an assessment of food conditions in Abadan and the Fields. His report concluded that one of the major and recurring complaints by "the staff" was about the quality and unpredictability of the supply of bacon, vegetables, and meat. "The complete lack of choice, combined with low quality and low standards of cooking affects the physical and mental condition of the staff…the lack of other amenities and the climate are badly enhanced by food problems" [127]

---

[124] Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e Dowran-e Separi Shodeh*, 35, 119–120.
[125] BP 49700
[126] David Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 204–225.
[127] "William D.D. Jardine: A report on the food facilities at Abadan and the Fields", 1937/1938, BP 49700

The Company had established a dairy farm "to supply the staff continuously with milk. Jardine was asked to evaluate the dairy farm and make suggestions for improving the situation, since "the irregularity of food quality and quantity enhances abnormality of life in Iran". Jardine concluded that given the location of Abadan little could be imported from outside the province, "some fruits perhaps, but no vegetables. Meat is a problem that cannot be remedied locally, but frozen meat [packed in dry ice, before refrigerated containers] can be imported…butter can be produced locally, same with pigs". Jardine's suggestion was to solve the food problem by improving local supplies, by employing an agrarian specialist, and insuring the maintenance of "disease free areas…taking precautions against diseases… and the threats of contamination". However, all this required an increase in the supply of local grains, maize and barley.

The logistic of food demand and consumption intertwined the Company areas and the indigenous communities, as did epidemic viruses, and work in the refinery. As it were, "the Company is obliged to operate for itself and its employees a comprehensive food supply scheme"[128]. The considerable expense and the practical difficulties entailed in these schemes were an irritating inconvenience for a commercial oil company. In 1937 APOC had to import some 32 tons of bacon, ham, butter, cheese, lard, cream, and jams; together with 36 thousand tins of canned milk[129], not a negligible expense during a period of economic stringency.

Militant Particularism in Abadan:

The Company's plan to evict residents and merchants, paying compensation to those who had some form of official property title (it is unclear how many did, and from what authority) based on outdated property values, and then to charge them rent for re-admitting them as Company tenants, under its own strict supervision, did not sit well with the residents. These were the same "unscrupulous shopkeepers" that Eftekhari pointed out were fleecing workers with high interests. But the common struggle over threatened shared urban space was creating momentary common alliances, in what David Harvey calls "militant particularism"[130]. It was true that the

[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996).

new bazaar would offer many new amenities, such as electricity, water, a clean and modern space; but it was doing so on Company terms, after it had dispossessed and evicted the people who lived there, and it was unclear who could afford the transition once they had lost what they already had. Some of the shopkeepers and merchants found an attorney in Bushehr to plead their case. They put together a petition and sent it not only to the Majles and the Cabinet, but also to the newspaper *Iran*, which published it:

> "Once again the Company intends to demolish houses and evict the miserable population in the name of making a street. Two years ago they destroyed a major section of Abadan and despite numerous petitions and complaints they have not paid any compensation. Now they are at it again. We implore you to stop this injustice that is destroying Abadan's urban fabric (*shahriat-e Abadan*) and preventing its development"[131].

The petition was signed by a score of residents and merchants, some of whom cited their trades as clockmakers, cloth makers, grocers, coffee shop owners, urban landlords, bakers, merchants, etc. Again, from the geographic and ethnic attributes of their names we can surmise many were immigrants from mostly southern parts of Iran adjacent to the province (Isfahan, Kazeroun, Shiraz); others came from nearby towns in the province itself (Behbahan, Ramhormoz). A number of them had explicitly Arabic names (Khezr-e Arab, Fahd Qawab Arab, Seyyed Abdollah Arab, etc.). Many simply cited their name, so it was unclear what they did, or where they came from; simply that they were part of the common cause of laying claim to their shared urban space. The struggle moved to the Cabinet and Reza Khan, in one of his last acts as Prime Minister before ascending the throne in December, signed the following cabinet ruling:

> "The APOC's plan to build a bazaar will subsequently improve Abadan. Therefore the Cabinet approves their plan under the following conditions:
> - The land belongs to the Government, who shall be party to the transactions.
> - The Company shall build the Bazaar at its own expense

[131] Law attorney Tehranizadeh, Bushehr, to the Majles, Prime Minister, The Government Cabinet, IRAN Newspaper, 6 October 1925, INA 240009253

- The Government ought to approve the plans for the bazaar. To speed things up the Military Governor of Abadan can inspect the plans
- The Company shall pay the property (*Mostaqellat*) taxes on shops leased by it
- To maintain price control rents shall not exceed 7% profit on capital expended together with expenditures on repairs, government charges, and water, electricity, and sanitation charges, which are to be borne by the Company
-Foreign subjects are forbidden to own property and real estate, yet as all Company's institutions under the terms of Concession revert to the Government this permission is granted to the Company as an exception[132]

APOC management was unhappy that its intentions to take full control of a strategic section of the city had been frustrated again. The Company intended to clear out the undesirable elements in order to design the area according to its own specifications. It felt this was necessary to maintain exclusive control and impose discipline. The Company justified the venture in commercial terms, and calculated that the rents and fees it intended to charge would cover the costs. But these plans now seemed in tatters, since the Government wanted a piece of the action and intended to impose its own oversight over the whole process. Greenhouse wrote an exasperated letter to Teymourtash:

> "Tardy correspondence has yet again delayed the completion of the bazaar until 1926. In view of the urgent need to provide accommodation for the poorer classes of shopkeepers – the sellers of meat, fish, and vegetables – our offer was made as generous as possible, and for this reason no mention was made of the heavy capital cost of the construction which will become the property of the government in a few years time [once the D'Arcy Concession expired, in 1961]. It is regrettable that our offer has been refused."[133].

Greenhouse went on to make a detailed reply to the Cabinet decree, the main points of which were: first, a refusal to pay ground rent to the Government on the

[132] Cabinet Ruling; Signed by "Prime Minister Reza", 5 October 1925, INA 24002909
[133] Greenhouse to Minister of Agriculture, 7 October 1925, INA 240029099

ground that "*the charge of ground rent by government on wasteland* is opposed to the terms of Concession". Second, he accepted to pay commercial property (*Mostaqellat*) taxes, but, third, it wanted to know why no mention had been made in the Cabinet decree of how APOC should recoup their "capital costs of £50,000"? Last, he emphasized yet again the urgency of the situation and the vital need for the project to proceed as quickly as possible[134]. In order to show some flexibility, Greenhouse made a slightly more generous offer a week later: "At great sacrifice to Company, and in public interest, we agree to restrict the rent to be charged on bazaar shops to 8.5% of capital expended on construction, electricity, filtered water supply, sanitary & miscellaneous services supplied by Company at cost (from 10%)"[135].

Teymourtash tried to placate the Company, and informed the Foreign Minister that he was willing to support the idea of the government to mediate the conflict with the residents so long as the state became the sovereign authority over legal transactions, tax collections, and the ultimate landowner:

> "A meeting was held at my house to deal with the issue [with Greenhouse present]. It was decided that the Military Government of Khuzestan should look into this affair and, first, collect land rent from Iranians residing in the Company areas on behalf of the Company, after confirming that all the legal documents are in order. Second, the agents of the Ministry of Interior [the Municipality] will collect the public health/sanitation taxes from the residents, in order to reimburse the expenses that are currently being paid by the Company out of pocket."[136]

However, even the powerful minister's missive was difficult to accept for a fledgling bureaucracy that was suspicious of the extra territorial powers of the Company, and felt highly insecure during a time of transition under the arbitrary and authoritarian scrutiny of Reza Shah. The bewildered responses of various institutions showed that the deceptive appearance of what Tim Mitchell calls a "state effect"[137], concealed the reality that interconnected and institutionalized state machinery simply

---

[134] Ibid.
[135] Greenhouse/APOC to Minister of Agriculture, No. P/362, 14 October 1925, INA 240029099
[136] Teymourtash, Minister of Agriculture to Minister of Foreign Affairs, No. 5753, 15 October 1925, INA 240009253
[137] Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in *State/Culture*, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 76–97.

did not exist at that stage. The Ministry of Justice, in charge of redrawing property laws, sounded baffled and ignorant of what had transpired previously and inquired "what does the Company intend to do?" At the same time the Foreign Ministry was confronted with a continuing stream of ever more elaborate telegrams and messages from its local attachés and Abadan residents denouncing "the Company's illegal plans to make streets and to demolish homes and buildings"[138]. Meanwhile, the new Kargozar seemed to be far more sympathetic to the Company's position, and filed the following report:

> "The Company is refusing to pay the 130 thousand Rps' compensation demanded by the evicted and displaced population. There is a big difference between what the residents ask and what the Company is willing to consider. The demolished houses are of two types: Some have been demolished in the Company area [Braim, Refinery], others in the so called "Sheikh" neighborhood by the government of the time (Khaz'al) in order to build a bazaar for Sheykh Abdollah. At present both groups of population are mixed together. The Company's dealings' with the residents seems to be fair, but their demands are too high. Nevertheless the Company is willing to help."[139]

It now appeared that people evicted from different areas - Braim, the Sheikh neighborhood, and the Shahr - were making common alliance to resist their dispossession, and to demand at least proper compensation. The central bone of contention was becoming the issue of the legal ownership of what, by now, had become urban land.

The Politics of property in interwar Abadan:

Who 'owned' this urban land? What was the meaning of property under these changing circumstances? Chapter 3 discussed the incongruence of different notions of property when APOC was making its land deals with the Bakhtiyaris and Khaz'al. In the process of its negotiations APOC had relied on the liberal and Lockean notion of private property as a natural right insured by a free contract, which had led to the

---

[138] "Ministry of Justice to Teymourtash, Minister of Agriculture", No. 9072, 25 October 1926; Series of telegraphs to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 November 1926 to 25 January 1927, IA 240009253
[139] "Kargozari: Follow up on report No. 199", No. 25, 26 December 1925, INA 240009253

privatization of the collective territories of the Bakhtiyari following the collusion of their khans with the Company. The D'Arcy Concession had given APOC the right of free possession of dead (mavvat) and uncultivated (bayer) land. None of these categories applied to Abadan since it had become a boomtown after 1912.

> "In the Fields population centers had developed in isolated areas. There the Company performs the municipal duties. Abadan is somewhat different. There were some cultivators in the vicinity of the refinery area, but villages and a rapidly expanding town came into being, adjacent to but outside the Company area"[140]

As a result, the Company's repeated references to residents having signed over their properties in exchange for fair compensation begged the question of what kind of documents had been signed over, who had obtained these titles, from whom, and under what circumstances? From Eftekhari's memoirs and the petitions of residents we know there were many people renting their residence at a significant share of their meager wages. These renters, in all likelihood most of them oil workers, were also being displaced with little alternative shelter available in the highly congested boomtown. Their claims for a "right to the city" did not figure at all in the contractual game of compensation for formal titles. It was most likely that any titles had been purchased from the patriarchal authority of Khaz'al, who had held control of the Island until he was deposed. But the Central Government had never recognized his authority over what it called "state land" (khalesejat), and now that Khaz'al had been deposed all his legal dealings were considered moot. Consequently, the claim of the Company that it had paid fair compensation for a title issued by Khaz'al met a sympathetic ear from government bureaucrats.

In any case, these titles in Abadan were no longer about agrarian land of any sort, so the categories specified in the Concession could hardly apply to them; nor did the clauses referring to the fair local value of cultivated land, since migrants and indigenous people had transformed these areas into urban residential land. Having been dispossessed once from their customary and collective geographic resources to make room for the primary accumulation of extractive oil capitalism, the now urban

---

[140] "Terms and Conditions of Employment; Chapter 6; Municipal Development", p.34, June 1946, BP 41516

migrants were being again dispossessed to make room for the built urban environment of oil that would facilitate the accumulation of capital in the industrial processing of oil capitalism. The Company was willing to compromise its desire to take full control of the urban space, and was glad to delegate the politically charged task of evicting and dispossessing the population to the government, so long as its specific requirements for creating a segregated sanitary city were implemented. The state, on the other hand, was faced with the dilemma of citizen demands for fair treatment, justice, and protection, during a period of momentous transition when the institutions and the governmental practices of a new centralized nation state were being erected, legitimized by a nationalist claim of representing the interests of the nation and improving people's material lives.

The deadlock following these confrontations put the politics of property in the city at the center of the consolidation of the oil complex in the interwar years. Given these mounting frictions, and the generally unstable political situation, the Company decided to withdraw its proposal and bide its time[141].

Illusions of Segregation: Servants and the Politics of Domestic Households

As it turned out Greenhouse's urgency in the autumn of 1925 had not been misplaced. The climate and major political events conspired to postpone the whole affair. The rainy season came and made large-scale construction impractical. The Majles voted to depose the Qajar Dynasty and appoint a new monarchy, headed by Reza Shah Pahlavi. The political transition was so momentous that it put the whole affair on hiatus as far as the central government was concerned, but not for the Company, who faced the double urgency of addressing critical sanitary conditions, coupled with the desire to take exclusive control of urban space.

In 1926, the Company prepared itself for a long-term re-organization given the new circumstances (Chapter 5). The discussions and meetings between directors in London, and field managers in Iran were arranged around John Cadman's official visit for the coronation in April 1926. Arnold Wilson highlighted some of the essential matters up for review during Cadman's visit. Chief among these were:

> "The new market and the main gate are essential features of the sanitary and housing improvement…the selected site aims at moving [the new] bazaar

[141] "Note on Abadan Bazaar position", no date, no author (probably A.T.Wilson), BP 71183

> away from insanitary lower section of the Sheikh's village and to fit it into the sites where new villages are being erected... Sewerage (waterborne) will be extended to these new villages."[142]

Once again the themes that dominated Company plans were erecting gates, segregating space, creating exclusive sanitary conditions, and providing an urban infrastructure (waterborne sewage) only for these Company areas. The fact that dumping the human sewage from Company areas into the river where it would infect the water intake of the rest of the "native city" a few hundred meters downstream was an inconvenient fact that was often acknowledged on scientific grounds, but ironically did not undermine the segregationist plans (It will be recalled that at this stage only 7 piped water public outlets had been established for the entire *Shahr*, which Company correspondence estimated to have a population of 25 thousand). As we have seen, on numerous occasions Company officials had stressed the fact that urban sanitary prevention measures had to be inclusive and universal, otherwise they simply would not work. Europeans, skilled Indian workers, and casual Iranian workers shared the workspace of the refinery and had to physically interact on a quotidian basis. For another thing, European expatriates were heavily dependent on domestic servants for cooking, cleaning, disposing of garbage, gardening their lawns, washing their cloths, carrying their goods, attending and caring for their children, etc. These routine everyday physical interactions simply undermined the scientific justification for racial and class spatial segregation, and revealed them for what they were: The urban design of a built environment for the maintenance of unequal relations of power and dominance based on racial and class differences.

Although there is more material available for the post-WW2 period, I have not come across specific information regarding servants and domestic workers during this interwar years. Nevertheless, through routine and casual references found in archival materials over the years, we know that servants and household domestics always formed significant numbers in Abadan. In the last years of the AIOC operations before nationalization there were more than two thousand servants working for

---

[142] A.T.Wilson: "Some matters suggested for Sir John Cadman's attention while on visit to Persia", Dossier 2, Letters from A.T. Wilson to A.C. Hearn, 23 February 1926, BP 71183

Europeans in Company areas[143]. Many servants lived in the Shahr, or routinely interacted with people there. Initially many domestic servants were Indians, especially cooks from Goa were highly appreciated. After the re-negotiated 1933 Oil Agreement, the Company committed to replace Indian workers with Iranians, but as in 1920 and 1922 when the striking Indians had been expelled (Chapter 5), this new attempt to replace Indians did not create problems only in the workplace, but also in households where skilled cooks were deemed essential for domestic comfort and culinary satisfaction:

> "Lack of good cooks depresses men further…Iranians are bad cooks, but eager to learn…they have no experience of a varied diet and do not present food in appetizing form. They only know how to fry and boil… Even if the cookery schools train many, they can't get to serve 500 bungalows. A man can't be expected to go home and prepare or supervise his own food…the cook's position is perhaps today the most irritating factor in the food position at Abadan... [Given that by late 1930s Abadan had many married couples in residence it was important not to take things too far:] It is not suggested, at the moment, that the lady inhabitants of Abadan should actually do their own cooking in the cookhouses attached to the bungalows. But they can supervise the preparation of food and control the cook"[144].

This report is rich on so many levels – and one does wonder about the statement by an Englishman about bland cooking - but more significant are the politics of gender, the division of household labor, and the perceived role of the "lady" of the house, topics of great significance that will be analyzed elsewhere (in chapter 7 I touch upon the politics of household in the Company enclaves, but a fuller treatment of the topic will be undertaken in a future study). However, what we need to emphasize here is that the notion of spatial segregation justified on the grounds of sanitation was merely an illusion, obfuscating and reinforcing the underlying unequal relations of power in an industrial city. To the extent that fresh food was available it had to be produced and purchased locally, which was one of the reasons for the

[143] "Preventing the flood Workers to Oil Regions, Finding Employment for Abadan's Unemployed, Restarting the Refinery", 1950-1951, INA 240017450
[144] William D.D. Jardine: A report on the food facilities at Abadan and the Fields", 1937/1938, BP 49700

urgency of building a modern bazaar. Servants purchased food and prepared it in the European areas. They cleaned, kept order, and did the laundry. Even in married couples' quarters there were routine and physical everyday interactions with domestic workers, who may have appeared invisible when crossing the rigid fences and gates raised around the Company areas to keep out contamination. Consequently, the illusion of ensuring protection from epidemic hazards by enforcing and maintaining spatial segregations with the indigeneous population did not jibe with practical realities.

In the aftermath of the 1933 re-negotiated oil agreement, Iran's insistence on the further Iranianization as part of the new Concession led to significant changes in the built environment, as the provision of housing and urban amenities for Iranian employees became a new requirement. JM Wilson, the Company architect and urban planner, proposed the development of an "Abadan Garden City for *the mixed population* of first, second, and third class employees". As the explicit exclusion of Iranian nationals from Company benefits was becoming politically untenable, hierarchical distinction by assigned employment grade became the new norm for access to urban amenities and living conditions. The idea of "the garden city", it will be recalled, was initiated by Ebenezer Howard at the turn of the century, as a utopian utilitarian solution for overcoming the urban malaise of class strife, inequality, and unsanitary living and working conditions, by creating garden cities in the countryside, combining workplace and living quarters by employers and employees side by side[145]. As quickly as it was conceptualized, the idea had become the inspirational basis of the rising urban planning movement in the era of social reform, but not as Howard had intended. The idea was adopted as the basis of residential suburbanization for the middle classes in Britain and the US; and of planned exclusive areas in the colonies[146]. The original idea of organically combining work and everyday life in the same self-sustaining green geography was dropped. Women, in particular, became highly isolated and alienated in these posh spaces where they were relegated to domestic

[145] Ward, "The Garden City Tradition Re-Examined"; Peter Batchelor, "The Origin of the Garden City Concept of Urban Form," *Journal of Society of Architectural Historians* 28, no. 3 (1969): 184–200; Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*.
[146] R.K. Home, "Town Planning and Garden Cities in the British Colonial Empire 1910-1940," *Planning Perspectives* 1990, no. 5 (1990): 23–37.

work only or, as was suggested above, to the task of overseeing servants doing the household tasks according to prescribed middle class standards[147].

J.M. Wilson was a Scottish architect who had served as assistant to Edwyn Lutyens during his reconstruction of Delhi. The most prominent architect of the turn of the century, Lutyens had been among the first to implement a gentrified version of Howard's garden city idea for building middle class suburbs around London's Hamspted Heath. He then implemented the concept on a much vaster and imperial scale to Delhi by creating exclusive enclaves[148]. His assistant, JM Wilson, was later hired to design buildings in colonized Iraq after WWI, building the Baghdad train station and the university there. He was then engaged in 1925-1926 to oversee a much grander project, not for an Imperial employer, but for a private corporation APOC, to develop long term urban development plans for Abadan. This was one of the largest company town projects in the world[149], excluding the equally massive projects that were taking shape in the Soviet Union during the 1930s[150].

The idea of designing new urban areas for "a mixed population" of Europeans and elite Iranian employees sat very uneasily with the Company directors. The plans were for the development of Bawarda and additional parts of Braim into major housing estates for clerks, staff, and higher skilled artisans. D. Jameson, the General Manager, objected to Wilson's proposal expressing his fear of contamination:

> "We will encounter great trouble for that area in case of epidemics, since there is much communication there that are not under Company's control… it is preferable to have the European staff isolated from others. In other eastern

---

[147] Aldridge, "Only Demi-Paradise? Women in Garden Cities and New Towns"; Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*.
[148] Irving, *Indian Summer*.
[149] I have analyzed the development of company towns elsewhere. On average, industrial and mining company towns were built for relatively small populations of employees, averaging around 5 to 10 thousand. Abadan was on an altogether different scale, and the fact that a significant segment of the population always remained excluded, but adjacent to the Company areas, defined its hybrid character and political and social dynamics. See Ehsani, "Social Engineering and Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns"; Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns* (London: Verso, 1995); Oliver J. Dinius and Angela Vergara, eds., *Company Towns in the Americas: Landscape, Power, and Working-Class Communities* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011).
[150] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (University of California Press, 1997).

countries Europeans live apart as they don't have the same immunity to disease as natives do"[151].

Bawarda, in particular, was considered with hesitation due to its proximity to the *Shahr*: "Bawarda is not ideal for a European area, as when cholera broke out it would be all around there, and many inhabitants of the 'new colony' would be carriers of typhoid and dysentery". Elkington, the General Manager at Abadan, was particularly concerned that "the large number of servants already in the Bungalow area (Braim) are probably already carriers".

However, with the new agreement imposing "Persianization" on the Company, avoiding the risk of contamination to Europeans could no longer function as a scientific justification for maintaining the racial and class system of power that kept being reinforced through spatial segregation. Jameson remarked, "One of the greatest difficulties in the future would be that every Persian who could read or write would imagine that he was a first class employee." Brewster reassured him that some degree of segregation would always be maintained: "Even if the whole Company were completely Persianized, there would still be class distinctions, and the executives would move to the present Bungalow Area (Braim)", an accurate prediction of what transpired in the following years[152].

The sanitary idea continued to act as justification for spatial segregation, and became a permanent feature of the built environment of oil. While maintaining explicit racial segregation became increasingly untenable due to political circumstances over the following years, other forms of spatial hierarchy by rank, employment status, and social class persisted and became ingrained into the urban fabric of the refinery city and imbued its habitus. We will now return to our story of the decisive period of transition in 1926-1927, to close the story of the bazaar and see how the urban frictions and struggles developed and shaped Abadan in its aftermath.

---

[151] "Visit to Persia, February/March 1934: Notes of meetings held at Abadan, 22 February to 1 March 1934", Volume 2, 152, BP 67590
[152] Ibid.

Photograph 21: Abadan - Braim



Source: BP Archives

The Honeymoon of 1926:

In the winter of1926, after Reza Shah had ascended the throne, the government re-opened the case of the Bazaar. Now the terms of the inquiry had become the legal ownership of urban territory, as a review of the case by a government ministry stated:

> "The Oil Company planned in 1924 to build a bazaar in order to improve sanitation. They prepared the plans and the building material, but had to stop due to rainy season. Now they ask, first, if the designated land is considered state land, then it should be transferred to the Company free of charge…. third, they pledge to control prices by keeping the rents they will charge for shops not to exceed 8.5% of profit on expended capital. Last, the Company undertakes to collect all additional charges that are due to it for services such as lighting, purified water, sanitation, and public order; as well as the government duties, from the tenants"[153].

[153] Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Finance, No. 8590, 11 January 1926, INA 240029099

Having realized that under the new political and local circumstances the Company's insistence on obtaining exclusive control over a public area such as the Bazaar would only make the government more suspicious, Arnold Wilson came up with an alternative scheme of recruiting a local Iranian merchant, a Mirza Hossein Movaqqar, who was also the Majles deputee from the area, to take charge of the new bazaar project and to build and operate it according to Company plans and with its considerable assistance. Wilson arranged a meeting in Tehran between Cadman, Homan, The American adviser in charge of Khuzestan's finances, Movaqqar, and senior Company directors, to hammer out an agreement to have Movaqqar front the project in order to avoid objections by the government and local protesters. An agreement was made for the Company to draw up and submit a plan based on "sanitary concerns and controls", and to extend a loan of 75,000 Rps, at a low interest rate of five percent, for Movaqqar to build the bazaar on 4 blocks, with the provision of further expansion as soon as the situation became more favorable. At the meeting Homan was urged to obtain the approval of the provincial governor for the scheme and to make sure the crucial issue of a final transfer of property rights would take place[154].

However, the Company was already planning further expansions, and had come to the decision to acquire significantly greater stretches of urban land for its projected urban and industrial operations, just as the government was imposing new property laws and setting up land registration institutions. At a meeting between Dr Young, Cadman, and Jacks, it was decided that while the Company should keep a low profile, they ought to ask the government for the grant of some 500 ha of land in Abadan (1,300 jerib)[155]. Included in this land request were some 66 ha north of the refinery to Bahmanshir River, 36 ha to the west of the refinery for recreational space, and 45 ha between the village of Bawarda and the Sheikh Village (the site of the proposed bazaar). The Company was designating all this as "uncultivated land" and intended to demand the government for its free transfer.

---

[154] "Notes of meeting between Homan, Movaqqar, Cadman, Jacks, Elkington", 18 March 1926; "Item 19: Bazaar", 18-19 March 1926, BP 71183

[155] On the politics and history of determining the variable local unit of land measurement Jerib, to permanent and definite metric system during the 1909-1918 land negotiations with the Bakhtiyaris see chapter 3. Lambton gives the local Jerib as 1,108 m^2. See Ann K .S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia* (London: IB Tauris, 1991); Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, *Ganj-e Shayegan* (Berlin: Kaveh, 1946), 195.

In a demonstration of the continued fluidity of the political situation, it was decided at the meeting to keep active contact with Sheikh Khaz'al, who was in exile in Tehran, in case he returned to power[156]. Dr Young visited Khaz'al in Tehran to assess his situation. Instead of a possible political player who could make a comeback and again become a force in the province he encountered an old, impoverished, and broken man who asked Young for assistance: "The old man is of course very downhearted. He has no means and he is in need of a loan, but I told him that at the present moment we did not consider it in his own interest to borrow money from us". He advised Khaz'al to throw himself on the mercy of Millspaugh, and even if the government would not restore all his property perhaps they would at least provide him with an allowance to live out his days[157].

Realizing that the old political arrangements were well and good in the past, there was now real concern among Company directors about the numerous old agreements signed with the Bakhtiyaris and Khaz'al coming under serious government scrutiny and reconsideration (see chapters 3, 7). The Foreign Ministry had asked the Finance Ministry to make a ruling about the legal status of khalesheh (state) lands in Abadan, and were told that, "This bazaar is not part of the Concession, and needs to be renegotiated"[158].

An apprehensive Cadman told Foroughi the Premier, and Davar the Minister of Public Works, that the Company was not to blame for the deals it had had to make with the local magnates. Given that until very recently the Government had had neither land registration offices in the provinces, nor a tangible institutional presence to enforce its rules, the Company had had no option but to deal with the local magnates. Cadman also made an implicit threat by reviving the old wartime disputes when APOC had suspended royalty payments after German sabotage of its pipelines in 1915, and hinted that APOC could ask for compensation from the government for failing to protect it as the concession demanded (chapter 2)[159].

However, these fears proved ungrounded, and a meeting with Millspaugh at the end of April had somewhat allayed the Company's fears regarding future

[156] "Notes on conference held at Tehran on 22nd April 1926", Dossier 8, BP 71183
[157] Dr Young to Cadman, Dossier 10, 25 May 1926, BP 71183
[158] Foreign Ministry to Finance Ministry: "Please inform us of the legal status of the khaleseh lands of Abadan", 3 February 1926 No. 47109; "Finance Ministry to Foreign Ministry, In response to No. 41109", No. 22188, 27 February 1926, INA 240009253
[159] "Minutes of meeting between Cadman, Jacks, Dr Young, with Foroughi, Prime Minister, Davar, Minister of Public Works, Millspaugh", 6 May 1926, BP 71183

government claims for the land deals made with the Bakhtiyaris and Sheikh Khaz'al. Millspaugh went further and offered the Company an immediate allocation of the desired "uncultivated land" in Abadan that they were requesting[160].

During these pivotal meetings with the Cabinet, Cadman discovered that the primary concern of the Iranian government was not so much local popular discontent about its treatment by the Company, but the Iranianization of the labor force, and the terms of the concessions regarding royalties (see chapter 5). The state was willing to be flexible regarding the spatial arrangements and land confiscations the Company was asking in Abadan, so long as they did not impinge on the ultimate formal sovereignty of the government and its representatives.

In Abadan also the negotiations had proceeded regarding the Bazaar. Harold Homan, the American provincial financial director was following up the scheme of making Movaqqar the front man for the Bazaar project

> "This office has entered negotiations with Mirza Hossein Movaqqar who is currently a Majles depute, to build a large bazaar on state land (khaleseh) in Abadan. *This decision was made when complaints began to be received from residents of Abadan against the Company's [excessive] demands.* An agreement has been reached between Movaqqar and the government, and approved by the Company, to build a bazaar according to plans approved by this ministry and the Company's engineer, to charge rents not above the current rates, and to respect all prevailing laws regarding state lands (khalesehjat).
>
> In addition, I must *bring to your attention that there is much unused land adjoining this bazaar, but there are very few Iranians with the wherewithal or the willingness to undertake such construction, with the exception of Movaqqar* [my emphasis]."[161]

In effect, the state was embracing the proposal offered by the Company and confirming the whole urban modernization scheme, so long as a member of the Iranian new political elite was prominently involved. The notion of "Iranianization"

---

[160] Minutes of meeting between Millspaugh, Jacks, and Fairly, 30 April 1926, BP 71183

[161] "Harold Houman, Head of Khuzestan Finance Office to Head of Iran's Finances, (Millspaugh), in reply to correspondence No. 41706, dated 22 January 1926", No. 1610, (unclear day) May 1926, INA 240029099

was becoming a catchphrase for Iranian elite nationalists as a substitute to any real renegotiation of power that would also involve the local population, and the acknowledgment of the collective rights of urban citizens. The Company's claim that the areas it already occupied, as well as those further territories it was now demanding were unused and unoccupied wasteland surrounding the oil works in Abadan was being accepted by the state, in spite of vociferous objections and pleas by local residents, as well as the reports of the local government Kargozars. In March the government sent an envoy to the province, Mr. Nasr, in order to get a first hand assessment of the situation in a region that was still clearly an unknown territory to the new state actors. Nasr provided a detailed intelligence report, providing alarming information about the extent of Company monopoly control in Masjed Soleyman (chapter 5). Regarding Abadan, Nasr reported as if from a foreign country, about which he was providing original reconnaissance:

> "Abadan: This is a region for the refining of petrol. I have submitted to you all the maps of this region, which I have secured with great pain. In these maps you will find that besides the refinery installations the Company has many other buildings and constructions, such as dwellings, shops, mosque for Indians, and movie theaters. There are 16 thousand workmen.
>
> The Persian workmen live in wicker huts or under tents outside the Company areas, but the Indians and Chinese dwell in constructions erected by the company or under good tents. The Company has its own police department as well as a municipality. The local Iranian police have no authority at all. The Company collects taxes on land, property, and sanitation. As regards the health of the workmen the Company has taken good measures"

The year 1926 was the high point of good relations between APOC and the central government. Pivotal agreements were reached, and the relieved Company finally launched into its coveted urban planning projects. But citizen resistance had not ended by simply being ignored and dismissed, and soon after the frictions returned with a vengeance.

After the Honeymoon was Over: Urban Strife and the Social Question in post 1926 Abadan

Most histories of this period have depicted the reasons behind the increasingly turbulent relationships between APOC and the Iranian Government between 1928-1933 as caused by the disputes over the royalties and terms of the concession that came to a head following the Great Depression of 1929 and culminated in the highly contested 1933 oil agreement[162]. However, both global circumstances, as well as urban tensions in Abadan, and the continued resistance of workers, residents, and local population also played an important role in exacerbating frictions and forcing adjustments by the state and the Company.

In the proceeding years certain patterns were set, with the Company constantly demanding and expecting more from the government to shoulder the social responsibilities of expanding and maintaining the urban infrastructure and to suppress local resistance; while the state felt it was the Company's responsibility to maintain and develop the built environment of oil, and felt aggravated by the heavy handed actions that were alienating the local population. At the same time, on the international scale, labor strife and mass politics were casting a heavy shadow over corporate perceptions about the vital importance of "the social question" for political stability and more smooth labor relations. The 1926 General Strike of miners and transport workers in Britain was a watershed in enforcing a rethinking of industrial relations among the employers (see chapter 4). In Iran the brutal program of the disarmament and the forceful settlement of tribes, coupled with compulsory universal conscription, and intrusive cultural laws enforcing a universal national dress, created a major backlash that resulted in the general tribal uprising of 1929[163]. In the spring of the same year a major labor strike occurred among the oil workers of Abadan, organized and led by Yousef Eftekhari. The turbulent political situation would prove

---

[162] Peter J. Beck, "The Anglo-Persian Oil Dispute 1932-33," *Journal of Contemporary History* 9, no. 4 (1974): 123–51; Mohammad Malek, "Oil in Iran between the Two World Wars," in *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800*, ed. Vanessa Martin (London: Routledge, 2009), 128–36; Ferrier, *History of the British Petroleum Company*, 1:588–631; Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle*; Fatemi, *Oil Diplomacy;*; Laurence Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.* (London: Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), 1938), 38–77.

[163] *Persia, Annual Report 1929*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.8, 442, 468–475; Stephanie Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41* (London: Routledge, 2007); Rudi Matthee, "Transforming Dangerous Nomads into Useful Artisans, Technicians, Agriculturalists: Education in the Reza Shah Period," in *The Making of Modern Iran*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London: Routledge, 2003), 123–45; Kaveh Bayat, *Shuresh-e Ashayer-e Fars: 1307-1309* (Tehran: Noqreh, 1986); Pierre Oberling, *The Qashqai Nomads of Fars* (Hague: Mouton, 1974).

that the restlessness and discontent of the subalterns, the working classes, and the urban populations, could neither be ignored permanently, nor simply fenced in behind gates, barbed wires, and fortified enclaves.

As Company plans to develop new parts of the city began to be implemented after the summer of 1926 more local complaints kept flooding the Ministries in the fall and winter of the following year. People being evicted to make room for boulevards, ditches, and streets, were told that their complaints were pointless because, "The Provincial Government of Khuzestan has been ordered to allow street making in Abadan only after it has been discussed in the Provincial Administrative Council and after owners have been satisfied with the just compensation they have received for the buildings being demolished"[164]. However, when the Company began digging canals and ditches all over the island the government agents were highly alarmed and the Kargozar asked, "The Company is digging canals around Abadan. The cost is paid out of oil revenues, where the government is a shareholder. Has the government permitted this? Is the Company's intention to stifle the expansion of the city?" The response of the head of Abadan Municipality was highly interesting and worthy of being quoted in detail:

> "The ditches and canals were dug before I came here; on the east side in 1923, and in 1925 on the west side, both without the government's permission. Most of the population in Abadan work for the company, and the city has a population of 60,000. The ditches have curtailed the city's expansion and the high density has made the population miserable. There is conflict and even murder over each zar' [Dehkhoda: zar' = $2m^2$] of land, and families of 20 live in utter misery huddled in a 50 zar' [100 m^2] patch of land. Now the Company has also taken over this side of Haffar (name of canal), which used to be part of Abadan, where they have occupied acres of space, and are preventing people from building shelter, housing, or shops. Something has to be done for the welfare of this miserable population. Either they should be relocated and compensated so they can build something for themselves, or the Company's expansion should be curtailed, and the open side of Abadan adjoining

[164] "Response of Ministry of Interior to Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, and Public Welfare regarding complaints against evictions for street making in Abadan", No. 6494, 30 January 1927, INA 240009253

> Khorramshahr [to the north] should be allowed to expand and allow people to build houses for themselves.[165]

Once an agreement with the government was put in place in 1926 the Company had moved energetically to launch a program of urban development for the expanding areas under its control. Its sanitary projects of sewerage and drainage ditches were at the same time acting as new fences and fortified barricades to contain the displaced population in an increasingly carceral landscape, that was designed by professional experts in urban and municipal planning and sanitation.

In 1925 APOC hired the consulting engineering firm F.C.Temple to work on sewerage and drainage. The following year the experienced Scottish urban planner, J.M. Wilson, with extensive colonial experience in India and Iraq, was employed to oversea the city's transformation over the coming years, and until nationalization in 1951[166]. In 1936 other prominent firms, N. Porteus and D.M. Watson, were brought on to further expand and develop sewage and water works. Richard Costain, the largest British home construction firm was contracted in 1938 to oversee the Company's massive housing programs, under the planning direction of JM Wilson[167].

Until 1930s all housing and urban development programs were geared toward European staff, and the skilled artisans. After 1933 housing skilled workers and Iranianization of the labor force also became part of the agenda. It was only in the 1940s that the Company was confronted with the inevitability of accepting a role in assisting with the housing crisis and urban conditions of ordinary laborers. The political changes in the post WW2 era when labor mobilization, socialist activism, urban struggles, and nationalist sentiments were reaching an explosive point, finally prompted the Company to begin addressing the horrendous housing conditions of ordinary laborers: "Many of the labor houses built during wartime have no internal water, light or latrines. There are one water point for 16 quarters, and one communal latrine per block for 8 quarters. However, they are rapidly being updated to peacetime standards"[168].

---

[165] Kargozar to Ministry of Interior, No. 170, 9 March 1927; Municipal Director of Abadan to Ministry of Interior, No. 101, 19 May 1926, INA 240009253
[166] C.H. Lindsey-Smith, "J.M. The Story of an Architect," 1976.
[167] "Terms and Conditions of Employment, 1946: Chapter 3, Housing and Sewerage", BP 41516
[168] Ibid.

While the Company did offer aid with important urban amenities for the Shahr area, it never committed to significantly improving conditions there; leaving the dilemma for the central government to handle. Meanwhile, the major land clearings across the island, and especially around the refinery and the Company areas, that had began in 1927 were intended to clear space for streets, housing estates, and large excavation works for the building of canals and sewerage and drainage ditches. As a result, all the vital Company areas -- residential estates, the refinery, roads, tank farms, the port, the new bazaar, administrative offices, clubs, expanding port facilities, the airport, etc. – were surrounded by defensible open spaces that could be easily monitored, policed, and kept under surveillance. All these projects were displacing massive numbers of people, as the Municipal Director reported with dismay, and pushing those evicted into an ever more condensed Shahr area. The sewerage ditches, the sanitary canals excavated to carry the human refuse to the river were at the same time acting as new physical barriers to enforce spatial segregation, and to defend the new exclusive enclaves carved out by and for the Company with the consent of the state.

Almost immediately the new urban works created a strong backlash, especially as the demographic pressures were mounting in the increasingly congested city. The new government appointed municipal agents began to object. Hossein Sami'i, who had been placed in charge of Abadan's municipal affairs, warned that, "Abadan's population is annually increasing because of Company affairs. There is no justification for limiting the expansion of the city, and for the population to suffer because of a useless ditch"[169].

The latest dispute was over a major ditch for berthing large boats coming up the river:

> "The Company has dug a 300 zar' canal in East of Abadan to allow ships to dock at high tide [zar', it seems, indicated both a unit of length as well as surface, pending on the context]. A year and half ago (1925?) another canal was excavated that separated the Company from the west of the town. It appears the only intention [of these projects is to further] separate the two [Company areas from Shahr]… These actions curtail the expansion of the town since the areas beyond both canals are [also] occupied by the Company,

[169] Hossein Samii – Municipal Affairs of Ministry of Interior to Foreign Ministry, "Regarding No.101, No. 3006, 7 February 1927, INA 240009253

> and the town cannot spread in those directions, nor to the south where it borders the Shatt (al-Arab River). However, there are lands to the North as well as some unused land within the existing city [for the growing population to settle]"[170]

The popular resistance against increasing evictions continued and added to the pressure cooker of urban discontent. Petitions to the Majles and authorities, reports to newspapers, and complaints to local officials, continued and became more vocal, as evidenced by the following petition that reached newspapers and the Court, prompting the Monarch to look into the situation. The petition was penned by "Your humble servant Mehdi Reza, also known as Abdollah Atiq al Hossein, acting as attorney for the plaintiffs, "My clients, the residents of Abadan", and giving his address as "Next to the Turks' Mosque, by the Cloth Shoemakers' Market [*Bazaar-e Givehkesh-ha*]":

> "Regarding the homes demolished in1924 by the Company in Abadan: We sent a telegram to the Majlis, all the ministries, and all well known newspapers. In Mohammareh we had meetings with the Kargozar, the Company representative, and the British Consul, and they all agreed and drew a tally of 24,000 Rps compensation to paid, but thus far my clients have received naught. Please clarify whether the Company has not paid, or have they paid the government (but not us), how do they intend to pay people?"[171]

Reza Shah's office made an inquest to the Company regarding the ongoing complaints, but the Company dismissed the whole affair as opportunism by the plaintiffs, and urged the government to move on and draw a line under the affair:

> "We did pay some compensation for the illegally built huts and cottages built on Company property [?!]. This demolition took place several years ago with the consent of government officials who acknowledged them to be the source of sanitary danger and epidemics and felt it necessary to demolish them. At the time government officials determined the amount of compensation, which was paid. You ought to inquire from Mohammareh officials about this. Of

[170] Finance Ministry/ Division of Crown Lands, to Foreign Ministry, "Explanation for the Ditch", No. 12061, 17 July1927, INA 240009253
[171] "Complaint: Aqa Mehdi Reza", No. 18042, 1 January 1928, INA 240009253

course acknowledging claims years after they have been cleared will only cause further trouble"[172].

Conclusion:

The post-WWI era was a pivotal period that shaped the oil complex globally, as well as in Iran, within the context of revolutionary transformations that were taking place at various scales (chapter 4). The transformation of the built environment of Abadan reflected these processes, but also was the spatial setting for making them a reality: Without places like Abadan and Masjed Soleyman there would not have been a transition to Fordism of mass consumer production and consumption that was built on the foundations of cheap and plentiful petroleum, nor the possibility of democratic mass politics based on notions of publicly provided social welfare.

This urban geography was shaped by a host of social and political relations that contributed to its taking shape: The sanitary ideas of public health, coupled with the apartheid practices of racial and class segregation justified on scientific grounds but implemented as exercises of power and domination, mediated and implemented by an emerging class of middle class professional experts. In this chapter we investigated the micro processes of "the state effect", by analyzing how the nascent state institutions actually took shape on the ground, and came to define their governmental functions and jealously tried to carve out spheres of sovereignty over populations and territories for the exercise of their authority. To the extend that sources are available, we tried to excavate the social and historical agency of subaltern classes and urban denizens as they had to adjust to their new urban conditions after having been deracinated and dispossessed of their customary and collective modes of economic and social life. They carved out new urban solidarities, and founded new urban identities, in order to collectively resist their further dispossession and to struggle for their right to the city.

Our analysis of the urban transformation of Abadan showed how the coercive commodification of urban space and everyday life created the material basis for a labor market, as well as a market for the basic necessities of everyday life. This urban built environment was thus the setting for the creation of a permanent wage laboring

[172] "His Majesty's Personal Office inquires from PM about No.18042, 11 January 1928 #11752; APOC Reply, 14 January 1928, No. 10564, INA 240009253

class, where one did not exist before. The precarious conditions of life eventually made cheap casual labor too expensive, as the relentless resistance of the urban population to its living and working conditions, as well as their ongoing dispossession eventually culminated in open insurgencies such as those that occurred in 1925, 1929, culminating in a general tribal uprising and the oil workers' strike, that drew some major concessions from the Oil Company and the Government (see Conclusion).

The detailed micro history of the Bazaar of Abadan presented here encapsulates much larger global, national, and local dynamics that, I will argue, were paradigmatic in how the oil complex was shaped in Iran. I have tried to demonstrate through this thick description that the oil complex was shaped, in practice, by the constant frictions and struggles between social agents that were vastly unequal, but nonetheless had no choice but to contest and negotiate as they played their part in the assemblage of the oil industry. In the process of these contested relations, taking place in the urban setting of Abadan, these social agents - APOC, the Iranian state, and the local population of Abadan - strove to shape the city to fit their interest; and were in turn shaped and transformed by it.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Abadan and Oil Workers in the Interwar Years (1926-1941)

The previous chapters explored the social and geographic history of the consolidation of the oil complex in Khuzestan during a pivotal and revolutionary period for Iran, Khuzestan, the Persian Gulf region, as well as for Britain. Our historical analysis situated the social history of oil within the *longue durée* of the British-Iranian relations (chapter 2), the WWI, and the paradigmatic changes brought about by Fordism, and the rise of mass politics and state involvement in regulating social conflict through welfare measures (chapter 4). The remaining chapters provided a micro history of local social change as the oil complex began to take shape by altering the existing social, political, and physical landscape of the province (chapter 3, 5, 6). By linking together these different geographic scales of analysis the social history of the oil encounter in southern Iran was presented as part of a relational Global Labor History (chapter 1). The period covered in these chapters traces the assemblage of the oil complex in Iran from the granting of the D'Arcy Concession in 1901 until 1927 and the relative consolidation of the main social actors and institutions that were used as the main units of analysis in exploring this historical oil encounter.

In this concluding chapter I will briefly analyze the large contours of the period leading to WW2, which culminated with the occupation of Iran by the allies and the forced abdication of Reza Shah. This dissertation sets the groundwork and the theoretical and comparative framework for a subsequent book project that will analyze the social history of labor in the Iranian oil complex up to 1953, when a military coup d'état ended the oil nationalization movement, which had the oil workers as its backbone.

Taking Stock of the State of Knowledge, Evaluating Sources, and What Remains to be Done:

The previous chapters have been heavily focused on the largely overlooked but formative early period of the assemblage of the oil complex and the industrial working class in oil, especially as far as the role of ordinary people has been

concerned. The relative obscurity of the social history of this earlier period has been the result of two factors:

First, the dearth of primary and even secondary sources produced by subalterns and ordinary people themselves, who were pulled in one way or another into the historical drama of the oil encounter. This silence was due in part to the mediums of collective expression in Khuzestan, and the operative forms of knowledge and local historical record keeping. Literacy was of little practical utility and almost non-existent among ordinary pastoralists and agrarian and tribal populations; there were no newspapers or other forms of mass media in the province until the late 1920s, and even the slim urban intelligentsia of notaries, administrators, secretaries, and men of religion have not left behind much in the form of conventional written historical, personal, financial, and legal records, that can help to paint a thicker portrait of the social everyday life as oil capitalism was being assembled in the province[1]. To compensate for this dearth of primary materials, in addition to archival Oil Company documents and British and Iranian government records, I have made use of petitions, newspaper reports mostly published in Tehran, property transaction records, legal contracts and treaties whenever pertinent and available, ethnographic studies, and a geographical analysis of the built environment of oil and the rural, urban, regional, national, and global dynamics within which the oil complex was embedded. However, there is no way to deny that for the time being more direct voices expressing the lived experiences of ordinary local populations are by and large missing from the story. As a result, my aim has been to focus on fleshing out the social history of that earlier formative period as much as possible by using the scant available sources.

Aside from these scant primary sources we do have access to some histories written by the local political elite and prominent historians; and in recent years an increasing number of local histories are being published, which are greatly welcomed, but by and large they continue to remain within the realm of "folk history", and all too often rely on already published secondary sources when it comes to delving

[1] This can be attested from the types of sources used in a number of outstanding social and political histories of the region, which have relied on a range of similar sources as the ones I have used. See for example Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41*; Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiari Tribe in Iran*; Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of 19th Century Iran*; Ansari, "History of Khuzistan"; Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*.

deeper into the subject[2]. While I have made wide use of archival sources that provide invaluable primary sources for this period, as we have seen in the previous chapters even the extensive diplomatic, intelligence, and bureaucratic records of the governments of Britain and Iran, and of APOC remain at best sketchy about the more intimate details of the transformations of quotidian and individual and collective lives during this period. We know, for example, that life in Abadan was very hard in the 1910's to 1930s, or that the Bakhtiyari rank and files were highly alienated during the enclosures of their pastoral territories, that tribal Arabs in Abadan were highly resentful of the encroachment of soldiers, migrants, and Oil Company men on their land, or that working conditions in the refinery and the oilfields were extremely difficult, but we know little about how these hardships, resentments, and alienations were actually experienced by people living through the experience.

The changeover in sources from the 1930s onward is noticeable, as local working people, intellectuals, political activists, government and Oil Company experts and functionaries, began to produce very different types of records and analyses ranging from reporting about living conditions, political aspirations, cultural changes, work habits, social ties, and power relations in the oil complex, as well as changing property relations, contracts, police records, economic and commercial activities, etc. The historical sources and available materials from roughly 1929 onward provide a very different picture and ample raw materials for pulling together a more complex portrait of the social life of oil in the region than the former era.

The second reason behind the relative obscurity of the earlier formative phase of the oil complex has to do with the perspective of those who have produced what historical records we have of this era. As we have seen throughout the text, British explorers and political agents, Oil Company officials, and Iranian statesmen, functionaries, and writers, did not deem the experiences of subaltern populations as significant enough to record, except from an instrumental perspective that served the priorities and interests that they found relevant. Thus, we have remarkably detailed primary as well as secondary sources produced over long decades by British political and intelligence agents, which provide invaluable knowledge about the region, even if

---

[2] Lesan al Saltaneh Sepehr, *Tarikh-e Bakhtiyari* (Tehran: Yasavoli, 1982); Emam Shushtari, *Tarikh-e Joghrafiyayi-e Khuzestan*; Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Pansad Saleh Khouzestan*; Abbasi-Shahni, *Tarikh-e Masjed Soleyman*; Lahsaeizadeh, *Jame'eh Shenasi-e Abadan*; Shakiba, *Negahi beh Tarikh-e Mahshahr*; Yousefi, *Tarikh-e Khorramshahr*; Latifpour, *Tarikh-e Dezful*.

they remain at best partial when it comes to gaining more intimate insight into how these revolutionary historical transformations were experienced from the perspective of the heterogeneous local populations[3]. Likewise, there is a growing body of contemporary political historiography of the province, the state, various local ethic groups, and the oil industry in Iran, but this important literature also favors the role of large institutions such as the national state and APOC, and tends to emphasize as as analytical framework macro processes such as industrial capitalism and nation state building in such a way that they are often presented as ready-made and all too powerful makers of history. As a result, in this literature the histories of subaltern populations are offered as mere case studies proving the general forward trend of history (see chapter 1).

To fill this void and reconstruct the social history of the oil encounter in Khuzestan we have focused on the built environment of oil in Khuzestan and the urban process in Abadan as an entry point into that formative period. Analyzing the built environment of oil allowed us to link together various geographies that are usually understood to be separate as part of an interlinked process and to nlyze the social agencies that built these environments. Most importantly, the rural, agrarian, and pastoral regions of Masjid Soleyman and Abadan were analyzed as part of the oil complex that also included their urban and industrial spaces. Thus, "the country and the city" have not been analyzed as two separate places, but as a unified but uneven space produced by the interconnected practices of the same set of social agents[4]. What connected them together were the enclosures of collective lands, pastures, and territories, to pave the way for the process of the initial accumulation of oil capitalism. Rather than treating this process as a fait accompli I have tried to show how it was a protracted and coercive process that led to great social dislocations, while it continued to be contested in various forms.

Chapter 4 brought in a transnational dimension, by historicizing the medical and social reform practices that began to be implemented during the formative period

---

[3] Lorimer, *GPG*; Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*; Burrell, vols. 4-7, *IPD*; Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*; Wilson, *A Precis of the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes and Shaikhs of Arabistan*; Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*; Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*; Laurence Lockhart and Rose Greaves, *The Record of the British Petroleum Limited (1918-1946) Relations with the Persian (Iranian) Government* (London: British Petroleum Company, 1968).

[4] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

of 1870s-1918 in Europe and the colonies in response to the exigencies of mass politics, industrial and scientific change, and the world war. The emerging role of professional middle class experts in formulating the social question and devising new practices of governmentality in response to these dislocations was discussed in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Last, analyzing the urban process in Abadan (chapters 3, 5, and 6) allowed us to focus on the frictions between the heterogeneous local populations, the Oil Company, the newly formed administrative apparatus of the central government, and British and Iranian state actors. By placing the micro history of the urban struggles around the Bazaar of Abadan at the center of analysis I have tried to demonstrate how each of these institutions and sets of historical actors were formed through relentlessly contentious interactions with each other. Chapter 6, in particular, demonstrated how APOC tried to carve out exclusive enclaves in Abadan by using the justification of medical and scientific knowledge and the practical techniques of urban planning. The urban struggles over reshaping the city's spaces and physical amenities contributed to the state institutions, as well as the citizens, defining their roles and shaping their collective and institutional practices.

As an entry point I have used the different and conflictual notions of property to analyze how various groups and institutions tried to establish exclusive access to land (and space) in the city as well as the country. By analyzing property and legal contracts as social relations of power we have gained an insight into how the initial enclosures and dispossession of the Bakhtiyari and tribal Arab societies took place to pave the way for the assemblage of the oil complex was assembled in Khuzestan.

In the following sections I will provide an overview of the transformations of the oil complex' transformations from 1927 to 1941. I will first discuss the larger geopolitical changes that took place in Khuzestan; before proceeding to sketch out the new dynamics of labor activism that emerged with the 1929 Abadan oil workers' strike; and conclude with an overview of the urban transformation of Abadan during this period.

Patching Together a Fragmented Provincial Geography with Guns and Oil:

In 1924 the Prime Minister Reza Khan visited APOC installations at Abadan and the Fields and was received formally and with eager hospitality by the APOC

management. The event carried remarkable symbolism as the first visit to the province by an Iranian head of state in centuries[5]. Khuzestan, known from the 16th century as 'Arabistan', had become virtually autonomous from the rest of the country during the turbulent previous centuries[6]. The visit had even greater practical significance: Reza Khan had accompanied the army to Khuzestan to subjugate Sheikh Khaz'al's autonomous rule. The British Government had tried to dissuade him by attempting mediation and issuing threats, to no avail (chapter 2). The previous year autonomous southern tribes had attempted to forge a "Southern Confederate Alliance" to collectively resist the central government's pending incursions; but their effort fell apart amidst rivalries and discord, partly fueled by Reza Khan playing them against each other. The Army took a month to arrive. Once there, the balance of power shifted permanently (see chapters 2,3,5). Sheikh Khaz'al submitted and offered to pay his arrear taxes, the formal bone of contention with the central government. But he was arrested and deported a few months later, and his authority in the province, the linchpin of a confederate system of tribal alliances, was replaced by that of a Military Governor and appointed central government bureaucrats[7].

[5] Reza Khan was Prime Minister at the time. But Ahmad Shah had left the country for Europe, never to return, and the Majles was in debate over whether to declare Iran a republic, as in Turkey. For all practical purposes Reza Khan was already the head of state. The last such visit had occurred in the 18th century, when Karim Khan Zand had made an attempt to integrate the province more thoroughly into his nascent but shortlived state. See John R. Perry, *Karim Khan Zand* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 68–74; Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Pansad Saleh Khouzestan*.

[6] Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Pansad Saleh Khouzestan*; Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, Vol.2, 268–386.

[7] See Ansari, "History of Khuzistan," 323–357; Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 14–17.

Reza Shah's Visit to Abadan 1931



Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Iran

Soon after these events a growing flood of appointed government officials and administrators began to arrive. Ahmad Kasravi, the prominent nationalist intellectual, was one of these officials who had been appointed earlier in 1923 to head the new judicial administration in Ahvaz, now designated as the new provincial capital. As had others before him, such as Najm al-Molk in the 19h century (Chapter2), Kasravi arrived from Tehran by a circuitous and long journey through Baghdad and sailing down the Tigris, taking weeks to arrive at his post[8]. For Kasravi the experience was like travelling to a foreign and exotic land over a hazardous route. Until the mid 1920s a trip by horse from Abadan to Tehran took approximately four weeks,

[8]Ahmad Kasravi, *Zendegani-e Man: Dah Sal dar 'Adliyeh; va Chera az 'Adliyeh Birun Amadam* (Tehran: N/P, 1944); Haj Mirzâ Abd-al Ghaffar Najm-al Molk, *Safarnameh Khuzestan beh Zamimeh Ketabcheh Dastour-e Ma'muriat-e Khouzestan va Gozaresh-e Barresiha-ye Ân Saman* (Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar va Mafakher-e Farhangi, 1962); Abd-al Ghaffâr ibn-e Ali Mohammad Najm-al Dowleh, *Safarnameh Dovvom-e Najm-al Dowleh be Khouzestan; beh Peyvast-e Ketabcheh-ye Dastour-al Amal-e Nasser-al Din Shah dar Khosous-e Safar-e Aval beh Khouzestan* (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2007) .

effectively longer and considerably more dangerous than a sea voyage to London[9]. However, things were about to change with remarkable speed.

Iran had a vast and rugged territory, with few established roads fit for carriage transport, let alone modern vehicles. Historically, camel and mule caravans had replaced wheeled transport since pre-Islamic times, and especially the mountain access routes to Khuzestan were difficult and hazardous in the extreme[10]. In the first quarter of the 20th Century, with all the political uncertainty and acute hardships plaguing the country, maintaining the transport and communication networks had become even more challenging[11].

This fragmented geography also characterized the province itself. Arnold Wilson who was in Mohammareh around 1910 as acting Consul remarked "Sixty years ago or so there was regular traffic from Dizful to Hamadan and Central Persia. Now tribal feuds have made traffic impossible"[12]. Prior to APOC building a Company railroad connecting Masjed Soleyman to Abadan and Mohammareh the 130 km journey to the oil fields could take up to five days, especially in bad weather. Once completed the narrow gage Company railroad reduced this to one day[13]. Motorcars further accelerated this spatial integration drastically, with profound social consequences, as we shall see. Prior to WWI motor transport were a luxury and a novelty (See Chapter 4). Arnold Wilson, who was from a middle class background and a colonial officer in the service of the Government of India in southern Iran, first experienced riding a motorcar in 1910 in an APOC owned vehicle on a visit Masjid Soleyman[14]. For different reasons both the British as well as the southern tribes viewed paved roads, and especially railroads, with considerable apprehension until the mid 1920s (See chapter 2)[15].

---

[9] Alexander Melamid, "The Geographical Patterns of Iranian Oil Development," *Economic Geography* 35, no. 3 (1959): 203.
[10] Richard Bulliet, *The Camel and the Wheel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Kaveh Ehsani, "Ideh," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Indiana: Encyclopeadia Iranica Foundation, 2008), http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ideh.
[11] See detailed personal recollections of Arnold Wilson for this period in Arnold T Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 39–42, 72–78, 162–177, 262.
[12] Ibid. 162
[13] Melamid, "The Geographical Patterns of Iranian Oil Development," 202; Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 78.
[14] John Marlowe, *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London: Cresset, 1967), 62.
[15] Ibid., 72.

Wilson who surveyed and mapped the western regions of Iran for selecting alternative railroads routes saw the situation thus:

> "Russia wants a trans-Persian railroad to India (bad for Persia and for India); Britain wants railroads from the Gulf to the interior, but nowhere near Russia…Having the oilfields in British hands, it is incumbent on us not to allow them to be imperiled by a Russian southward push by means of a Russian controlled railway and Russian trade".

In a 1913 conversation with a Lur Clan Headman with whom he was staying overnight during his survey, Wilson was told that the tribes appreciated the benefits of roads and railways, but what they feared was the increasing power of cities, the bureaucracy, and the state:

> "A railway through Luristan would increase the power of the Central Government in SW. Persia to levy taxes, which would be spent elsewhere, mainly in the Capital, by men with no interest whatsoever in the welfare or interests of the people of SW. Persia"[16].

As the tribes saw it Railways brought security, but only for the cities. Despite his own prescient misgivings Wilson insured his host that the security brought by railroads would not be at the expense of the tribes, but by the improvements in general welfare that would accompany them. In hindsight his host was probably more clear-sighted than the colonial officer.

Britain doggedly tried to control the financing and construction of the Iranian transnational railway to make sure the project remained tied to its own strategic interests, especially now that Tsarist threat had been replaced by what she saw as the more insidious Soviet menace. During the major APOC re-organization of 1926 Percy Loraine the Minister in Tehran, Cadman the APOC chairman, Chamberlain the Foreign Secretary, and his assistant Lancelot Oliphant, did their best to coordinate their efforts to prevent the independent railway schemes that were being prepared by Tehran[17]. The construction of the transnational railroad had become an obsession with

---

[16] Wilson, *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, 206, 131–132, 246–248, 227.
[17] See several letters from Lancelot Oliphant to John Cadman in February 1926 to apply pressure on Reza Shah during his upcoming visit for the coronation. "Dossier 1: Correspondence with Foreign Office Relating to Visit to Tehran", BP 71183

Iranian nationalists who perceived it as the golden solution for overcoming chronic 'backwardness'. These nationalists understood the persistent objections and interferences by the Great Powers since the end of the 19th century against successive attempts to fund and build a national railroad as a conspiracy that ought to be overcome at all costs if Iran were to become a modern and prosperous nation[18].

In 1925 Britain had been alarmed by a law passed by the Majles to impose a special consumer tax on sugar and tea in order to finance the national railroad construction (chapter 2). Loraine was concerned that if this were to happen the Iranian government would no longer be dependent on British loans or oil royalties, and could employ American firms and engineers instead to help it with the scheme[19]. They asked Cadman to delay negotiations over a new concession, and to,

> "Tie the oil renegotiations to the railway scheme. Iran will become dependent as no one will build railroads in Iran without full measure of security on capital, nor will railroads produce enough income ever for working expenses for the first ten years…The Government will have to subsidize the railroads directly…They will have no choice but to come to us then"[20].

However, the drastic events in Khuzestan had changed all these calculations, as we saw in chapter 2, and once Sheikh Khaz'al was ousted the British Government and APOC had little option but to throw in their lot with Reza Shah.

---

[18] Ehsani, "Tabar Shenasi-e Tarh-ha-ye Bozorg-e Tose'eh dar Iran-e Mo'aser. I intend to write about the social history of the railroads in Iran at a different occasion. Here I am merely sketching the relevant parts for our current story.

[19] "Loraine, British Legation in Tehran, to Chamberlain, Foreign Secretary, London", 14 January 1926, Dossier 1: Correspondence with Foreign Office Relating to Visit to Tehran, BP 71183

[20] "Loraine to Cadman" 18 February 1926, BP 71183. The British preferred an East West route to connect Mesopotamia and India, both their territories. In the case of a North South route they wanted the construction to begin from the Persian Gulf, and end at Tehran, staying well away from Soviet borders. The central government, on the other hand wanted a north-south line, uneconomical as the chosen route may be, to immediately connect the capital with the oil areas in Khuzestan. A more economic choice would have been a main line connecting the country's largest cities, Tabriz, Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, with the largest open ports on the Persian Gulf, either Bushehr or Bandar Abbas. As it were, the construction proceeded and the railroad was completed by 1938. It was a great feat of engineering, built at great cost and hardship for ordinary people. Ironically, the greatest beneficiaries of the project were the Allies who occupied Iran in 1941, deposed Reza Shah, and used the railroad to supply the Soviet Union on the Eastern Front. See Ehsani, "Tabar Shenasi-e Tarh ha-ye Bozorg-e Tose'eh"; Clawson, "Knitting Iran Together: The Land Transport Revolution 1920-40"; Steen Andersen, "Building for the Shah: Market Entry, Political Reality and Risks on the Iranian Market, 1933–1939," *Enterprise & Society* 9, no. 4 (2008): 637–69; Cronin, *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society Under Riza Shah, 1921-41*; Melamid, "The Geographical Patterns of Iranian Oil Development," 211–214.

The consequences of the new alliance between the Oil Company and the army, and the game-changing impact of new modes of transportation and communication, became evident almost immediately. In July 1925, shortly after Khaz'al exile, Arab tribes of southwest Khuzestan rose in revolt, and attacked Mohammareh. In a stunning change of strategy the Oil Company made its transport vehicles available to carry army troops from Ahvaz to crush the revolt of its erstwhile allies (chapter 6). Arnold Wilson, now the Company Manager at Mohammareh, called on gunships and Indian troops from Basra for help, but their intervention proved unnecessary[21]. Modern vehicle transport provided by APOC and fueled by Abadan refinery products had aided the new Iranian army to eliminate quickly and effectively the threat of Arab tribes who had been guarding the oil industry until a few months before. A new uneasy alliance had been sealed. From now the Oil Company together with the State, its army, its bureaucratic institutions, and its national laws, would continue together the project of reshaping the geography of the province, and of regulating the lives of its people in order to pave the way for the effective operation of oil capitalism and the consolidation of an integrated nation state.

The 1925 Arab revolt was the first of many subsequent tribal insurgencies that challenged the new political order in the coming years. By late 1920s Reza Shah began a major project of coercive resettlement of the pastoral tribes, who comprised a quarter of the total population of the country. The immediate cause of the 1925 Arab tribal revolt was the abuses they had suffered from army troops who had been confiscating grain, foodstuff, and pack animals (see chapter 6). The year 1925 was especially difficult for the local population: there was severe drought and famine across the country; in Khuzestan the acting military governor who had replaced Sartip (Colonel) Zahedi was suspected by the Oil Company of having communist sympathies; and his troops had been confiscating pack animals to facilitate food imports from Iraq and provisioning the army[22]. It was an explosive mélange. In the fragile agrarian pastoralist economies of the region mules, horses, sheep, water buffalo, pack animals, and grain, could make the difference between life and death, and between relative affluence and high status versus destitution:

---

[21] Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 70; Kazem Pourkazem, *Naqsh-e Ashayer-e Arab-e Khouzestan dar Jahad Aleyhe Este'mar* (Tehran: Ammeh, 1996), 156–157.
[22] *Persia, Annual Report 1925*, Burrell, *IPD*, Vol.7, 384.

> "[Horses and] Mares are the most valuable commodity of an Arab. They'll deprive themselves of food to keep hold of them. Mares are bought and sold in peculiar ways, seldom is the whole animal bought by a single keeper. Each buys one or more legs. The one who owns the forelegs stables, feeds, and exercises her"[23].

However, the more deep-rooted cause of the revolt was the collapse of the social-political order that had been personified in the position of Sheikh Khaz'al and his court. While the revolt was crushed in Mohammareh and Abadan remained relatively calm; "Inland, however, the unrest among the Arabs continued due partly to their resentment of the Persian troops' behavior and partly *because they had in many cases been deprived of all tribal authority*"[24] [my emphasis].

Inevitably, the vacuum created by the elimination of the existing social and political order and the demise of the role of the local magnates began to be filled by the State and the Oil Company, through a highly fractious relationship where the boundaries of sovereignty of each were to be relentlessly contested in the coming years. In the footsteps of the army and bureaucrats came national laws and regulations, conscription, roads, the railroad, the national currency, as well as a growing stream of people hoping to make a living working for the oil industry or on its margins. Growing motorcar transport, increasingly fueled by petrol produced in Abadan, and distributed by APOC through a nationwide supply network[25], played a vital role in forcing through this geographic integration[26]. With a paved road linking Masjed Soleyman to the rest of the province, followed by more feeder roads extending into the highlands and the countryside, the historical advantage of their geographic isolation as part of their strategic defense and autonomy rapidly disappeared for the Bakhtiyaris in the highlands of Zagros. In the interwar years the

---

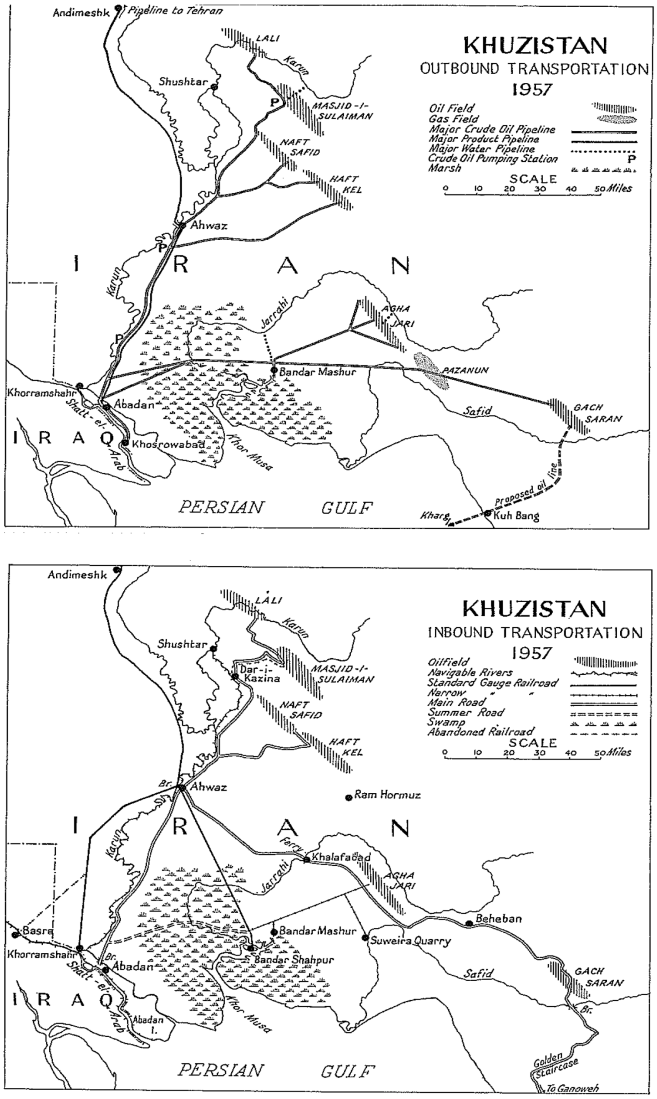
[23] Sykes, *Through Persia on a Side Saddle*, 275.
[24] Lockhart, *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.*, 70.
[25] The issue of supplying subsidized motor fuel for the northern Iranian market, and establishing a nationwide supply network were one of the major bones of contention in negotiations between APOC and the central government in the 1933 agreement. See Mostafa Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992).
[26] Alexander Melamid, "Petroleum Product Distribution and the Evolution of Economic Regions in Iran," *Geographical Review* 65, no. 4 (October 1, 1975): 510–25.

expanding road network transformed the oil industry itself by allowing it to spread out beyond its originally limited scale (see Figure 1).

Motorcars allowed the rapid transportation of heavy equipment and manpower, and significantly facilitated the Company's exploration and extraction activities in previously inaccessible locales. They opened new feeder roads and made possible the rapid repair and constant monitoring of pipelines, as well as the fast expanding communication and transportation grid. During WWI, in 1915-1916, the pipeline sabotage by the Germans and their tribal allies had taken three months to repair. Now it could be done in days. By the end of 1920s, shortly after Kasravi had arrived in Ahvaz via a long and difficult journey, regular motorcar travel became possible, with the trip from Tehran to Khuzestan taking two days to complete in good weather. APOC assisted in the road-building project, by contributing to the construction of the northbound Dezful--Khorramabad road through the notoriously unsafe Luristan highlands. The Company provided help in surveying and mapping the route, and made cost estimates for the project. It also began supplying subsidized petrol products to the construction project, and for provisioning the market in the rest of the country[27].

[27] Cadman to Loraine, 8 May 1926, BP 71183

Map 4: Khuzestan Inbound and Outbound Geographic Links[28]



These new geographic developments facilitated the mass movement of troops, as well as bureaucrats, official visitors, entrepreneurs, and migrant workers to the province. Before this period the geography of oil in Khuzestan had been limited to a linear corridor formed around the two nodes of crude oil extraction in Masjed Soleyman in the north, linked via pipeline transport southward to be refined at Abadan, and from there exported by tankers via the river Shatt al Arab. Now,

[28] Source: Melamid (1959): 204-205

however, thanks to the new networks of road transportation, the refinery at Abadan began supplying various petroleum products in reverse direction, northward to Masjed Soleyman and Ahvaz, and soon to the rest of the country[29]. The change affected material production as well, as domestic demand grew fast for products such as tar and bitumen for paving roads, lubricants and petrol for engines, and Kerosene for generators and lighting. These products began to be packaged and distributed for the expanding internal market from 1930s.

Equally significant, motorcars allowed the horizontal spread of the oil networks within the province: Car transport facilitated the discovery and exploitation of alternative fields - such as Haftgel, Gachsaran, Lali, and Aghajari - in remote locations where extending the Company railroad would have been impractical and uneconomical. Soon the idea of developing alternative deep-sea ports on the coast of the Persian Gulf began to be considered as the solution for allowing the berthing of larger tankers, and of avoiding the problems that plagued Abadan and Khorramshahr (as Mohammareh had been renamed). Foremost among these problems was the ongoing river boundary disputes with Iraq, and the logistical difficulty of the constant dredging of the heavily silted Shatt al Arab. Eventually, the pristine lagoons of Khor Mousa and the nearby tiny port of Ma'shour were selected and a new seaport began to be built there; although the idea of building a new refinery there to handle the production of Aghajari was ultimately abandoned in favor of an underwater pipeline to the Kharq Island[30].

It is important to emphasize, again, that the path was opened for motorcars, the railroad, and the military-bureaucratic integration of Khuzestan into a nation-state framework only after the existing social and political structures had been subjugated and dismantled, and collective pastoral and tribal territories had been enclosed. Along with this new geography came the process of increasing commoditization of everyday life, including labor and its reproduction (housing, food, transportation, etc.). The process also opened the gates for the significant movement of population to

---

[29] Melamid, "The Geographical Patterns of Iranian Oil Development," 208; Fathollah Sa'adat, *Jughrafiya-ye Eqtesadi-e Naft-e Iran*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Pars Publishers, 1967).
[30] N/A, "Banader-e Jonoub," *Taqadom*, no. 3,4,7,8 (1927-1928); Melamid, "Petroleum Product Distribution and the Evolution of Economic Regions in Iran"; Melamid, "The Geographical Patterns of Iranian Oil Development"; Shakiba, *Negahi beh Tarikh-e Mahshahr*; Yousefi, *Tarikh-e Khorramshahr*; Emam Shushtari, *Tarikh-e Joghrafiyayi-e Khuzestan*; Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Jazireh Khark, Dorr-e Yatim-e Khalij* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1960).

Khuzestan, and the expansion of a significant wage labor market in its urban areas. The increasing integration of the province into national politics and market relations had created a situation where global trends and national policies began to quickly and directly affect all aspects of life.

The Great Depression of 1929 and the coercive and military settlement of pastoral tribes by the central government that began in 1928 and accelerated throughout the 1930s contributed to the growing army of the unemployed. But in southern and western Iran, this trend was briefly offset by the intense demand for labor during the construction of the transnational Iranian Railways. However, once the railroad had been completed in 1938 a new wave of mass unemployment ensued, especially in the western regions. The import-substitution-industrialization policies that the central government had launched in the 1930s (see the next section) momentarily alleviated this crisis; but the military occupation of the country during the WW2 once again imposed great hardships on a population that was ill equipped to absorb it. The occupying Allies used the recently developed infrastructures of the oil industry, the transport networks of new roads and railways, and the abundant and destitute cheap manpower, to supply the Soviet Union and shore up the Eastern Front. The occupation caused severe wartime hardships, especially in the south and the west due to military food requisitions and the labor drafts that undermined subsistence agriculture and food production. These developments contributed to a trend where the draw of the labor market and the urban economies of Khuzestan's oil cities became often the only hope of economic survival for the growing throngs of migrants who began to flood the province[31].

Table 7 shows the demographic trends over the period under discussion. It should be noted that no official census data exists until 1956. The figures are compiled from various sources, and some are at best intelligent estimates based on scanty and scattered sources available. Despite its sketchiness the table reveals several important trends: The expansion of oil cities, particularly Abadan, had accelerated significantly prior to the completion of the Railroads in late 1930s, due to the

[31] Atabaki and Ehsani, "Shifting Governmentality in the Shadow of Labor Activism: Revisiting the Roots and Impact of the 1929 Abadan Oil Workers' Strike."

increasing availability of relatively cheap bus transport[32]. But the subsequent growth after the occupation in 1941 becomes truly noticeable.

Table 7: Estimated Population of Khuzestan and Selected Cities (000)

	1880s-1900 (Opening of Karun to commercial navigation)	**1910s** (Constitutional Revolution, Establishment of Oil Industry, WWI)	**1920s** (Consolidation of New Central Government, APOC Reorganization, Demise of Local Autonomy)	**1930s** (New Oil Agreement, Great Depression; Beginning of Industrialization, Railroad and Roads, Forced Settlement of Tribes)	**1940s** (WW2 and Occupation, Oil Nationalization Movement)	**1956** (Era of Consortium)
Khuzestan	180	N/A	410	543	N/A	1,43
Abadan	14	24	40 - 60	61	173	226
Masjed Soleyman	Seasonal	1	6 - 20	N/A	N/A	45
Ahvaz	0.3 - 1.0	4	10	30	N/A	120
Mohammareh/ Khoramshahr	3.0 - 6.0	10 - 16	20	20	N/A	19

Sources: Compiled from Adamec (1976): 5; Ansari (1974); Author's estimates; Bamberg (1994); Ferrier (1982): 276; ILO (1950): 131; Iran National Census (1956); Issawi (1971); Lorimer (1986); Neligan (1926); Seccombe & Lawless (1987): 32; Seccombe & Lawless (1993): 191, 193, 194; Shahnavaz (2005); Vieille, et.al. (1964, 1969)

In the interwar years Khuzestan was transformed from one the most sparsely populated and rural provinces of Iran, where prior to WWI at most 10 percent of the population lived in urban areas, to one of its most urbanized, with 40 percent of a much larger population living in what were now urban areas[33] (see table 1). Most of this urban growth took place in oil cities, primarily Abadan and Masjed Soleyman; as well as in Ahvaz, which became both one of the headquarters for AIOC operations as well as the new seat of provincial government in 1926. The extent to which the oil complex had been one of the main causes of this urbanization and the formation of an industrial labor market can be glimpsed from an ILO report into working conditions in the oil industry, which concluded that Abadan in 1949 had "an estimated population of 173,000, of whom 133,000, or 77 percent were company employees and

[32] Melamid, "The Geographical Patterns of Iranian Oil Development," 209.
[33] Lawless and Seccombe, "Impact of Oil Industry on Urbanization in the Persian Gulf Region."

their dependents. Most of the remaining 44,000 were workers employed by contractors, independent craftsmen and merchants and their families"[34].

Photograph 22: Ahvaz in 1932



Source: BP Archives

However, the urban impact of the oil industry and state institutions was uneven. Ahvaz, for example, had initially suffered as the commercial steamship transport on Karun, as well as the Lynch Road mule track across Zagros went into permanent decline with the advent of motorized transport. However, the city's

[34] ILO, *Labor Conditions in the Oil Industry in Iran* (Geneva: International Labor Office, 1950), 31.

bureaucratization, as well as its location as the hub of the transnational railways compensated for this loss[35]. On the other hand, the historic cities of Khuzestan, in particular Shushtar, Dezful, Ramhormoz, and Behbahan, entered a long period of relative isolation and stagnation[36]; while entirely new urban areas emerged as railroad towns (Andimeshk); ports (Mahshahr, formerly Ma'shur); army garrison towns (Ramshir, formerly Khalafabad); or oil company towns (Haftgel, Aghajari).

Elsewhere, the historic and traditional economies and social relations on which they were based were hard pressed to continue functioning. In the Persian Gulf the pearling industry gradually all but disappeared. Likewise, the ship/boat building industry in Mohammareh/Khorramshahr as well as in Basra were hit hard but did not completely disappear. As the fishing and sea trade were taken over by new motorized vessels, traditional boat builders began fitting their craft with engines, although the construction of larger vessels moved to the coastline of the Persian Gulf. Similarly, the thriving date cultivation and trade along the Shatt al-Arab became subsumed under the new commercial shipping and oil traffic and land speculation that had deeply affected the river coastline[37]. Date groves and small-scale date farming survived in both Mohammareh/Khorramshahr and Abadan, mainly because of a continued demand for the crop as a staple food throughout the Persian Gulf region, although they were pushed to the margins of the local economies, overshadowed by the vast global businesses of oil and transnational shipping. In Abadan, Khorramshahr, and along the fertile coast of Shatt al Arab and Karun, date farming became a 'traditional' enclave for indigenous Arabs to hang on to the remaining vestiges of their land and productive activities.

Table 8 reveals that by mid century a substantial share of the population of the new urban centers created by the exigencies of the oil industry and the policies of the central state had been settled in these cities continuously, beyond the first generation. These census figures are by district, and not by urban areas. The districts include the

---

[35] Paul Vieille, *La Féodalité et l'Etat en Iran* (Paris: Anthropos, 1975).
[36] Ehsani, "Urban Provincial Periphery in Iran: Revolution and War in Ramhormoz." Dezful in the 1960s became the center of major international agribusiness and hydropower development, and large scale government experimentations in authoritarian regional planning. A major military airbase was also built in its vicinity.
[37] On the vibrant date trade of Basra and Mohammareh see Visser, "The Gibraltar That Never Was"; Ansari, "History of Khuzistan"; Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*; Sykes, *Through Persia on a Side Saddle*, 267.

peri-urban and the rural hinterland of the cities in question. Nevertheless they reveal

Table 8: Migration Patterns by Census District & Birthplace of Migrants by Province (1956)
(The last 6 rows show the percentage of migrants coming from each cited region)

	District Population (000)	Non-Migrants (000)	Migrants as Share of Total Population (percent)	From Khuzestan & Luristan (%)	From Fars & P.Gulf Coast (%)	From the North * (%)	From Isfahan & Yazd ** (%)	From Central Province *** (%)	From Kurdistan & Kermanshah (%)
Abadan	284	161	42	24	24	5.0	36	3	4
Ahvaz	213	151	29	53	3.0	8.0	25	6	0
Masjed Soleyman	170	135	20	21	0	1.0	70	1	0
Khorramshahr	68	45	32	50	10	7.0	11	6	3
Shushtar	57	55	5	50	0	4.0	44	3	4

Source: National Census of Iran (1956)
* "North" includes the provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran, East and West Azarbaijan
** Until 1954 the Bakhtiyari districts were administratively part of Isfahan, prior to being designated as a separate province

interesting patterns that had been established after half a century of oil production and national integration in the province. Thus Abadan, the largest city in the province and still the highest receiver of migration to its district, had nearly 60 percent of its population who had been born there. By contrast, Shushtar, the previous historical seat of provincial government, had had virtually no immigration and only 5 percent of its population had been born outside the district. While 42 percent of the population of Abadan had been born elsewhere, the vast majority of these migrants had come from within Khuzestan (24%), or the adjoining provinces in the south of country (60%). Very few were migrating to the oil city from Tehran (the Central Province) or the northern provinces (8% of all migrants).

Although the 1956 census, which was the first nationwide survey of the population, compounded the places of origin, for example Isfahan and Yazd, it should be noted that 'Isfahan' had until recently (1954) been the administrative province in control of most of the Bakhtiyari highlands of Zagros. Likewise, the adjoining tribal pastoralist regions of Kohkilouyeh and Mamsani had been administratively considered as part of the province of 'Fars', as were the Dashtestan districts of

Bushsher and the northern coast of the Persian Gulf. Consequently, we can surmise that the high rate of migration from these southern regions of the country adjoining the province of Khuzestan and from within the province itself to the oil cities of Abadan and Masjed Soleyman, to the port of Khorramshahr, and the administrative center Ahvaz, indicated the flow of labor power from the pastoralist and agrarian regions with close historic economic and geographic ties to southwest Khuzestan to the established wage labor markets and urban economies of these oil cities.

Table 9: Geographic Origin of Iranian Oil Industry Employees, 1956 (% of total)

	Fields	**Abadan**
Born in Khuzestan	61	40
Born in Adjoining Provinces	34	48
Born Elsewhere in Iran	5	13

Source: Melamid (1959): 209

Table 7 reveals a relatively similar pattern for those employed in the oil industry during the same period. The figures demonstrate the consolidation of labor by the oil industry within the region, together with a continued "pull factor" from the adjoining pastoralist and agrarian regions of the south. By the mid twentieth century industrial labor in the oil complex, and the accompanied urbanization in the built environment of oil, had become an established reality in Khuzestan and throughout southern Iran.

LABOR ACTIVISM IN THE INTERWAR YEARS:

The consolidation of the oil complex brought with it new forms of labor activism among the industrial working class. The new collective political agency of the industrial workers was a direct result of the formation of a large class of wageworkers in the oil industry, and their geographic concentration in the centers of oil production of Khuzestan. The turning point for this new trend in labor activism came with the 1929 oil workers strike in Abadan, which had been organized by

Yousef Eftekhari (chapter 6)[38]. By this date the urban built environment of oil had become the staging ground for new forms of collective labor agency that were to affect other industrial centers across the country.

On Mayday 1929, some 9,000 oil workers, out of a total Iranian workforce of 15,000, went on strike at the Abadan oil refinery[39]. Their collective action caught APOC by surprise, and effectively brought production to standstill. Even though the strike was suppressed after three days through the "strong action by the military governor of Abadan backed by troops from the [Masjid Suleiman] garrison"[40], nevertheless the ensuing crisis had deep repercussions for industrial and labor relations. The strikers were demanding a wage increase of 15 percent; the shortening the working day from ten to seven hours in the summer and eight hours in the winter; the right to establish an independent trade union, and the recognition of Mayday as an official holiday[41]. Eftekhari states that the strike's top demand was to force the government to refuse to renew the Oil Concession with APOC, because of the Company's abusive records. In particular, strikers demanded an end to the practice of "blacklisting" of the workers who had been targeted for being subversive, disruptive, or unproductive. What especially outraged the strikers was the Company's callous treatment of workers who had been injured and disabled during work, or the families of those who had died as a result of work injuries:

> "The Company used the blacklist to permanently lay off workers who had been injured at work and were now unable to work and did not have any insurance. We demanded an end to these permanent layoffs, as well as an end to the chronic abuse of workers. They routinely abused and tormented workers…Workers had no place to live, and had to sleep next to the river. The Company refused to provide them with shelter. Their wives went hungry, and

---

[38] This section is partly based on Atabaki and Ehsani, "Shifting Governmentality in the Shadow of Labor Activism: Revisiting the Roots and Impact of the 1929 Abadan Oil Workers' Strike."

[39] For recent studies of the workers' strike in the oil industry in 1929 see: Kaveh Bayat, "With or Without Workers in Reza Shah's Iran", in Touraj Atabaki, *The State and the Subaltern. Modernization, Society and the State in Turkey and Iran* (London & New York: IB Tauris, 2007) pp. 111-122; Stephanie Cronin, "Popular Politics and the Birth of Iranian Working Class: The 1929 Abadan Oil Refinery Strike," *Middle Eastern Studies* 5 (2010): 699–732.

[40] "Abadan to Tehran, Telegram" 12 May, 1929, BP 59010

[41] Ardashes Avanesian, *Safehati Chand az Jonbesh-e Kargari-ye Iran dar Dowran-e Avaal-e Reza Shah* (Leipzig: Tudeh Publications, 1979), 75–83; L.P. Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955), 68–69. For a detailed study of labor activities aiming to reduce the working day in Iran, see Touraj Atabaki, "The Comintern, the Soviet Union and Labor Militancy in Interwar Iran," in *Iranian-Russian Encounters. Empires and Revolutions since 1800*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London, 2012).

> often had to walk around half naked and dressed in rags. Abadan was a bizarre place the like of which I had not seen anywhere. Even the truly backward Tajikistan wasn't as bad as this place."[42]

APOC reports also mentioned the workers' demand for "complete equality [between] Indians [and] Persians"[43], and described the strike as a "Bolshevik plot"[44]. APOC field managers believed the workers' demands were "formulated to cloak real Bolshevik activity and not likely to materialize".[45] Fearing the worse, the British Consul of Mohammerah/Khoramshahr even requested the warship "Cyclamen to move down the Shatt al-Arab to a point within easy reach of Abadan"[46]. There were indeed some Marxist organizers involved in the strike such as Yousef Eftekhari who played an important role in helping workers coalesce and articulate their grievances. But the personal account of his organizing work in Abadan makes clear that workers' grievances were real and not ideologically motivated, to the point that they were quite ready and willing to confront the powerful Oil Company to demand improvements in their appalling living and working conditions.

The repression of the 1929 strike was harsh and immediate. More than a hundred activists were deported from the province and the army imposed martial law[47]. But the ensuing calm was temporary and soon after labor discontent broke out in the oilfields of Masjid Suleiman, before spreading to other industries. On 28th May 1929, some 300 railway workers of the American Ulen Company based near Ahwaz demanded higher wages[48]. Once more and now on the advise of APOC, the Ulen Company approached the Governor General of Ahwaz to arrest the "ringleaders"[49].

The labor protests of 1929 were crushed through the collaboration of the Iranian army, APOC, and the implicit threat of the British Royal Navy. Their reaction revealed the paranoia among Oil Company and government officials of communist

---

[42] Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e Dowran-e Separi Shodeh*, 42.
[43] "Abadan to London, Telegram", 6 May 1929, BP 59010. APOC reports also mention slightly different details about workers' demands, including a demand for "six hours working days, minimum wage laborer *rials* 45 per month, representation labor on the management".
[44] "Abadan to London, Telegram", 4 May 1929, BP 59010.
[45] Ibid.
[46] "Secret Report", 8 May 1929, BP 59010. Efekhari, *Khatirat Dowran Separi-Shodeh,* 39.
[47] "Secret Report", 17 May 1929, BP 59010.
[48] "Secret Report", 2 June 1929, BP 59010. Ulen Company was a railway construction company functioning in the vicinity of Ahwaz.
[49] Ibid.

influence among industrial workers of the country's largest and most strategic industries. The workers' demands for more decent pay and better treatment were ignored until after the suppression of what was considered their most subversive demand: autonomous representation through their own union.

Throughout the interwar period, Iranian industrial workers attempted on numerous occasions to establish collective representation, but were repeatedly put down. The overall pattern that developed was to ignore workers' outburst and demands for self-representations, regardless of the circumstances[50]. The police would then arrest and imprison the leaders, but later on the government or employers would make some concessions in the form of pay increases, or occasionally pass legislation and government acts aimed at reducing the risks of recurring future crises. This pattern of employer and government response to workers' demands for self-representation had three key motives: To placate protestors and defuse the situation; to clarify that no autonomous workers' self-representation would be tolerated and any and all demands had to be channeled only through the bureaucracy; and third, to better regulate and control the labor market, including using workers' demands to pressure employers into various concessions that suited state policies.

The authoritarian modernization of Reza Shah's reign defined the formative interwar period. Building the institutions of a modern nation state coincided with building a modern economy, based on industrial manufacturing and its requisite infrastructure. Thus, while the state engaged in using its newly constituted army to repress local autonomies and coercively forge a national identity, its policies also created a class of wage workers who had no option but to sell their labor in the new factories.

At the end of WWI urban Iranian workers in manufacturing had been mostly engaged in small craft workshops, but by 1941 Iran had a fairly substantial wage labor force employed in large factories. How did the Iranian workers experience this proletarianization? What were the state policies that contributed to the formation of a labor market? Were workers simply the object of an authoritarian, but ultimately progressive process of modernization? Or did they exercise an influence in shaping

[50] For example Abadan in 1922 and 1929; Isfahan in 1931, etc.

labor and industrial relations during this formative period? Traditional labor historiography tends to privilege the spectacular moments of labor protest and open labor activism, such as the 1929 oil workers strike in Abadan as answers to these questions. However, by such standards the urban industrial workers do not figure very prominently as active historical agents during the interwar years. There are a few scattered moments of open labor protest here and there, like the brief events of 1929 in Abadan and Ahwaz but, by and large, these strikes and open protests seem to have been rare and isolated events.

The moments of open labor protests are important indicators of industrial workers discovering a collective voice, but they do not tell the whole story. The repression of such protests and the workers' failure to consolidate trade unions and other forms of collective self-representation does not imply they remained passive objects of a history that bypassed them. Instead, I will make the following four points:

First, the interwar industrialization programs in Iran also involved the often-coercive process of making a working class. The violent and protracted process though which peasants, craftsmen, and pastoralists became industrial wage workers is integral to the forms of labor agency that emerged during this period. To understand the new patterns of the social and political agency of labor we ought to look at the country and the city as a unified but uneven space, that was being transformed to suit the exigencies of initial capital accumulation and nation-state formation, as we have done in previous chapters.

Second, the apparently scattered moments of open labor protests across the country during the inter war years were not as isolated and unrelated as it may appear. As we have seen, these were turbulent times during which large populations moved to flee war, epidemics, and poverty, in search of livelihood, survival, and security. Experiences travelled with people across space, and inspired new actions. Migrating workers, political activists, labor organizers, extended families, and foreign workers with their transnational connections, were among the conduits through which repertoires of experience travelled across space and time and inspired novel practices and formed new collectivities.

Third, workers' actions at their place of work, and their collective influence on shaping events were not limited to the rare moments of open militancy under authoritarian regimes of the factories and the police state, which Reza Shah's

autocracy had become by the 1930s. Non-confrontational forms of resistance, attrition, desertions, moral appeals, indirect and direct negotiations, and other tactics to improve the collective social life of labor were more common and effective that is currently understood. For example, as we saw in chapter 5, labor flight was a common response of casual as well as skilled workers to the harsh and coerced conditions of work and life under APOC during WWI and its aftermath. So were sabotage and armed attacks on facilities. Insurgencies also remained part of the repertoire of workers' resistance to proletarianization or Company encroachments on collective territories. These insurgencies lasted while the casual workers kept a foot in adjacent tribal social structures, and the military structures of the *Ilat* and *Ashayer* still had the ability to mobilize enough force to confront the military, and resist state and Company policies.

As the oil complex consolidated other forms of workplace and urban based collective solidarities and actions came to be added to the repertoires of subaltern resistance. During the 1920s in Abadan, where most of the estimated urban population of 60 thousand were recent migrants, workers and their families were constantly engaged together with other social groups in urban collective struggles over housing, access to land, food supplies, and sanitary conditions (chapter 6). These urban movements were not directly related to work conditions, but to the reproduction of the laborers and other people drawn into the circuit of oil capitalism. That is why understanding the changing daily life of workers, and how they fit into the wider web of social relationships that accompanied the mechanisms of capital accumulation and nation state formation is integral to developing a more comprehensive social history of this period.

Fourth, state policymakers and administrators, as well as employers were more apprehensive of, and responsive to, workers' demands that it is generally believed. Acknowledging workers' unions and self-representation may not have been acceptable to the authorities, or to the Oil Company who treated any such attempt as a Bolshevik plot. However, it is also surprising to discover in archival sources how much workers grievances and demands actually affected legislation, social policies, management strategies, and economic considerations by state administrators as well as employers (chapter 6).

Successive Waves of Industrialization and Labor Activism

The history of industrialization in the interwar era can be roughly divided into two periods: 1919-1931 and 1931-1941. In the first period, the government facilitated and encouraged private investments by introducing a series of new legislation. The administrative and centralized registration of properties and contracts, the establishment of a National Bank (*Bank-e Melli*) that took over the currency mint and monetary policy from the British owned Imperial Bank, and the improving security of roads and transport routes, were important features of these policies[51]. However, the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 initiated a far more interventionist economic policy by the state. Financial and monetary constraints on the budget overlapped with the enormous government burden of investment in the trans-Iranian railroad and other major infrastructure projects. The collapse of oil royalties, and the protracted dispute over the new Concession (1930-1933) further strained the treasury revenues. Nor was Reza Shah willing to curtail the army's significant budget. In response to these economic pressures which significantly affected the private sector the state imposed a monopoly on foreign trade, and began to directly invest in manufacturing and industrial ventures in order to maintain the pace of industrialization[52]. This phase of dirigiste state capitalism lasted from 1931 to 1941, and further intensified the processes of urbanization and centralization that were already in evidence in the previous decade. Escaping poverty and acute shortages, and faced with the disruption of the coercive policies discussed before, people flocked to cities in search of jobs and wages in new government owned industries.

This geographic shift to the cities changed the nature of industrial labor. In the early 1920s, there were only few industrial plants that employed more than a hundred workers, apart from the oil industry in the south. These larger factories were located mainly in the northern provinces, and included the Arsenal in Tehran, a sugar refinery in Kahrizak, two textile mills in Tabriz, and a match factory in Khoy. The change over the following two decades was drastic, with over 346 manufacturing plants established by the eve of the country's military occupation in 1941[53]. During the same period the annual rate of state budget allocation to industrial investment had grown on

[51] Massoud Karshenas, *Oil, State and Industrialization in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Bharier, *Economic Development in Iran 1900-1970*.
[52] Massoud Karshenas, *Oil, State and Industrialization in Iran*, 64–87.
[53] Ministry of Labor, *Amar-e Sanaye'e Iran* (Industrial Statistic of Iran) (Tehran: Entesharat Vezarat Kar, 1948).

average 25 per cent[54]. The largest industrial employers among these were the long-existing cotton and wool spinning, and textile-mills that altogether employed approximately 26 thousand workers.

Table 10 Growth of the Labor Force in Selected Industrial Sectors

INDUSTRIES	EARLY 1920S	EARLY 1930S	LATE 1930S
Oil	7,000-8,000	17,000	31,000
Spinning and Textile	< 1500	1800	25,700
Leather Tannery	Not Available	Not Available	> 5000
Electricity Plants	100	200	600
Construction and Road	3,300	Not Available	60,000
Mining	200	Not Available	3,000
Railways	-	-	14.500
Car Transport	-	12,000	20,000
Carpet	Not available	Not Available	250,000

Willem Floor, *Industrialisation in Iran 1900-194* (Durham: University of Durham Press, 1984), p. 29.

From a national perspective, the 1929 Abadan strike of 1929 was one of the first expressions of collective demand for self-representation by a new industrial class that had been gradually formed in larger cities since the end of the WWI. Following the defeat of oilworkers' strike at the Abadan refinery, the covert activities of the labor activists continued with more energy. In May 1931 the workers of the *Vatan* state-owned textile factory in Isfahan began a strike calling for improvements in working and living conditions[55]. "The strike was almost total, and even 8 year old children participated. A few workers of the weaving department, who wanted to continue to work, were induced to strike as well." Marching towards the city centre, the workers articulated their demands that included a change from piecework to a monthly salary; an eight-hour working day with a living wage and overtime; adequate leisure time for half a day per week with pay.

Following a police attack on the marchers and the arrest of a number of strike leaders workers returned to work the following day. However, they stopped work after eight hours as planned. More police harassment could not induce the strikers to

[54] Manuchehr Zia'i, *Majmueh Qavanin Vezarat-e Kar* (Budgetary Amendments Collection) (Tehran: Vezarat Barnameh va Budgeh, 1976)
[55] Afacan, "Revisiting Labour Activism in Iran: Some Notes on the Vatan Factory Strike in 1931."

rescind their demands. Finally, following some intense negotiations between the representatives of the government, the director of the factory, and the representatives of the workers, the government backed off and reached an agreement with the strikers, accepting most of their demands, including the reduction of the working day from twelve to nine hours, and extending the lunch break from half an hour to one hour. Throughout the 1930s the Isfahan textile workers' achievement in rectifying the working day regulations remained a benchmark not only for Iranian workers who wished to fix their working days, but also for the government in introducing new legislation regulating employers' and employees' associations.

The Isfahan textile strike was the last in the chain of labor strikes in interwar Iran. The gradual decline of labor activism in the 1930s was not simply due to the repressive political measures adopted by the new regime. The state-sponsored industrialization policies that were implemented in the wake of the Great Depression of 1929 had increased labor demand and had led to a relative shortage of skilled and semi-skilled workers. In the 1930s the Iranian Parliament passed a series of laws to improve working conditions in factories, workshops, and offices. These legislations included the Factory Act of 1936, which comprised the organization of miscellaneous training projects and the improvement of working conditions, housing, health and nutrition; the 1937 Act regarding the employment of prisoners in industrial and agricultural sectors; and the 1939 Act regarding the working conditions of medical personnel in government service. Important as these legislations were, they do not tell the whole story of whether or not working and living conditions for the industrial wageworkers improved as a result. However, they do indicate that an industrial wage working class had been formed in larger cities, and despite their heterogeneous ethnic and geographic background these workers were gradually forging solidarities and gaining a collective voice by posing demands for improved living and working conditions. In this context the 1929 Abadan oil workers' strike was the watershed for new forms of collective class agency that gained greater political relevance during the post WW2 period of oil nationalization struggles.

The Urban Process in Abadan 1929-1941

After highly protracted and contentious negotiations that began in 1928 the Iranian government granted a new 60-year oil concession to APOC in 1933. At one

point in 1932 an enraged Reza Shah unilaterally cancelled the existing concession, and only backed off after implicit British threats of military retaliation. The aftermath of the agreement had significant political fallouts, as Reza Shah's reign became more arbitrary and he eliminated some of his closest political allies, including Teymourtash and Sardar Asad Bakhtiyari, whom he suspected of disloyalty and collusion with the British. Some of the most significant clauses in the new agreement included the reduction of the concession area, a payment of £1 million to settle past disputes, improved royalties for Iran, the provision of cheaper petroleum products in Iran through a network of distribution set up by APOC, and a commitment by the Oil Company to reduce its dependence on foreign employees and increase substantially the share of its Iranian workforce by training them at various levels[56].

The 1933 concession was not particularly more advantageous to Iran, and its political fallouts poisoned domestic Iranian politics and strongly worsened public opinion against the Oil Company and Britain (see chapter 1 and the discussion of disputes over royalties). The new concession also had repercussions in Abadan and Khuzestan, as it made APOC even more concerned about its public image and how to deal with new concessionary terms, and to find more effective ways to reduce the potential of labor strife and nationalist backlash. The issue of Iranianization of the workforce took on greater urgency, along with the recognition that further reducing the reliance on casual laborers and increasing a loyal, better co-opted, and permanent workforce was the best strategy to pursue in the new and increasingly more hostile atmosphere. The result was a commitment by the Oil Company to the significant expansion of its social programs in the Company enclaves, especially education, leisure activities, and housing provision. The rest of this chapter will briefly outline these changes in general terms.

As seen in previous chapters, the urban spaces of Khuzestan's oil cities had been characterized by segregation and dualism between Company enclaves and their indigenous local surroundings. However, this segregationist geography had its limits and was implemented unevenly, and against considerable resistance. Thus, Masjed Soleyman had more of the characteristics of a classic company town than the much

[56] Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle*; Fatemi, *Oil Diplomacy;*; Malek, "Oil in Iran between the Two World Wars."

larger and more heterogeneous Abadan (chapters 3, 6). Despite these important variations the Company enclaves shared certain spatial characteristics that reveal how urban design and central planning were used as instruments of social training and employment management and control. These characteristics were apparent if one compared the company enclaves in Abadan to the *Shahr* [Abadan Town] and other indigenous neighborhoods that fell outside its direct jurisdiction.

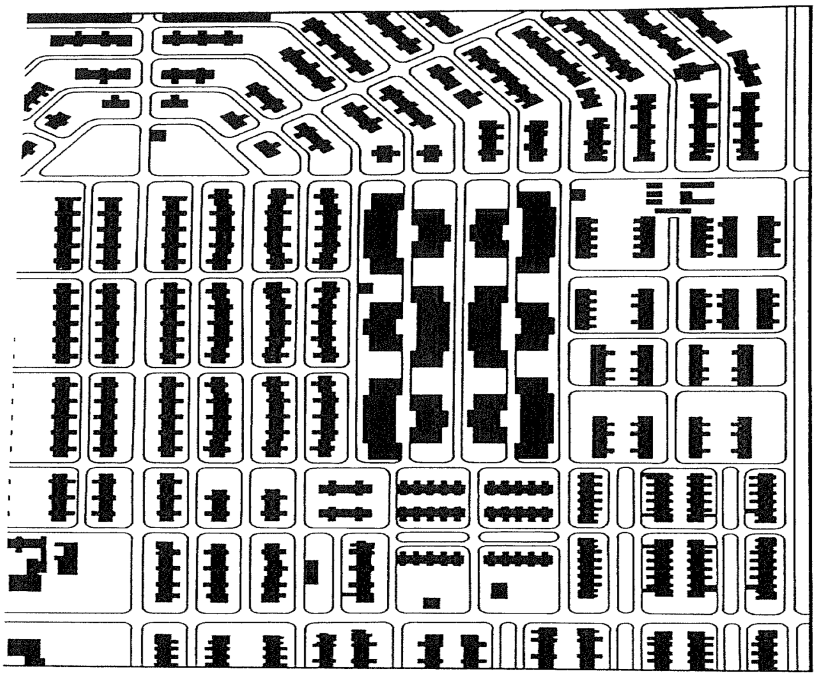
Whereas "formal" company enclaves were subdivided into strictly hierarchic, centrally planned, and meticulously segregated spaces, the "informal" urban areas were an amalgam of different construction materials, and types of shelter and architectural forms used by different social groups who lived in close proximity and intermingled with each other. Over time, this glaring contradiction within and between these spaces – between the formal and informal spaces, the legal and subversive, the ordered and disciplined, the chaotic and lively, the rich and destitute, the modern and hybrid, the controlled and repressed, and the anarchic and spontaneous – came to define the character of these oil towns, and especially of Abadan

By the mid 1930s the formal company spaces of Abadan consisted of several enclaves ringing the refinery or set apart by various Company facilities, the residents of which were carefully assigned housing according to their job, rank in the company roster, and even race, nationality, and ethnicity[57]. A rigid and inflexible hierarchy defined the neighborhood, street, alley, and the specific house assigned to each individual employee according to his formal status, work record, skill, and even ethnicity, and marital status (the vast majority of formal employees being male). Senior European staff were housed in "Braim", which consisted of large villas and bungalows set on green lawns, surrounded by parks and gardens and lined with English hedges, and built on lots averaging 1000 m², and 4.5 units per hectare. Workers' neighborhoods, such as Bahmanshir and Bahar, were row houses with high walls and tiny courtyards, built in straight lines and wall-to-wall, averaging 120 m², with a density of 26 to 31 units per hectare (See Figure 2). In between these extremes

[57] This section is partly based on Ehsani, "Social Engineering and Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns."

lay the middle- and lower-staff neighborhoods, such as Bawardeh, which were combinations of these two forms in terms of architecture, design, and scale[58].

Figure 2: Layout and Density of Workers' Neighborhoods in Company Areas of Abadan[59]



The employment of several construction and architectural firms under the overall direction of the architect J.M. Wilson (worked for APOC 1926-1941) provided an urban and architectural coherence to these company enclaves[60]. As the Iranianization policies became more pressing after 1933, the racial segregation that had previously separated the spaces of routine interaction and daily life between Iranians, Indians, and the English and Europeans gradually became less marked, in

[58] Paul Vieille, Zafardokht Ardalan, and Abolhassan Banisadr, "Abadan: Morphologie et Fonction Du Tissu Urbain," *Revue Geographique de l'Est*, no. 4 (1964): 337–85; Paul Vieille and K Mohseni, "Ecologie Culturelle D'une Ville Islamique: Tehran," *Revue Geographique de l'Est*, no. 3–4 (1969): 315–60.
[59] Source: Vieleille et.al. (1964)
[60] C.H. Lindsey-Smith, "J.M. The Story of an Architect," 1976.

comparison to the occupational and class distinctions that served as the norms segmenting city spaces, although they did not disappear altogether.

These forms of designed spatial segregation and planned inequality were glaring visual signs of the "modernity" of Masjed- Soleyman and Abadan[61]. In addition, these oil cities had other unprecedented urban amenities that set them apart as conspicuously modern. They were the sites of the first airports, motor vehicles, cinemas, technical schools, mixed schools (boys and girls, foreign and Iranian), leisure clubs, sports clubs, bus services, mass transport, luxury inns, well-equipped hospitals, etc., in Iran and the region. At the same time, all these amenities were segregated for different social layers and classes, to the extent that Masjed Soleyman even had separate cemeteries for workers and staff.

This system allowed the social position and status of each individual employed by the Company to become public knowledge through his residential address, the means of transportation and the medical facilities he and his family were allowed to use, the social and athletic clubs he was allowed to join, and the schoolsis children could attend. At the same time, because the Company's internal organization was also to an extent a meritocracy, and as each step up the career ladder translated into greater material privileges and social status, workers were encouraged both to feel envious and to compete against each other, and to pursue individual and personal rather than collective benefits. Transforming urban amenities and city spaces into symbolic capital was one of the most effective instruments for controlling the population in these cities.

Modernizing the Household

By the mid 1930s the Company was increasingly faced with the exigency of finding ways to house its enormous workforce, but it also had to adapt it to the stringent technical exigencies and special demands of modern industry. Once trained and familiarized with the rigors of their industrial jobs, permanent workers became valuable assets, human capital, that needed to be retained, to be kept relatively content, dependent on their wages, and docile. The designed spaces of the city

[61] I use "modernity" in the Foucauldian sense, as a material, spatial, and discursive exercise of power that simultaneously generates the individual and collectives, through the exercise of disciplinary power where various forms of hierarchy are internalized. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977); Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population : Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

increasingly became an instrument for achieving these goals. The details of the urban design, from the layout and architecture of the houses to the types of material used in their construction, the variations in the designed and organized spaces of entertainment and leisure, the types of walls and enclosures surrounding residences and their heights, the length and width of streets and alleys, the morphology of planned formal neighborhoods, and the types of kitchens, lavatories, and amenities made available collectively or installed in individual units, etc. were all intentional elements of a mechanism of spatial socialization in the Company enclaves.

The French geographer Xavier de Planhol has argued that the walled-in row houses of the workers were designed to duplicate "native architecture" and a sense of privacy, rooted in "Islamic values".[62] In fact, far from adhering to the local rural and pastoral domestic architectural forms these row houses were designed with two apparent purposes in mind: first, the mass production of a great number of cheap and durable residential units and, second, to directly intervene in the domestic space of the family and to modernize it.[63]

For one thing there were essential elements of local domestic architecture missing from these designed Company housing for workers. The tiny courtyards and high walls prevented air circulation, a great inconvenience in the atrociously humid and hot summer months. The widespread use of new or modern construction materials, such as bricks, roof plates, concrete, and metal frames, instead of adobe, reeds, rushes, and lumber (from palm drees), were faster, standardized, capable of being industrially mass produced, and cheaper; but unlike traditional materials they did not have the ability to modify extreme seasonal and climatic fluctuations. As a result, these Company houses depended on modern amenities, such as electricity, fans, some form of air conditioning, and heaters (gas and electricity were provided exclusively by the Company, and at its discretion), over time became common features in Company housing. The provision of these modern amenities, as well as sewerage, piped water, and medical facilities, helped to augur in new notions of personal hygiene and public health.

---

[62] De Planhol, "Abadan".
[63] See Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*; Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore*; Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*; Michelle Perrot, ed., *A History of Private Life: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1990); Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns*.

In Company towns the monopoly ownership by the Company of the means of production, as well as of reproduction, is the main instrument of social control. In other words, both occupation and the source of income – as well as real estate, housing, and social services – are in the monopoly of the Company. In market societies the household, aside from being the smallest social unit, plays a key role in in shaping the "individual", and in placing him/her within larger networks of social relations necessary for the continued accumulation of capital. For this reason larger institutional powers, especially the state and organized capital, consistently attempt to penetrate the household and to shape and regulate it according to their norms and interests. This intervention often requires the imposition of radical change upon existing household organizations, and sometimes even the prevention of the survival of these older forms.

The rigidly fixed residential architecture of the Company housing in the enclaves of Abadan and Masjed-Soleyman, prevented the accommodation of large extended families, the basic unit of social life in the region. Nor did it allow the use of the domestic space for alternative economic and productive activities that were prevalent throughout the region, such as the maintenance of livestock and poultry for the production of meat, dairy, and eggs, or vegetable garden plots. The small, one- or two-roomed houses were not even practical for traditional handcrafts, such as kilim weaving. All these activities, quite widespread in the region up to this day, are crucial for allowing the household to act as an autonomous economic unit by providing additional income and food supplements. As importantly, these economic activities also happen to be the realm of the economic agency of children and, especially, women.

Overall, the designed domestic architecture of the Company enclaves promoted the nuclear family as its privileged unit, but it also altered gender roles within the household, as well as the other major division of labor between different generations. In this setting the adult male becomes the sole legitimate economic agent, in the sense of his productive activity being socially validated through the labor market. The workplace was thus separated and set apart from the place of residence, and the result of the male wage earner's economic activity would return to the household in the monetary form.

The other consequence of this spatial division of labor was to make the house the exclusive domain of the wife/woman, but at the same time to deprive it of the economic and productive activities it previously allowed. At the same time, domestic space also became a boundary between the private and the public domains, and thus a physical constraint for women who could no longer easily and routinely cross the porous boundaries of the household space into the public arena as economic producers in their own right[64].

This spatial and gender division of labor effectively imposed a new role of homemaker upon women living in Company enclaves, and in many ways dramatically limited their former social roles. Contrary to the "traditional" extended household of pastoralist and agrarian local societies, the "modern" nuclear family was a social form imposed by the domestic architecture of Company enclaves. For one thing, the Company housing architecture curtailed the number of children and other generations or relatives who could live under the same roof, primarily because of the shortage of space and the architectural design of the houses. Ordinarily, the only other generation who could reside in these houses were the children who, instead of participating in collective household productive activities, were sent out to schools (vocational and regular) in order to eventually replace their parents at home, at the workshop, the refinery, and the oil fields, after several years of disciplined training and socialization[65].

This modernization of the family, gender, and women has been a mainstay of "modernity". However, its early imposition from above in Khuzestan's company towns set the stage for its replication as a desired model of development later on across the country, long after the AIOC (Anglo Iranian Oil Company, as APOC came to be renamed after 1933) had relegated its role to the oil Consortium and the Iranian state in 1953. The anomie and social problems mentioned have remained acute in the newer and smaller company towns of Khuzestan and elsewhere, such as the agro-industrial model villages of Dezful, the sugar-cane plantations of Haft-Tappeh, the steel town of Mobarakeh, the copper-mining town of Sarcheshmeh, the industrial-machinery town of Arak, etc. This is especially the case for women, where

[64] Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*; Aldridge, "Only Demi-Paradise? Women in Garden Cities and New Towns."
[65] On the social impact of the modernization of the extended household in Khuzestan see Ehsani, "Urban Provincial Periphery in Iran: Revolution and War in Ramhormoz"; Goodell, *The Elementary Structures of Political Life*.

geographic isolation and their seclusion in the household is not relieved by the large scale of the urban setting and the diversity of city life, as it was in Abadan and Masjed-Soleyman.[66]

Public Space

The wide boulevards and the grid pattern that characterized the formal spaces of Abadan distinguished it from other Iranian cities in the interwar period. The physical layouts of historical Iranian cities tend to follow the local physical topography, primarily as the means of water allocation by gravity[67]. They have narrow, winding alleys and culs-de-sac, lined by high brick or adobe walls, intended to defend neighborhoods from wind and dust, extreme fluctuations in climate, and from physical and military attacks and molestation. In these cities an important part of the flow of everyday social life outside the home and workplace is shaped in the public space of streets and bazaars.

The formal public space of company towns differs from this historical model in several important respects. In Abadan, instead of long and narrow winding alleys forming a functional and protective maze, the front doors of the row houses designed for workers open onto either short, narrow, and straight alleys that abut onto large streets at both ends, or directly onto large avenues (see Figure 2). In this way each house is set up as distinct from its neighbors, and separated from the neighborhood, the intimate street life, and ultimately from the workers' society. Any collective protest or suspicious gatherings among neighborhood residents can be quickly detected, and each street, alley, and even neighborhood can be easily cordoned off from the others should the need arise (see Figure 2).

The assignment of housing by the Company, based on occupation, rank, and race, and the constant reassignment of the personnel within the Company hierarchy,

---

[66] For the case of the sugar-cane plantation in Haft-Tappeh see Ministry of Agriculture, *Tarhe Eskane Karkonane Vahedha-ye Haftgane-ye Tarhe Tose'e-ye Neyshekar va Sanaye-eJjanebi* (Tehran, 1990). On Dezful's agribusiness towns see Goodell, *Elementary Structures of Political Life*. On planned industrial townships in Iran see Azam Khatam, "Molahezat-e Ejtema-yi dar Makan-yabi va Ehdas-e Shahrha-ye San'ati", *Ettelaat Siasi-Eqtesadi*, 53/54 (1992), pp. 59-60. Khatam's research is based on fieldwork and interviews with many residents of several company towns in Khuzestan, Arak, and Isfahan. See also J. Varesi, *Do Negaresh be Sakht-e do No-Shahr dar Shahrha-ye Jadid-e Iran* (Tehran: Ministry of Housing and Urbanism, 1994).

[67] On the historical morphology of cities on the Iranian Plateau see Michael Bonine, "Morphogenesis of Iranian Cities," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69 (1979): 208–24; Michael Bonine, *Yazd and Its Hinterland*, vol. 83, Marburger Geographische Schriften (Marburg, 1980); Massoud Kheirabadi, *Iranian Cities* (Austin: Texas UniversityPress, 1991).

made the forging and maintenance of lasting spatial solidarities difficult. Because the independent ability to choose one's residence was denied the workers seeking company housing, the formation of autonomous and spontaneous networks of solidarity in space by using common kinship, ethnic background, or geographic origins, were near impossible.

In Abadan, the intention to use urban space as an instrument of controlling the population can be readily detected in the details of the design of the neighborhood and public spaces of the Company enclaves and formally designed parts of the city. In a 1960s study the French sociologist Paul Vieille and his collaborators pointed out some glaring examples of these coercive and panoptic aspects of the urban design of Abadan in a study that is still one of the best examples of spatial analysis in Iran.[68] The motives followed in the urban design of Abadan, they argued, were not the conventions of urban planning, nor the price of land and economic calculations, but the separation and distinction of different areas of the city from one another by a central authority. It is self-evident that if different city neighborhoods were constructed adjacent to each other, the provision of common services and infrastructure would be far cheaper due to the economies of scale. In fact, Abadan's neighborhoods were built apart and separated by wide stretches of empty terrain, wide roads, pipelines, the administrative and industrial facilities and, of course, the enormous bulk of the refinery itself. This imposed separation prevented easy intermingling and routine pedestrian interactions, as well as potentially dangerous collective congregations between separate city sections.

Figure 3 is an aerial photograph of Abadan taken in the 1940s. The view is to the north, with Shatt al-Arab River to the west (left) and Iraqi territory visible in the upper section of the photograph. In the foreground is the Bawarda staff neighborhood. The bulk of the refinery is in the middle, with Braim, the neighborhood of the senior staff visible as a green triangle just north of the refinery, near the river. In between Bawarda and the Refinery lies the *Shahr* or Abadan Town, with its apparently chaotic and maze-like pattern, cut through by several wide avenues and access roads linking Bawarda and the Refinery. These wide access roads were built after 1926 (see chapter 6).

---

[68] See Vieille et al., "Abadan: Morphologie et Fonction Du Tissu Urbain"; Paul Vieille et al., "Abadan: Tissu Urbain, Attitudes et Valeurs," *Revue Geographique de l'Est*, no. 3–4 (1969): 361–78.

Bawarda is kept separate from Abadan by a wide swath of seemingly open land, where some workshops and storage sheds are scattered about. The open area abuts into a wide ditch, which was dug after 1926, to heated protest by city officials and townspeople (chapter 6).

In Company enclaves roads did not connect different city sections to traffic exchanges. Rather they ended in several bottlenecks that allowed the surveillance of all communication between different parts of the city. Guard posts marked the boundaries of different neighborhoods, and there were regular police stations near or at the entrance to workers' neighborhoods. APOC was the monopoly owner of all land in the formal company enclaves. It was responsible for organizing different sections of these enclaves, as well as for creating, maintaining, and reinforcing the distinctions between its different parts.

Photograph 23: Bawarda & Jamshid Housing Estates. Staff Housing in Foreground Against Workers Housing in Background



Source: BP Archives

Photograph 24: Abadan (circa 1930s): Bawarda, Indigenous Town, Refinery, and Braim



Source: BP Archives

Photograph 23 is an aerial picture of two Company neighborhoods of Abadan in the 1940s. In the foreground we see the senior staff housing development in *North Bawarda*, and in the background the row houses of *Jamshid* neighborhood for mid ranking workers, and further still lies the workers housing in *Bahmanshir* neighborhood. The water tower at the center also acts as a watchtower. The road grid separates neighborhoods, but also serves the functions of protection, as well as surveillance in a visibly panoptic manner. The contrast in the density as well as availability of green open space is detectable, even in this distant aerial photograph. It is also clear that streets in these Company neighborhood are not intended for lingering or social interactions, as there are no shops, stalls, parks, benches, trees, fountains, or any other vestige of public intercourse available for residents outside their domestic space. The public space of Company areas is limited to Company clubs and buildings.

In Masjed-Soleyman the local topography and physical setting of oil wells and extraction facilities had to a large extent aided and modified the process of social engineering. While its oilfields produced a high yield Masjed Soelyman remained firmly in the grip of APOC, and was more stringently controlled as an exclusive company town than the much larger and more cosmopolitan Abadan. Houses and urban facilities were constructed, in a spread-out fashion, around oil wells and the industrial facilities. Specific neighborhoods were often called after these facilities – for example Nomre-e Yek (Number One, referring to the first oil well discovered), Nomre-e Chehel (Number 40), Naftak (Little Oil), Naftoun, etc. The distances and areas between neighborhoods were intentionally left barren and undeveloped, and were connected by narrow Company-built roads passing through rugged hills.

Every attempt by the local population to build unauthorized hovels and houses were immediately confronted by the Company's bulldozers and demolished. As in Abadan, official Company areas were built separately from one another, and had only one narrow access road in and out. Neighborhoods were designed either in a circular pattern, or as parallel streets that were interconnected by perpendicular streets, but dead ended on both sides, cutting and isolating the neighborhood from the world beyond, except through the single and easily guarded access road.

Company neighborhoods were segregated according to rank and status, set in separate locations with different amenities and characteristics. The senior managers lived in Shah Neshin (Seat of the King), senior staff in Naftak and Talkhab, junior and petty staff in Nomre-e Chehel, Camp Scotch, and Pansion-e Khayyam; and workers in Naftoun, Do Lane (Two Lanes), Seh Lane (Three Lanes), Bibian, etc.

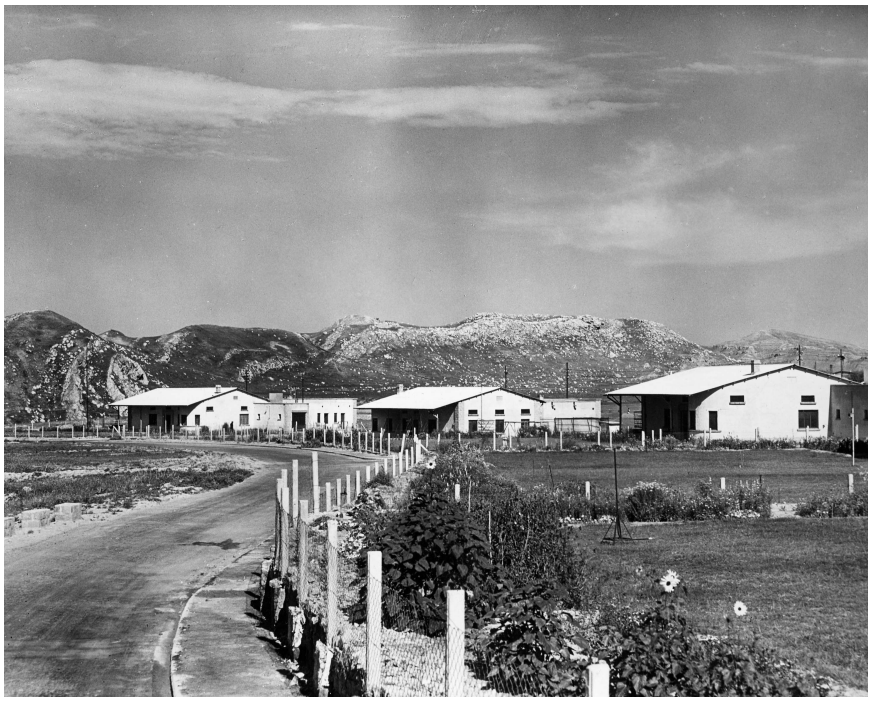
Photograph 25: Shahneshin Senior Staff Neighborhood in Masjed Soleyman



In Masjed-Soleyman, as in Abadan, the formal Company spaces of leisure and social interaction were differentiated according to rank and class. Senior staff and managers had membership to *Bashgah-e Markazi* (the Central Club), junior staff had the *Bashgah-e Iran*, and workers *Bashgah-e Kargari* (Workers' Club), located in Naftoun. Only members and their guests had access to each club. Aside from the medical facilities that were available to the public, but with segregated wards for Europeans and Company enployees, the rest of the town's population, if not employed by the Oil Company, had no access to Company facilities, especially the clubs. Social clubs had more or less similar facilities, such as a cinema, restaurant,

cafeteria, swimming pool, ping pong, bingo, billiards, etc. The difference was not so much in the range of amenities as the quality and, more important, the prestige conferred by membership of each institution, which played an important role in bestowing symbolic status on individuals and their family. In Masjed Soleyman even the company stores and the range and types of "rations" assigned to employees were segregated and distinguished by rank and social class.[69]

Photograph 26: Masjed Soleyman Staff Housing



[69] Shahni, Tarikh-e Masjed-Soleyman, pp. 349-530.



Photograph 27: Abadan. Club Cateen for European Staff

Production of Place as a Contested Process

Place is a social construct that both constitutes and is constituted by social relations (see chapter 1). The production of place and the interpretation of its meanings are equally contested processes. People and institutions struggle over defining, using, and shaping space and place according to their individual and collective interests. We have been discussing how the APOC built Khuzestan's oil towns and the architectural and design rational behind it. I have argued that this rational was both utilitarian, as well as a discursive exercise of power. The Company wanted to attract and maintain a labor force that would be at the same time competent, efficient, modern, and submissive. However, there has always been a fragile balance between the power of the Company over place, and its own clear lack of autonomy from both global markets, as well as domestic and local dynamics. On closer scrutiny we have seen that the structured coherence of this industrial landscape has always been shaky and open to contestation.

Company towns of the twentieth century, have been designed by using two contradictory as well as complementary principles: the idea of general welfare and the assimilation of the labor force into the generic values of the "middle class", and, on the other hand, the praxis of colonialism, both internal and external, in the form of a one-sided domination over an alien and weaker region and people, for the main

purpose of extracting natural resources and human abilities[70]. Contrary to the first principle, the aim of colonial social planning is not necessarily to integrate and standardize the subjugated region and people into a larger unit (national, for example), but rather to create and proliferate its internal divisions, differences, and distinctions in order to better control and dominate it.

The presence of both these principles could be detected in Abadan and Masjed-Soleyman. These cities were built in isolated regions, away from any significant centers of urban population. Various planned aspects of the urban design of the Company enclaves intended to instill among its employees new norms of work, and appropriate principles and behaviors that conformed to the needs of modern industry and capital accumulation in oil. Even though the Oil Company was not a "colonial power" per se, nevertheless it made free use of colonial practices and techniques of urban planning, as well as relying on principles of industrial management and corporate welfare policies. The standard of living, the available social services and urban amenities, the level of education and technical training, and the overall urban culture of Masjed-Soleyman and Abadan began to exceed the rest of the country from the 1930s, although acute social and spatial inequalities continued and became increasingly politicized and an unsustainable liability.

In Abadan the spontaneous growth of *Shahr* or the indigenous city, created an alternative geography outside the socially engineered confines of the Company enclaves. Characterized by a high population density of mostly destitute and displaced people from across southern Iran, the "native city" as Company officials called it, was characterized by a hodgepodge of dwelling types, shops, stalls, bazaars, "informal" residential and commercial neighborhoods, illegal hovels and shanties, and especially forbidden places housing brothels, drug sellers, and smugglers who made the most out of the city's location on the border.

These subversive places grew adjacent to the manicured lawns and hedges of fancy Company neighborhoods such as Braim and Bawardeh. Workers' squatter neighborhoods like *Abolhassan, Ahmadabad,* and *Karun* had grown next to formal Company compounds with posh Persian names such as *Pirouz* (Victorious), *Bahar* (Spring), and *Farahabad* (Refreshing). The "public" spaces of the formal Company

[70] On the notion of internal colonialism see Robert Hind, "The Internal Colonial Concept," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 3 (1984): 543–68; Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*.

enclaves were confined to clubs, athletic fields, Company stores, and urban amenities that only employees of the Company could access. In contrast, the informal Abadan Town and squatter neighborhoods were crisscrossed with winding alleys and constant urban confusion and hubbub, teeming with pedestrians, peddlers, and people until the small hours of the dawn. Despite its poverty, the *Shahr* presented a lively, heterogeneous, unruly, sometimes dangerous, and unsupervised public arena to all denizens of the city, whether employed by the Company or not. The two cities confronted each other with striking contrasts: the formal city was affluent, comfortable, ordered, and staid. It was shaped by disciplinary powers of separation, distinction, ranking, and surveillance that kept its residents under relentless control. The spontaneous and informal city was impoverished and destitute, but had a relatively untrammeled public life, in the more conventional sense of the word. It was open, integrated, public and, at the same time, quite hectic and anarchic.[71]

In these "free zones", which did not belong to the Oil Company and laid outside its control and surveillance, all manner of people inevitably worked, cohabited, and mixed together: villagers and tribesmen, Arabs, Lurs, Bakhtiyaris, Turks, Isfahanis, oilworkers, political activits, prostitutes, policement and bureaucrats, sailors, merchants, smugglers, men and women, rich and poor, etc. The majority of oil workers also lived in the *Shahr* and outside Company enclaves. A third of the population of the *Shahr* and some sixty per cent of residents of the notorious *Ahmadabad* were Company employees in the interwar years. In other words, the Company's efforts to mold and create an ideal workforce through its spatial designs, was consistently subverted as a result of contamination by these adjoining, visible, and accessible "free zones". As a result of the co-presence of alternative places, the tight and controlled cast of the planned Company enclaves was continuously broken, making Abadan a lively and cosmopolitan place with a strong sense of identity. No matter how powerful the Oil Company and its economic resources and organizational abilities were, it could not in the end manage to impose a full hegemony upon the place it had created. Spontaneous civil institutions, informal networks of trade, guild,

[71] I have discussed the dynamics of public space in Kaveh Ehsani, "The Politics of Public Space in Tehran," *City and Society*, under review 2015. The public space in Khuzestan's company towns cannot be considered as genuinely "public", as they were owned and controlled by the company. If urban life in these towns broke out of the rigid straightjacket of company control, it was due to the formation of autonomous and truly public spaces within the informal sectors of the city.

and subversive politics, religious and ethnic activities, always remained prominent features of the City.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archival Sources:

The Organization of National Library and Archives of Iran, hereafter cited as **INA** (Iran National Archives) followed by file number

The Archives of the British Petroleum Company, University of Warwick, hereafter cited as **BP** followed by file number

I.M. Burell, Editor, Iran Political Diaries; 1881-1965; Volumes 1-14 (Cambridge, 1997), hereafter cited as **IPD** followed by volume

Books, Articles, and Published Material:

Abbasi-Shahni, Danesh. *Tarikh-e Masjed Soleyman*. Tehran: HIrmand, 1995.

Abbott, George C. "A Re-examination of the 1929 Colonial Development Act." *Economic History Review* 24, no. 1 (1971): 68–81.

Abrahamian, Ervand. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Abtahi, Alireza. *Naft va Bakhtiyari-ha*. Tehran: Moassesseh Motale'at Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran, 1985.

Abu-Lughod, Janet. *Rabat, Urban Apartheid in Morocco*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Adamec, Ludwig W. *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*. Vol. 3 - Abadan. 4 vols. Graz: Akademische Drucku. Verlagsanstalt, 1976.

Adamiyat, Fereydoun. *Fekr-e Democrasi-e Ejtema'i Dar Nehzat-e Mashruṭiyat-e Iran*. Tehran: Payam, 1976.

———. *Ideolojy-e Nehzat-e Mashroutiyat-e Iran*. Tehran: Payam, 1976.

Adams, Robert McC. "Agriculture and Urban Life in Early Southwestern Iran." *Science* 136, no. 3511 (1962): 109–22.

Adams, Robert McC, Theodore E. Downing, and McGuire Gibson, eds. *Irrigation's Impact on Society*. Anthropological Papers of the University of Arizona, no. 25. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974.

Adas, Michael. *Machines as the Measure of Men; Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Adelson, Roger. *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory*. New York: Continuum, 2001.

Afacan, Serhan. “Revisiting Labour Activism in Iran: Some Notes on the Vatan Factory Strike in 1931.” *International Labor and Working Class History*, Forthcoming.

Afary, Janet. *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy & the Origins of Feminism*. The History and Society of the Modern Middle East. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Afkhami, Amir Arsalan. “Compromised Constitutions: The Iranian Experience with the 1918 Influenza Pandemic.” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 77 (2003): 367–92.

———. “Iran in the Age of Epidemics. Nationalism and the Struggle for Public Health: 1889--1926.” PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2003.

———. “The Sick Men of Persia: The Importance of Illness as a Factor in the Interpretation of Modern Iranian Diplomatic History.” *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 3 (2003).

Afshar, Mahmoud. “Nokati Chand Piramoun-e ‘Alat-e Fe’l Shodan-e Taqizadeh dar Tajdid-e Qarardad-e Naft, ‘Pul Gereftan-e’ Modaress az Alman-ha dar Jang-e Jahani-ye Avval, va ‘Reshveh Gereftan-e’ Vosouq el-Dowleh va Shoraka az Engelis dar Qarardad-e 1919.” *Yaqma*, no. 352 (January 1978): 588–96.

Afshar Naderi, Nader. “Eskan-e Ashayer va Asar-e Ejtemaii va Eqtesadi-e an.” In *Ketab-e Agah: Ilat va Ashayer*, 328–51. Tehran: Agah, 1984.

Aglietta, Michel. *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*. New Edition. London: Verso, 2000.

Ahmad, Feroz. “A Note on the International Status of Kuwait before November 1914.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 2 (1992): 181–87.

Ainsworth, W.F. *The River Karun*. London, 1888.

Al-e Ahmad, Jalal. “Gozareshi az Khouzestan.” In *Karname-ye Seh Saleh*, 3rd ed., 66–94. Tehran: Ravaq, 1978.

———. *Jazireh-ye Khark, Dorr-e Yatim-e Khalij*. Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1960.

Aldridge, Meryl. “Only Demi-Paradise? Women in Garden Cities and New Towns.” *Planning Perspectives* 11 (1996): 23–39.

Amanollahi Baharvand, Sekandar. “Nezam-e Ejetmaii-Siasi Il-e Baharvand va Taghir va Tahavol-e an.” In *Ketab-e Agah: Ilat va Ashayer*, 102–29. Tehran: Agah, 1984.

———. “Zaval-e Kouchneshini dar Iran: Yekjaneshini Ilat va Ashayer.” *Motale’at-e Melli* 5, no. 17 (2004): 155–83.

Amin, Camron Michael. *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman: Gender, State Policy, and Popular Culture, 1865-1946*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002.

Amiralaii, Chamseddine. *Khal’e Yad az Sherkat-e Sabeq-e Naft-e Iran va Engelis (Dispossession of the Former Anglo Iranian Oil Company)*. Tehran: Dehkhoda, 1978.

Andersen, Steen. “Building for the Shah: Market Entry, Political Reality and Risks on the Iranian Market, 1933–1939.” *Enterprise and Society* 9, no. 4 (2008): 637–69.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1996.

AIOC. *National Oil Refineries*: *Llandarcy Refinery*. London: Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, 1953.

Ansari, Mostafa. “The History of Khuzistan, 1878-1925: A Study in Provincial Autonomy and Change.” PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974.

Apffel Marglin, Frederique. “Smallpox in Two Systems of Knowledge.” In *Dominating Knowledge*, edited by Stephen Marglin and Frederique Apffel Marglin, 102–44. Oxford: Clarendon, 1990.

Appel, Hannah. “Offshore Work: Oil, Modularity, and the How of Capitalism in Equatorial Guinea.” *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 4 (2012): 692–709.

Ardent, Gabriel. “Financial Policy and Economic Infrastructure of Modern States and Nations.” In *The Formation of States and Nations in Western Europe*, edited by Charles Tilly, 164–242. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Atabaki, Touraj. “Disgruntled Guests: Iranian Subalterns on the Margins of the Tsarist Empire.” In *The State and the Subaltern*, edited by Touraj Atabaki, 31–52. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007.

———. “Far from Home, but at Home; Indian Migrant Workers in the Iranian Oil Industry,” 2014.

———. “From ’Amaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker): Recruitment, Work Discipline and Making of the Working Class in the Persian/Iranian Oil Industry.” *International Labor and Working Class History* 84 (Fall 2013): 159–75.

———. , ed. *Iran and the First World War*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2006.

———. “Sandicalizm dar Jombesh-e Kargari-e Iran dar Faseleh-e Salha-ye 1320-25.” *Alefba* Second series, Paris, no. 6 (1985): 39–60.

Atabaki, Touraj, and Kaveh Ehsani. “Shifting Governmentality in the Shadow of Labor Activism: Revisiting the Roots and Impact of the 1929 Abadan Oil Workers’ Strike.” Paper presented at the *Middle East Studies Association Annual Conference*. New Orleans, 2013.

Atabaki, Touraj, and Erik Jan Zürcher, eds. *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004.

Athari, Kamal. “Masjed Soleyman; Sherkat Shahri Madaniyat Yafteh.” *Ettela’at-e Siasi-Eqtesadi*, no. 47/48 (1991).

Atkin, Muriel. *Russia and Iran, 1780-1828*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980.

Avanesian, Ardashes. *Safehati Chand az Jonbesh-e Kargari-ye Iran dar Dowran-e Avaal-e Reza Shah*. Leipzig: Tudeh Publications, 1979.

Avery, Peter, and S. Simmonds. “Persia on a Cross of Silver: 1880-1890.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 10 (1974): 259–86.

Azkia, Mostafa, and Kaveh Ehsani. “Abiyari Dar Ramhormoz Part 1 (Social Aspects of Irrigation in Khuzestan).” *Ketab-e Tose’eh*, no. 2 (1990): 107–12.

———. “Abiyari Dar Ramhormoz Part 2 (Social Aspects of Irrigation in Khuzestan).” *Ketab-e Tose’eh*, no. 3 (1992): 96–107.

Bahar, Malek al-Sho’ara. *Tarikh-e Mokhtasar-e Ahzab-e Siasi-ye Iran (A Brief History of Iran’s Political Parties)*. Vol. 1. Tehran: Jibi, 1978.

Baker, Patricia. “Politics of Dress: The Dress Reform Laws of 1920s and 1930s Iran.” In *Languages of Dress in the Middle East*, edited by Nancy Lindisfarne Tapper and Bruce Ingham, 178–92. Richmond: Curzon, 1997.

Bakhash, Shaul. *Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy and Reform under the Qajars*. St. Anthony’s Middle East Monographs 8. London: Ithaca Press, 1978.

———. “The Evolution of Qajar Bureacracy: 1779-1879.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 7, no. 2 (1971): 139–68.

Bakker, Karen. “The Commons versus the Commodity: Alter-Globalization, Anti-Privatization, and the Human Rights to Water in the Global South.” In *Privatization: Property and the Remaking of Nature-Society Relations*, edited by Becky Mansfield, 38–63. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Bakker, Karen, and Gavin Bridge. “Material Worlds? Resource Geographies and the ‘Matter of Nature.’” *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 1 (2006): 5–27.

Baldwin, Peter. *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830-1930*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Balfour-Paul, Glen. *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain’s Relinquishment of Power in Her Last Three Arab Dependencies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Bamberg, James. *History of the British Petroleum Company*. Vol. 2. 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Banani, Amin. *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961.

Barth, Fredrik. *Nomads of South Persia*. Boston: Little Brown, 1961.

Batatu, Hanna. *The Old Social Classes and The Revolutionary Movement In Iraq*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Batchelor, Peter. “The Origin of the Garden City Concept of Urban Form.” *Journal of Society of Architectural Historians* 28, no. 3 (1969): 184–200.

Bayan-e Amari-ye Tahavolat-e Eqtesadi va Ejtema’i-e Iran Dar Doran-e Por Eftekhar-e Doudeman-e Pahlavi [Statistical Performance of the Social and Economic Developments of Iran During the Glorious Reign of the Pahlavi Dynasty]. Tehran: The Statistical Center of Iran, 1976.

Bayat, Asef. *Street Politics: Poor People’s Movements in Iran*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

———. “Historiography, Class, and Iranian Workers,” in *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East*, ed. Zakhari Lockman (Syracuse: State University of New York Press, 1994), 165–210

———. *Workers and Revolution in Iran*. London: Zed Books, 1987.

Kaveh Bayat, “With or without Workers in Reza Shah’s Iran: Abadan, May 1929,” in *The State and the Subaltern*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 111–22

———. “Dar Kenar Ya Barkenar Az Kargaran-E Iran (Abadan Ordibehesht-E 1308),” *Goftogu*, no. 44 (2005): 69–86

———. “Riza Shah and the Tribes.” In *The Making of Modern Iran*, edited by Stephanie Cronin, 213–19. London: Routledge, 2003.

———. *Shuresh-e Ashayer-e Fars: 1307-1309*. Tehran: Noqreh, 1986.

Beck, Peter J. “The Anglo-Persian Oil Dispute 1932-33.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 9, no. 4 (1974): 123–51.

Behnam, Jamshid. “Population.” In *Cambridge History of Iran; the Land of Iran*, 1:468–88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.

Behrends, Andrea, Stephen P. Reyna, and Gunther Schlee, eds. *Crude Domination: An Anthropology of Oil*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2011.

Beinart, William, and Lotte Hughes. *Environment and Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Beinin, Joel. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Bernstein, Michael A. *A Perilous Progress: Economists and Public Purpose in Twentieth-Century America.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Bharier, Julian. *Economic Development in Iran 1900-1970*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Biernacki, Richard. *The Fabrication of Labor: Germany and Britain, 1640-1914*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Black-Michaud, Jacob. *Sheep and Land : the Economics of Power in a Tribal Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Block, Fred, and Margaret Somers. "In the Shadow of Speenhamland: Social Policy and the Old Poor Law." *Politics & Society* 31, no. 2 (2003): 283–323.

Bonanno, Alessandro, Lawrence Busch, William H. Friedland, Lourdes Gouveia, and Enzo Mingione, eds. *From Columbus to ConAgra: The Globalization of Agriculture and Food*. Lawrence, KA: University Press Of Kansas, 1994.

Bonine, Michael. "Morphogenesis of Iranian Cities." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69 (1979): 208–24.

———. *Yazd and Its Hinterland*. Vol. 83. Marburger Geographische Schriften. Marburg, 1980.

Bonine, Michael, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Ezekiel Gasper, eds. *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Bose, Sugata. *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.

———. *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Abdelmalek Sayyad. *Le Déracinement: La Crise de l'Agriculture Traditionnelle en Algérie*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1964.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc Wacquant. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Braun, Rudolf. "Taxation, Socio Political Structures, and State Building in Great Britain and Brandenburg Prussia." In *Formation of Nation States in Western Europe*, edited by Charles Tilly, 243–327. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Briggs, Asa. *A Social History of England*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983.

———. "Introduction." In *Essays in Labour History; 1886-1923*, edited by Asa Briggs and John Saville, 2:1–16. London: MacMillan, 1971.

———. *Victorian Cities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Bromberger, Christian. "Football as World-View and as Ritual." *French Cultural Studies* 6 (1995): 293–311.

Bulliet, Richard. *The Camel and the Wheel*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

Burawoy, Michael. *Extended Case Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009

———. *The Colour of Class on the Copper Mines: From African Advancement to Zambianization*. Zambian Papers. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972.

Burnett, John. *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*. 2nd ed. London: Methuen, 1986.

Burrell, R. M., ed. *Iran Political Diaries 1881-1965*. 14 vols. London: Archive Editions Ltd, 1997.

Butt, Gerald. *The Lion in the Sand; the British in the Middle East*. London: Bloombury, 1995.

Cahen, Claude. "L'Evolution de l'Iqta du IXe au XIIIe Siècle: Contribution a une Histoire Comparée des Sociétés Médiévales." *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 1953): 25–52.

Callon, Michel, ed. *Laws of the Markets*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998.

Cameron, Rondo. "A New View of European Industrialization." *The Economic History Review The Economic History Review* 38, no. 1 (1985): 1–23.

Canguilhem, Georges. *The Normal and the Pathological*. New York: Zone Books, 1991.

Caplan, Jane, and John Torpey, eds. *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Castells, Manuel. *The City and the Grassroots*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

Castree, Noel. "Commodifying What Nature?" *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no. 3 (2003): 273–97.

Çelik, Zeynep. *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers Under French Rule*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Chakeri, Cosroe. *Origins of Social Democracy in Modern Iran*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001.

———. *The Condition of the Working Class in Iran: A Documentary History*. Florence: European Committee for the Defence of the Democratic Rights of the Workers in Iran, 1978.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Labor History and the Politics of Theory; an Indian Angle on the Middle East." In *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East*, edited by Zachary Lockman, 321–34. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

———. "Postocoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" In *A Subaltern Studies Reader (1986-1995)*, edited by Ranajit Guha, 263–93. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Charle, Christophe. *La Crise des Sociétés Impériales: Allemagne, France, Grande-Bretagne : 1900-1940*. Paris: Seuil, 2001.

———. "Légitimités en Péril: Éléments pour une Histoire Comparées des Élites de L'état en France et en Europe Occidentale (19e - 20e Siècles)." *Actes de La Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 116/117 (1997): 39–52.

———. *Les intellectuels en Europe au XIXe siècle: Essai d'Histoire Comparée*. Paris: Seuil, 1996.

———. *Naissance des "Intellectuels", 1880-1900*. Paris: Minuit, 1990.

Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Chehabi, Hoochang. "Staging the Emperor's New Cloths: Dress Codes and Nation Building under Reza Shah." *Iranian Studies* 26, no. 3–4 (1993): 209–34.

Chehabi, Houchang, and Vanessa Martin, eds. *Iran's Constitutional Revolution: Popular Politics, Cultural Transformations and Transnational Connections*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

Chernyshevsky, Nikolai. “Nikolai Chernyshevskii: Selected Writings.” In *Late Marx and the Russian Road*, edited by Theodor Shanin, 181–203. New York: Montly Review Press, 1983.

———. *What Is to Be Done?* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Cherry, Gordon. *Town Planning in Britain Since 1900: The Rise and Fall of the Planning Ideal*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

Chevalier, Louis. *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes*. New York: Howard Fertig, 1973.

Chirol, Valentine. *The Middle Eastern Question: Or, Some Political Problems of Indian Defence*. London: J. Murray, 1903.

Christensen, Peter. *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environments in the History of the Middle East, 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press : University of Copenhagen, 1993.

Clawson, Patrick. “Knitting Iran Together: The Land Transport Revolution 1920-40.” *Iranian Studies* 26, no. 3–4 (1993): 235–50.

Cleveland, William L., and Martin Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 4th ed. Boulder: Westview Press, 2008.

Cloward, Richard, and Frances Fox Piven. *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Cockett, Richard. *Thinking the Unthinkable*. Waukegan: Fontana Press, 1995.

Cook, Philip. “The Contested Terrain of Locality Studies.” In *Human Geography; An Essential Anthology*, edited by John Agnew, et.al. Cambridge: Wiley, 1996: 476-191.

Cooper, A.R.C. “A Visit to the Anglo Persian Oilfields.” *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 13, no. 2 (1926): 148–61.

Cooper, Frederick. *Colonialism in Question*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

———. *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor, And The Capitalist World System*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.

———. “Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans. and the Development Concept.” In *International Development and the Social Sciences*, edited by Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, 64–92. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

———. *On the African Waterfront*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

———. “Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labor in Africa.” In *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa*, edited by Frederick Cooper, 7–50. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983.

Cooper, Frederick, and Randall Packard, eds. *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Cooper, Merian C. *Grass*. New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1925.

Cooper, Merian C, and Ernest Schoedsack. *Grass: A Nation’s Battle for Life*. Milestone Collection, 2000.

Corley, T.A.B. “Greenway, Charles (1857-1934).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.lib.depaul.edu/view/article/40994.

Coronil, Fernando. *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Cowen, Michael, and Robert Shenton. *Doctrines of Development*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
———. "The Invention of Development." In *Power of Development*, edited by Jonathan Crush, 27–43. New York: Routledge, 1995.
Crawford, Margaret. *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns*. London: Verso, 1995.
Crinson, Mark. "Abadan: Planning and Architecture under the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company." *Planning Perspectives* 12 (1997): 341–59.
Cronin, Stephanie. "Re-Interpreting Modern Iran: Tribe and State in the Twentieth Century." *Iranian Studies* 42, no. 3 (June 2009): 357–88.
———. *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910-1926*. London: I.B.Tauris, 1997.
———. *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society Under Riza Shah, 1921-41*. London: Routledge, 2003.
———. *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State 1921-41*. London: Routledge, 2007.
Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983.
———. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: Norton, 1992.
Curzon, George Nathaniel Curzon. *Persia and the Persian Question*. 2 vols. London: Elibron, 2005 [1892].
———. "The Karun River and the Commercial Geography of Southwest Persia." *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 12 (1890): 509–32.
———. *The Place of India in the Empire: Being an Address Delivered before the Philosophical Institute of Edinburgh*. London: J.Murray, 1909.
Damluji, Mona. "The Oil City in Focus: The Cinematic Spaces of Abadan in the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's Persian Story." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, no. 1 (April 25, 2013): 75–88.
Daneshvar, Mahmoud. *Didani-ha va Shenidani-ha-ye Iran*. 2 vols. Tehran: Ferdowsi, 1948.
Dasgupta, Keya. "A City Away from Home: The Mapping of Calcutta." In *Texts of Power*, edited by Partha Chatterjee. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.
Davis, Mike. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. New York: Verso, 2002.
De Bode, Baron Clement Augustus Gregory Peter Louis. *Travels in Luristan and Arabistan*. 2 vols. London: J.Madden & Co., 1845.
De Planhol, Xavier. "Abadan" *Encyclopeadia Iranica*. Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1991
———."Cholera: 1. In Persia." *Encyclopeadia Iranica*. Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1991.
———. "Geography of Settlement," in *Cambridge History of Iran; the Land of Iran*, vol. 1, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 409–67
Deacon, Alan. "Concession and Coercion: The Politics of Unemployment." In *Essays in Labour History; 1918-1939*, edited by Asa Briggs and John Saville, 3:9–35. London: Croom Helm, 1977.
Dean, Mitchell. *The Constitution of Poverty: Toward a Genealogy of Liberal Governance*. London: Routledge, 1991.
Dehqan Nejad, Morteza, and Zarifeh Kazemi. "Avamel-e Moaser dar Feqdan-e Tose'eh Rah-Haye Tejari Fars az Aghaz-e Jang-e Jahani-e Avval ta Payan'e

Jang-e Jahani-ye Dovvom." *Tarikh-e Ravabet-e Khareji* 12, no. 46 (2010): 27–52.

Deleuze, Gilles. "Forward." to *Policing of Families*, by Jacques Donzelot, ix–xviii. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

DeVito, Christian. "New Perspectives on Global Labour History, Introduction." *Workers of the Wold* 1, no. 3 (2013): 7–31.

Dezalay, Yves, and Bryant G. Garth. *The Internationalization of Palace Wars: Lawyers, Economists, and the Contest to Transform Latin American States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Digard, Jean Pierre. "Histoire et Anthropologie des Societes Nomades; Le Cas d'un Tribu d'Iran." *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 28, no. 6 (1973): 1423–35.

———. "Les Nomades et l'Etat Central en Iran: Quelques Enseignements d'un Long Passé d'Hostilité Reglementée'." *Peuples Méditerranéens*, no. 7 (1979): 37–53.

———. *Techniques des Nomades Baxtyâri d'Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Digard, Jean-Pierre, and Asqar Karimi. "Amalkard-e Sakhtar-e Enshe'abi va Sakhtar-e Qodrat Dar Jame'eh-ye Ili va Kouchneshin-e Bakhtiyari." *Tahqiqat-e Joghrafiyaii*, no. 15 (1990): 182–253.

Dinesen, Isak. *Last Tales*. New York: Vintage Books, 1975.

Dinius, Oliver J., and Angela Vergara, eds. *Company Towns in the Americas: Landscape, Power, and Working-Class Communities*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011.

Dobe, Michael E. "A Long Slow Tutelage in Western Ways of Work: Industrial Education and the Containment of Nationalism in Anglo- Iranian and ARAMCO, 1923-1963." PhD Dissertation, Rutgers University, 2008.

Donohoe, Maj M. H. *With The Persian Expedition*. London: Naval and Military Press, 2009.

Donzelot, Jacques. *L'Invention du Social: Essai sur le Declin Des Passions Politiques*. Paris: Seuil, 1994.

———. *The Policing of Families*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.

Dossal, Miriam. *Imperial Design and Indian Realities: The Planning of Bombay City 1855-75*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Downey, Morgan. *Oil 101*. New York: Wooden Table Press, 2009.

Dunsterville, L. C. *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*. London: Naval and Military Press, 2009.

Ebrahimnejad, Hormoz. "Épidémies, Médecine et Politique dans l'Iran du XIXe siècle." *Studia Iranica* 30, no. 1 (2001): 105–34.

Ebtehaj, Abolhassan. *Khaterat-e Abolhassan Ebtehaj [The Memoirs of Abolhassan Ebtehaj]*. 2 vols. Tehran: Entesharat-e Elmi, 1996.

Echenberg, Myron. *Plague Ports: The Global Urban Impact of Bubonic Plague, 1894-1901*. New York: New York University Press, 2010.

Edmonds, C. J. *East and West of Zagros Travel, War and Politics in Persia and Iraq 1913-1921*. Edited by Yann Richard. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Eftekhari, Yusof. *Khaterat-e Dowran-e Separi Shodeh*. Edited by Kaveh Bayat and Majid Tafreshi. Tehran: Ferdows Publishers, 1991.

Ehlers, Eckhart, and Willem Floor. "Urban Change in Iran, 1920-1941." *Iranian Studies* 26, no. 3–4 (1993): 251–76.

Ehsani, Kaveh. “A Critique of Planning, Development and Progress.” MA Thesis in Regional Planning, University of Massachusetts- Amherst, 1986.

———. “Arshiv-e Sherkat-e BP; Daricheh-yi Digar Bara-ye Tahqiqat-e Irani [BP Archives; a New Window for Iranian Studies].” *Goftogu*, no. 30 (2001): 199–203.

———. “Bohran-e Ab, Bohran-e Abadan [Water crisis/Abadan in Crisis],” no. 27 (2000): 162–72.

———. “Crude Power: Rethinking Oil and Politics.” Paper presented at *Lecture Series: Fueling Societies: Energy Resources and Politics from Below*. Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, 2014.

———. “Ideh.” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Indiana: Encyclopeadia Iranica Foundation, 2008. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ideh.

———. “Naft na Estebdad misazad, na democrasy (Oil is neither the cause of authoritarianism nor democracy.” *Tarikh Irani*, 2012. http://www.tarikhirani.ir/fa/files/13/bodyView/131/.

———. “Review essay: ‘Omran-e Khouzestan’; edited by Gholamreza Afkhami.” *Iran Nameh* 13 (1999): 403–10.

———. “Rural Society and Agricultural Development in Post-Revolution Iran: The First Two Decades.” *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006).

———. “Social Engineering and the Contradictions of Modernization in Khuzestan’s Company Towns: A Look at Abadan and Masjed-Soleyman.” *International Review of Social History* 48, no. 3 (2003): 361–99.

———. “Sweet Dreams; Sugarcane and the Politics of Development in Pre and Post-Revolution Iran.” Conference presented at the Development After Development, New York University, 2003.

———. “Tabar Shenasi-e Tarh-ha-ye Bozorg-e Tose’eh dar Iran-e Mo’aser (Genealogy of large scale development projects in contemporary Iran).” *Goftogu*, no. 54 (2009): 113–32.

———. “Tajadod va Mohandesi-ye Ejtema’ei; Negahi beh Tajrobeh Abadan va Masjed Soleyman.” *Goftogu*, no. 25 (1998): 9–45.

———. “The Politics of Property in Post-Revolution Iran.” In *The Rule of Law, Islam, and Constitutional Politics in Egypt and Iran*, edited by Said Amir Arjomand and Nathan Brown, 153–78. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2013.

———. “The Politics of Public Space in Tehran.” *City and Society*, under review 2015.

———. “Urban Provincial Periphery in Iran: Revolution and War in Ramhormoz.” In *Contemporary Iran*, edited by Ali Gheissari, 38–76. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Ehteshami, Manouchehr, ed. *Khouzestan va Lorestan Dar Ahd Naseri (Khuzestan and Luristan in Nasser al-Din Shah’s Era)*. Tehran: Mo’assesseh Motale’at Tarikh Mo’aser Iran, 2004.

Elgood, Cyril. *A Medical History of Persia and the Eastern Caliphate. The Development of Persian and Arabic Medical Sciences from the Earliest Times until the Year A.D. 1932*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.

Elling, Rasmus. “On Lines and Fences; Labor, Community and Violence in an Oil City,” 2014.

Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological Society*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

Elm, Mostafa. *Oil, Power, and Principle*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992.
Elwell-Sutton, L.P. *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955.
Emam Shushtari, Mohammad Ali. *Tarikh-e Joghrafiyayi-e Khuzestan*. Tehran: NP, 1952.
Engels, Friedrich. *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
———. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Revised. London: Penguin Classics, 2010.
Engelstein, Laura. "Morality and the Wooden Spoon; Russian Doctors View Syphilis, Social Class, and Sexual Behavior, 1890-1905." In *The Making of the Modern Body*, edited by Chathryn Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur, 169–208. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
Evans, Richard J. "Epidemics and Revolutions: Cholera in Nineteenth-Century Europe." *Past and Present*, no. 120 (1988): 123–46.
Fain, W. Taylor. *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
Farahmand Araqi, Ali. "Vakonesh-e Iran beh Naghz-e Bitarafi dar Jang-e Jahani-e Avval (Iran's Reaction to the Violation of Its Neutrality in WWI)." *Tarikh-e Ravabet-e Khareji* 4, no. 1 (2003): 167–99.
Farmanfarmayan, Manuchehr. *Blood and Oil*. New York: Modern Library, 1997.
Fateh, Mostafa. *Panjah Sal Naft-e Iran*. Tehran: Sherkat Sahami-e Chehr, 1956.
Fateh, Moustafa. *The Economic Position of Persia*. London: P.S.King and Son, 1926.
Fatemi, Nasrollah. *Oil Diplomacy; Powderkeg in Iran*. New York: Whittier Books, 1954.
Feinstein, C. H., Peter Temin, and Gianni Toniolo. *The European Economy Between the Wars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
Ferguson, James. *Expectations of Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
———. "Seeing like an Oil Company: Space, Security, and Global Capital in Neoliberal Africa." *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3 (2005): 377–82.
Ferrier, Ronald. *History of the British Petroleum Company*. Vol. 1. 3 vols. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
———. "The Iranian Oil Industry." In *Cambridge History of Iran, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, edited by Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Chares Melville, 7:639–704. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
Fesharaki, Fereydun. *Development of the Iranian Oil Industry*. New York: Praeger, 1976.
Fine, Ben, Michael Heasman, and Judith Wright. *Consumption in the Age of Affluence: The World of Food*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
Firouzan, T. "Dar Bareh Tarkib va Sazman-e Ilat va Ashayer-e Iran." In *Ketab-e Agah: Ilat va Ashayer*, 7–62. Tehran: Agah, 1984.
Flint, Kate. "Virginia Woolf and the General Strike." *Essays in Criticism* 36 (1986): 319–34.
Floor, Willem, *Labor and Industry in Iran, 1850-1941*. Mage Publishers, 2009.
———. "The Rise and Fall of the Banū Kaʿab; A Borderer State in Southern Khuzestan", *Iran,* 44 (2006): 277-315
———. *Public Health in Qajar Iran*. Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2004.
———. "The Creation of the Food Administration in Iran", *Iranian Studies*, 16. No.

3/4 (1983): 199-227
Forbes-Leith, F. A. C. *Checkmate; Fighting Tradition in Central Persia,* New York: Arno Press, 1973.
Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.
———. *Security, Territory, Population : Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
———. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
Foucault, Michel, Graham. Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. *The Foucault Effect : Studies in Governmentality : With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
Fourcade, Marion. "Culture and Economy." *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. New York: Blackwell Publishers, 2007.
———. *Economists and Societies: Discipline and Profession in the United States, Britain, and France, 1890s to 1990s*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
Fox, Robert, and Anna Guagnini, eds. *Education, Technology and Industrial Performance in Europe, 1850-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
Friedmann, Harriet. "Distance and Durability: Shaky Foundations of the World Food Economy." *Third World Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1992): 371-383.
Friedmann, Harriet, and Philip McMichael. "Agriculture and the State System." *Sociologia Ruralis* 29, no. 2 (1989): 93-117.
Galpern, Steven. *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East: Sterling and Postwar Imperialism, 1944-1971*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
Garthwaite, Gene. *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiyari Tribe in Iran*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2009.
Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Boston: Basic Books, 1977.
Gelvin, James L. *The Modern Middle East: A History*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
Ghani, Cyrus. *Iran and the Rise of the Reza Shah: From Qajar Collapse to Pahlavi Power*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1998.
Gheissari, Ali. *Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998.
Ghosh, Amitav. *Incendiary Circumstances: A Chronicle of the Turmoil of Our Times*. New York: Mariner Books, 2007.
Giddens, Anthony. *The Nation State and Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
Goodell, Grace. *Elementary Structures of Political Life: Rural Development in Pahlavi Iran*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
Goodman, David, and Michael Watts, eds. *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
Gottlieb, Robert, and Margaret Fitzsimmons. *Thirst for Growth: Water Agencies as Hidden Government in California*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994.
Gouldner, Alvin Ward. *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
———. *The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory*. New York: Seabury Press, 1980.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers, 1971.

Greaves, Rose. "Iranian Relations with Great Britain and British India: 1798-1921." In *Cambridge History of Iran, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, 7:350–73. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Greaves, Rose Louise. "British Policy in Persia, 1892-1903." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 28, Two Parts, Nos. 1 & 2 (1965): 34–60; 284–307.

———. *Persia and the Defense of India, 1884-1892 : A Study in the Foreign Policy of the Third Marquis of Salisbury*. London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1959.

Guagnini, Anna. "Worlds Apart: Academic Instructions and Professional Qualifications in the Training of Mechanical Engineers in England, 1850-1914." In *Education, Technology and Industrial Performance in Europe, 1850-1939*, edited by Robert Fox and Anna Guagnini, 16–41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Hakimian, Hassan. "Wage Labor and Migration: Persian Workers in Southern Russia, 1880-1914." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 4 (1985): 443–62.

Hall, Peter. *Cities of Tomorrow*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.

———.*Cities in Civilization: Culture, Innovation, and Urban Order*. London: Orion, 1999.

Haraway, Donna. *Simians Cyborgs and Women*. London: Free Association Books, 1996.

Hardy, Anne. "Public Health and the Expert: The London Medical Officers of Health." In *Government and Expertise: Specialists, Administrators, and Professionals, 1860-1919*, edited by Roy MacLeod, 128–44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Harloe, Michael. *The People's Home: Social Rented Housing in Europe and America*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995.

Harris, Jose. "Society and State in Twentieth Century Britain." In *Cambridge Social History of Britain: 1750-1950*, edited by F.M.L. Thompson, 3 *Social Agencies and Institutions*:63–118. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Harris, José. *Unemployment and Politics; a Study in English Social Policy, 1886-1914*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Harvey, David. *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

———. "Population, Resources, and the Ideology of Science." In *Spaces of Capital*, 38–67. New York: Routledge, 2000.

———. *Spaces of Hope*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

———. *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996.

———. "From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity." In *Mapping the Futures*, edited by Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, and et.al. London: Routledge, 1993.

———. *The Condition of Postmodernity : An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990.

———. *The Urban Experience*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

———. *Limits to Capital*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Haward, E. “India’s Defense as an Imperial Problem.” *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 13, no. 2 (1926): 111–29.

Hay, Douglas. “Property, Authority, and the Criminal Law.” edited by Douglas Hay, 17–64. New York: Pantheon, 1976.

Hayden, Dolores. *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing, and Family Life*. 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002.

———. *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790 - 1975*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979.

———. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982.

Hecht, Gabrielle. *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009.

Hechter, Michael. *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development*. New Brunswick, N.J.: University of California Press, 1979.

Hind, Robert. “The Internal Colonial Concept.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 3 (1984): 543–68.

Hobsbawm, Eric. *Industry and Empire: The Birth of the Industrial Revolution*. New York: The New Press, 1999.

———. *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875*. New York: Vintage, 1996.

———. *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*. London: Michael Joseph, 1994.

———. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Holdich, T. “The Gates of India.” *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review* 33, no. 65/66 (1912): 62–79.

Home, R.K. “Town Planning and Garden Cities in the British Colonial Empire 1910-1940.” *Planning Perspectives* 1990, no. 5 (1990): 23–37.

Home, Robert. *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities*. London: E & FN Spon, 1997.

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Hull, James P. “From Rustow to Chandler to You: How Revolutionary Was the Second Industrial Revolution?” *Journal of European Economic History* 25, no. 1 (1996): 191–208.

ILO. *European Housing Problems Since the War 1914-1923.* Geneva: International Labour Office, 1924.

———. *Labour Conditions in the Oil Industry in Iran*. Geneva: International Labour Office, 1950.

INA. “Official Telegraphic Correspondence Regarding Labor Relations and Other Issues Concerning the Anglo Iranian Oil Company’s Operations in the Province of Khuzestan (1908-1937).” *Iran National Archives*, 1937/1908.

Ingram, Edward. “The Defence of India, 1874-1914.” *Militärgeschichtliche Mittleilungen* 16, no. 2 (1974): 215–24.

Ironside, Edmund. *High Road to Command: The Diaries of Major-General Sir Edmund Ironside, 1920-1922;* London: Leo Cooper, 1972.

Irving, Robert Grant. *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

Issawi, Charles. *The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.
Ja'fari Valadayi, Asqar. "Tarhha-ye Tajziyeh-ye Khouzestan (Plots to Separate Khouzestan)." *Ettela'at-e Siasi-Eqtesadi*, no. 211/212 (2): 32–41.
Jack, Marian (Kent). "The Purchase of the British Government's Shares in the British Petroleum Company 1912-1914." *Past and Present*, no. 39 (April 1968): 139–68.
Jacoby, Russell. *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*. Boston: Basic Books, 1987.
Jafari, Peyman. "Reasons to Revolt: Iranian Oil Workers in the 1970s." *International Labor and Working Class History* 84, no. 1 (2013): 195–217.
Jamalzadeh, Mohammad Ali. *Ganj-e Shayegan*. Berlin: Kaveh, 1946.
Jefroudi, Maral. "Revisiting 'the Long Night' of Iranian Workers: Labor Activism in the Iranian Oil Industry in the 1960s." *International Labor and Working Class History* 84 (Fall 2013): 176–94.
Jenson, Jane. "Getting to Sewers and Sanitation: Doing Public Health within Nineteenth-Century Britain's Citizenship Regimes." *Politics and Society* 36, no. 4 (2008): 532–56.
Johnson, Steven. *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic--and How it Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2006.
Jones, Geoffrey. *Multinationals and Global Capitalism: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
———. *Banking and Empire in Iran: Volume 1: The History of the British Bank of the Middle East*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
———. *The State and the Emergence of the British Oil Industry*. London: Mac Millan, 1981.
Jones, J Graham. "Ernest Bevin and the General Strike; a Note." *Llafur* 8 (2001): 97–104.
Jones, Toby Craig. *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Water Forged Modern Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.
Kain, R. J. P, and Elizabeth Baigent. *The Cadastral Map in the Service of the State: A History of Property Mapping*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
Karimi, Asqar. "Damdari dar Il-e Bakhtiyari." *Honar va Mardom*, no. 129/130 (1973): 42–55.
———. "Nezam-e Malekiyat-e Arzi dar Il-e Bakhtiyari." *Honar va Mardom*, no. 189/190 (August 1978): 67–83.
Karshenas, Massoud. *Oil, State and Industrialization in Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh. *Frontier Fictions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
Kasravi, Ahmad. *Maqalat-e Kasravi*. Edited by Yahya Zaka. Tehran: Ṭahouri, 1956.
———. *Tarikh-e Mashrouteh Iran*. Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1951.
Kasravi, Aḥmad. *Tarikh-e Pansad Saleh Khouzestan*. Tehran: Gothenberg, 1951.
———. *Zendegani-e Man: Dah Sal dar 'Adliyeh va Chera az 'Adliyeh Birun Amadam*. Tehran: N/P, 1944.
Katouzian, Homa. *Political Economy of Modern Iran*. New York: New York University Press, 1980.
———. *State and Society in Iran*. London: IB Tauris, 2000.

Kazemzadeh, Firuz. *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914: A Study in Imperialism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.
Keddie, Nikki. *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protests of 1891-92*. London: Frank Cass, 1966.
Keddie, Nikki, and Mehrdad Amanat. "Iran under the Late Qajars." In *Cambridge History of Iran, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, 7:174–213. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
Kent, Marion. *Moguls and Mandarins: Oil, Imperialism and the Middle East in British Foreign Policy 1900-1940*. London: Franc Cass, 1993.
———. *Oil and Empire; British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil*. London: McMillan, 1976.
Kern, Stephen. *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.
Keynes, John Maynard. *Essays in Persuasion*. New York: Norton, 1963.
Khalidi, Rashid, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeva Simon, eds. *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
Khazeni, Arash. *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of 19th Century Iran*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009.
Kheirabadi, Massoud. *Iranian Cities*. Austin: Texas University Press, 1991.
Kiavand, Aziz. *Hokumat, Siasat, Ashayer*. Tehran: Entesharat-e Ashayeri, 1989.
Kidambi, Prashant. "'An Infection of Locality': Plague, Pythogenesis and the Poor in Bombay, C. 1896-1905." *Urban History* 31, no. 2 (2004): 249–67.
King, Anthony D. *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
Konrad, George, and Ivan Szelenyi. *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979.
Kotkin, Stephen. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
Kotobi, Laurence-Donia. "L'Emergence d'une Politique de Santé Publique en Perse Qajar; un Aperçu Historique de la Vaccinattion." *Studia Iranica*, no. 24 (1995): 261–84.
Kouross, Gholamreza, ed. *Ab va Fann-e Abyari dar Iran-e Bastan*, Tehran: Ministry of Water and Power, 1971.
Kula, Witold. *Measures and Men*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.
Ladjevardi, Habib. *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985.
Lahsaeizadeh, Abdolali. *Jame'eh Shenasi-e Abadan*. Shiraz: Kianmehr, 2004.
Laite, Julia Ann. "Historical Perspectives on Industrial Development, Mining, and Prostitution." *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 3 (2009): 739–61.
Lambert, Nicholas A. *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002.
Lambton, Ann K S. "Ilat." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2. Leiden: Brill, (1999):1095-1110
———. *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*. London: IB Tauris, 1991 [1953].
———. *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia: Aspects of Administrative, Economic and Social History, 11th-14th Century*. Binghampton: State University of New York Press, 1988.
———. *Qājār Persia : Eleven Studies*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press,, 1988.
———. *The Persian Land Reform, 1962-1966*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.

———. *Theory and Practice in Medieval Persian Government*. London: Variorum, 1980.
Landes, David. *The Unbound Prometheus; Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750-Present*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
Latifpour, Ahmad. *Dezful dar Gozar-e Zamān*. Tehran: Farhang-e Maktoub, 2008.
———. *Tarikh-e Dezful*. Tehran: Farhang-e Maktoub, 2008.
Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: an Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
Lawless, Richard, and Ian Seccombe. "Impact of Oil Industry on Urbanization in the Persian Gulf Region." In *Urban Development in the Muslim World*, edited by Hooshang Amirahmadi and Salah el Shakhs, 183–212. New Brunswick: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1993.
———. *Work Camps and Company Towns: Settlement Patterns in the Gulf Oil Industry*, vol. 36, Occasional Papers (Durham: University of Durham, 1987).
Layard, Austen Henry. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, Including a Residence Among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes Before the Discovery of Nineveh*. 2 vols. London: J. Murray, 1887.
Lee Peluso, Nancy. "Whose Woods Are These? Counter-Mapping Forest Territories in Kalimantan, Indonesia." *Antipode*. 27, no. 4 (1995): 383–406.
Lee, Sharon. "Racial Classifications in the US Census: 1890-1990." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16, no. 1 (1993): 75–94.
Lefebvre, Henri. *La Production de l'Espace*. Paris: Anthropos, 1983.
———. *Le Droit à la Ville*. 3rd ed. Paris: Anthropos, 2009.
———. *Writings on Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
Lenckowski, George. "Foreign Powers' Intervention in Iran during World War One." In *Qajar Iran*, edited by C. Hilenbradt, 76–92. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983.
Lesani, Abolfazl. *Talay-e Siah ya Bala-ye Iran*. Tehran: AmirKabir, 1978.
Lester, Alan. "Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of British Empire." *History Compass* 4, no. 1 (2006): 124–41.
Li, Tania Murray. *The Will to Improve*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
Lindsey-Smith, C.H. *J.M. The Story of an Architect*. London: Privately Published, Manuscript at the British Library,1976.
"Llandarcy: Down to The Last Drop." *BBC*, December 2, 2009, sec. History. http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/southwestwales/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8389000/8389503.stm.
Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. London: Hackett Pub Co, 1980.
Lockhart, Laurence. *The Record of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd.* Vol.1, 1901-1918. London: Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), 1938.
Lockhart, Lawrence, and Rose Greaves. *The Record of the British Petroleum Limited (1918-1946) Relations with the Persian (Iranian) Government*. London: British Petroleum Company, 1968.
Lockman, Zachary. *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
———. "Imagining the Working Class: Culture, Nationalism, and Class Formation in Egypt, 1899-1914." *Poetics Today* 15, no. 2 (1994): 157–90.
Longrigg, Stephen. *Oil in the Middle East: Its Discovery and Development*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Lorimer, John Gordon. *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*. 6 volumes. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, Eng.: Archive Editions, 1986.

Luong, Pauline Jones, and Erika Weinthal. *Oil is not a Curse: Ownership Structure and Institutions in Soviet Successor States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Lynch, Henry Blosse. "Notes on the Present State of the Karun River, between Shuster and the Shatel-Arab." *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 13, no.10 (1891): 592–510.

MacDonagh, Oliver. "The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal." *The Historical Journal* 1, no. 1 (1958): 52–67.

MacKenzie, Donald. *Material Markets: How Economic Agents Are Constructed*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

MacKinnon, Danny. "Reconstructing Scale: Towards a New Scalar Politics." *Progress in Human Geography* 35, no. 1 (February 1, 2011): 21–36.

Mahboubi Ardakani, Hossein. *Tarikh-e Moassesat-e Tamadoni-e Jadid Dar Irân*. 3 volumes. Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1975.

Mahdavi, Abd al-Reza Houshang. *Sahnehayee az Tarikh Mo'aser Iran*. Tehran: Elmi, 1998.

———. *Siyasat-e Khareji-e Iran dar Dowran-e Pahlavi, 1300-1357*. Tehran: Alburz, 2001.

Maier Charles. *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade after World War I*. Princeton University Press, 2011.

———. *In Search of Stability: Explorations in Historical Political Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

———. "Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920s." *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 2 (1970): 27–61.

Majd, Mohammad Gholi. *The Great Famine and Genocide in Persia, 1917-1919*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2003.

Malek, Mohammad. "Oil in Iran between the Two World Wars." In *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800*, edited by Vanessa Martin, 128–36. London: Routledge, 2009.

Maljoo, Mohammad. "Eqtesad-e Siasi-ye Nirou-ye Kar-e San'at-e Naft dar Iran-e Pas az Jang [The Political Economy of the Labor Force in Post-War Iran]." Kanoun-e Modafe'an-e Hoqouq-e Kargar, September 4, 2012. http://kanoonmodafean1.blogspot.nl/2012/09/blog-post.html.

———. "Ta'dil-e Nirou-ye Ensani dar Doereh-ye Eslahat [Adjusting the Labor Force during the Reformist Era]." *Naqd-e Eqtesad-e Siasi*, September 2012. http://pecritique.com/2012/09/22

Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Mandel, Ernest. *Late Capitalism*. London: Verso, 1978.

Mann, Michael. *The Sources of Social Power, Vol. 2: The Rise of Classes and Nation States, 1760-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1968.

Marcel, Valerie. *Oil Titans*. London: Chattam House, 2006.

Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.

Marcuse, Peter. "'Dual City': A Muddy Metaphor for a Quartered City." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 13, no. 4 (1989): 697–708.

Markovits, Andrei. "The Other 'American Exceptionalism': Why Is There No Soccer in the United States?" *Praxis International*, no. 2 (1988): 125–50.

Marlowe, John. *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson*. London: Cresset, 1967.

———. *The Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962.

Marshall, Alfred. "Three Lectures on Progress and Poverty by Alfred Marshall." *Journal of Law and Economics* 12, no. 1 (1969): 184–226.

———. *Where to House the London Poor*. Cambridge: Metcalfe (Reprinted from the Contemporary Review, for February, 1884), 1885. http://archive.org/details/wheretohouselond00marsuoft.

Marshall, T.H., and Tom Bottomore. *Citizenship and Social Class*. London: Pluto, 1992.

Martin, Emily. *The Woman in the Body*. Revised. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Martin, Vanessa. *The Qajar Pact: Bargaining, Protest and the State in Nineteenth-Century Persia*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2005.

Marx, Karl. *Capital*. Vol. 1. 3 vols. London: Penguin, 1976.

———. *The First International and After: Political Writings, Vol. 3*. London: Penguin Classics, 1993.

———. *The Revolutions of 1848: Political Writings, Vol. 1*. London: Penguin Classics, 1993.

Massey, Doreen. *For Space*. London: Sage, 2005.

———. "Power-Geometry, and a Progressive Sense of Place." In *Mapping the Futures*, edited by Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, and et.al., 59–70. London: Routledge, 1993.

Massignon, Louis. "Mohammerah." *Revue du Monde Musulman* 2, no. 11 (1908): 385–409.

Matthee, Rudi. "Transforming Dangerous Nomads into Useful Artisans, Technicians, Agriculturalists: Education in the Reza Shah Period." In *The Making of Modern Iran*, edited by Stephanie Cronin, 123–45. London: Routledge, 2003.

Mayhew, Henry. *London Labour and the London Poor*. Edited by David England and Rosemary O'Day. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2008.

McLachlan, Keith, ed. *The Boundaries of Modern Iran*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.

McLean, David. *Britain and her Buffer State: The Collapse of the Persian Empire, 1890-1914*. London: Royal Historical Society, 1979.

McMichael, Philip, ed. *Food and Agrarian Orders in the World-economy*. Westport: CT: Praeger, 1995.

Mejcher, Helmut. *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq 1910-1928*. London: Ithaca Press, 1976.

Melamid, Alexander. "Communications, Transport, Retail Trade and Services." In *Cambridge History of Iran; the Land of Iran*, 1:552–64. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.

———. "Petroleum Product Distribution and the Evolution of Economic Regions in Iran." *Geographical Review* 65, no. 4 (October 1, 1975): 510–25.

———. “The Geographical Patterns of Iranian Oil Development.” *Economic Geography* 35, no. 3 (1959): 199–218.
Menashri, David. *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.
Millspaugh, Arthur C. *The American Task in Persia*. New York: Century Co., 1925.
Ministry of Petroleum of the Islamic Republic of Iran. “San’at Naft-e Jomhouri-ye Eslami-ye Iran dar yek negah.” Accessed January 20, 2014. http://www.mop.ir/.
Mintz, Sidney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin, 1986.
Mitchell, Timothy. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. London: Verso, 2011.
———. “Carbon Democracy.” *Economy and Society* 38, no. 3 (2009): 399–432.
———. “Rethinking Economy.” *Geoforum* 39 (2008): 1116–21.
———. “The Properties of Markets.” In *Do Economists Make Markets?* edited by Donald MacKenzie, 244–75. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
———. “Economists and the Economy in the Twentieth Century.” In *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences : Positivism and Its Epistemological Others*, edited by George Steinmetz, 126–41. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.
———. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
———. “Society, Economy, and the State Effect.” In *State/Culture*, edited by George Steinmetz, 76–97. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.
———. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
Mohammadi, Jalil (Seyyed). “Seyr-e Malekiyat dar Iran va Chegounegi-ye Sabt-e Asnad va Amlak (The patterns of property in Iran and the manners of registeration of documents and properties).” *Kanoun (Nashriyeh-ye Kanoun-e Sar Daftardaran va Daftaryaran)* 41–45, no. 1–31 (1997- 2002).
Mojdehi, Hassan. “Arthur C. Millsapugh’s Two Missions to Iran and Their Impact on American Iranian Relations.”, PhD Dissertation, Muncie, IN: Ball State University, 1975.
Mommer, Bernard. *Global Oil and the Nation State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
Mommsen, Wolfgang. “Preface” to *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany: 1850-1950*. London: Croom Helm, 1981.
Monroe, Elizabeth. *Britain’s Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971*. 2nd ed. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.
———. “Loraine, Sir Percy Lyham (1880-1961).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.lib.depaul.edu/view/article/34597.
Moruzzi, Norma Claire. *Speaking through the Mask: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Social Identity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.
Moshar-Ghadimi, Hossein Khan. “Les Finances Publiques de la Perse.” PhD Dissertation. Paris: Université de Paris, 1922.
Movahed, Mohammad ‘Ali. *Naft-e ma va Masa’el-e Hoquqi-e an (Our Oil and Its Legal Issues)*. Tehran: Kharazmi, 1978.
Munif, Abdelrahman. *Cities of Salt*. New York: Vintage, 1989.
———. *The Trench*. New York: Vintage, 1993.
———. *Variations on Night and Day*. New York: Vintage, 1994.

N/A. “Banader-e Jonoub.” *Taqadom*, Nos. 3,4,7,8 (1927- 1928).

Naficy, Hamid. *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 1: The Artisanal Era, 1897–1941*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Naficy, Mosharrafod-dowleh Hassan Khan. “L’Impot et la Vie Economique et Sociale en Perse.” PhD Dissertation, Paris: Université de Paris, 1924.

Naft dar Doereh-e Reza Shah; Asnadi az Tajdid-e Nazar dar Emtiaznameh D’Arcy 1933 (Oil During Reza Shah’s Reign; Documents from the Renegotiated D’Arcy Concession). Historical Archives no. 2. Tehran: Printing and Publishing Organization of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 1999.

Najm-al Dowleh, Abd-al Ghaffar ibn-e Ali Mohammad. *Safarnameh Dovvom-e Najm-al Dowleh be Khouzestan; beh Peyvast-e Ketabcheh-ye Dastour-al Amal-e Nasser-al Din Shah dar Khosous-e Safar-e Aval beh Khouzestan*. Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2007.

Najm-al Molk, Haj Mirza Abd-al Ghaffar. *Safarnameh Khuzestan beh Zamimeh Ketabcheh Dastour-e Ma’muriat-e Khouzestan va Gozaresh-e Barresiha-ye an Saman*. Edited by Mohammad Dabir Siaqi. Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar va Mafakher-e Farhangi, 1962 [1882].

Nakhai, M. *Le Pétrole En Iran*. Bruxelle: Editions J. Felix, 1938.

Nandy, Ashis. “The Beautiful, Expanding Future of Poverty: Popular Economics as a Psychological Defense.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 3, 2004, 94–99.

Nateq, Homa. “Ta’sir-e Ejtema’i va Eqtesadi-ye Bimari-ye Vaba dar Dowreh-ye Qajar.” *Tarikh* 1, no. 2 (1977): 30–62.

Neligan, A.R. “Public Health in Persia; 1914-24. Part 1.” *The Lancet* 207, no. 5351 (March 20, 1926): 635–39.

———. “Public Health in Persia; 1914-24. Part 2.” *The Lancet* 207, no. 5352 (March 27, 1926): 690–94.

Nore, Peter, and Terisa Turner, eds. *Oil and Class Struggle*. New York: Zed Books, 1980.

Norman Finkelstein. *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*. New York: Verso, 2003.

Nye, David. *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.

O’Connor, Alice. *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Oberling, Pierre. *The Qashqai Nomads of Fars*. Hague: Mouton, 1974.

Olson, Roger. “Persian Gulf Trade and the Agricultural Economy of Southern Iran in the 19h Century.” In *Modern Iran*, edited by Eric Hooglund and Nikki Keddie, 173–90. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981.

Olson, William J. *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*. London: Frank Cass, 1984.

Orenstein, Dara. “Foreign-Trade Zones and the Cultural Logic of Frictionless Production.” *Radical History Review* 2011, no. 109 (2010): 36–61.

Owen, Roger. *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2004.

———. *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1993.

Packard, Randall. “Visions of Postwar Health and Development and their Impact on Public Health Interventions in the Developing World.” In *International Development and the Social Sciences*, edited by Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, 93–118. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Pahlavi, Reza Shah. *Safarnameh Khuzestan*. Tehran: Markaz-e Pajouhesh va Nashr-e Farhang-e Siasi-e Dowran-e Pahlavi, 1924.

Park, Robert E., Ernest Burgess, and Morriss Janowitz. *The City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925.

Parto, Afshin. “Khizesh-e Fars dar Jang-e Jahani-ye Avval.” *Ettela’at-e Siasi-Eqtesadi*, no. 135/136 (January 1999): 70–87.

Patterson, K D, and G F Pyle. “The Geography and Mortality of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic.” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 65, no. 1 (1991): 4–21.

Pearce, Roberta. “Cox, Sir Percy.” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.lib.depaul.edu/view/printable/32604.

Peck, Jamie. *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Peet, Richard, Paul Robbins, and Michael Watts, eds. *Global Political Ecology*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Peet, Richard, and Michael Watts, eds. *Liberation Ecologies*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Peluso, Nancy Lee, and Michael Watts, eds. *Violent Environments*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Perkin, Harold. *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2002.

———. *The Third Revolution: Professional Elites in the Modern World*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Perreault, Tom, and Gabriela Valdivia. “Hydrocarbons, Popular Protest and National Imaginaries: Ecuador and Bolivia in Comparative Context.” *Geoforum* 41, no. 5 (September 2010): 689–99.

Perrot, Michelle, ed. *A History of Private Life: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*. Vol. 4. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1990.

Perry, John R. *Karim Khan Zand*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2006.

Petroshevskii, Ilya. *Keshavarzi va Monasebat-e Arzi dar Iran-e Ahd-e Moghol [Agriculture and Landownership in Iran during the Mongol Reign]*. Edited and Translated by Karim Keshavarz. 2 vols. Tehran: Mo’assesseh-ye Motale’at va Tahqiqat-e Ejtema’i, 1965.

Pezeshkzad, Iraj. *My Uncle Napoleon*. Translated by Dick Davis. Bethesda: Mage Publishers, 1996.

Plehwe, Dieter. “Introduction.” In *The Road from Mont Pelerin*, edited by Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe, 1–44. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Podobnik, Bruce. *Global Energy Shifts: Fostering Sustainability in a Turbulent Age*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005.

Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. 2nd ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Poovey, Mary. *Making a Social Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Popović, Alexandre. *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999.

Pourbakhtiyar, Ghaffar. “Bakhtiyariha, Naft va Dowlat-e Engelis [Bakhtiyaris, Oil, and the English Government].” *Motale’at-e Tarikhi* 5, no. 22 (2008): 83–96.

Pourkazem, Kazem. *Naqsh-e Ashayer-e Arab-e Khouzestan dar Jahad Aleyhe Este’mar*. Tehran: Ammeh, 1996.

Procacci, Giovanna. “Social Economy and the Government of Poverty.” In *The Foucault Effect*, edited by Graham. Burchell et.al., 151–68. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Przeworski, Adam. *Capitalism and Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Pugh, Martin. “The General Strike.” *History Today*, (May 2006): 40–47.

Rabinow, Paul. *The French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.

Ratcliffe, Barrie. “Cities and Environmental Decline: Elites and the Sewage Problem in Paris from the Mideighteenth to the Midnineteenth Century.” *Planning Perspectives* 5, no. 2 (1990): 189–222.

Raymond, Martin, and William Leffler. *Oil and Gas Production*. Tulsa: PennWell Corp., 2006.

Razi, Monireh. *Polis-e Jonoub-e Iran (South Persia Rifles)*. Tehran: Markaz-e Asnād-e Enqelāb-e Eslāmi, 2002.

Reisner, Marc. *Cadillac Desert: The American West and its Disappearing Water, Revised Edition*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

Ribot, Jesse, and Nancy Lee Peluso. “A Theory of Access.” *Rural Sociology* 68, no. 2 (2003): 155–81.

Rich, Norman. *The Age of Nationalism and Reform, 1850-1890*. New York: Norton, 1977.

Robertson, D. H. “A Narrative of the General Strike of 1926.” *The Economic Journal* 36, no. 143 (1926): 375–93.

Rodinson, Maxime. *Israel, a Colonial-Settler State?* New York: Pathfinder Press, 2001.

Rohani, Foad. *Tarikh-e Melli Shodan-e San’at-e Naft-e Iran*. Tehran: Jibi, 1973.

Rose, Carol M. *Property and Persuasion: Essays on the History, Theory, and Rhetoric of Ownership*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.

Rose, Damaris. “Accumulation versus Reproduction in the Inner City: The ‘Recurrent Crisis of London’ Revisited.” In *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Societies*, edited by Michael Dear and Allen J Scott, 339–82. London: Methuen, 1981.

Ross, Christopher N. B. “Lord Curzon and E. G. Brown Confront the ‘Persian Question.’” *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (May 15, 2009): 385–411.

Ross, Elizabeth Ness MacBean. *A Lady Doctor in Bakhtiyari Land*. London: L. Parsons, 1921.

Rostow, W. W. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

Rowland, John. *Ambassador for Oil: The Life of John First Baron Cadman*. London: H.Jenkins, 1960.

Ryan, Alan. *Property and Political Theory*. London: Blackwell Publishers, 1984.

Sa’adat, Fathallah. *Joghrafiya-ye Eqtesadi-e Naft-e Iran*. 2 vols. Tehran: Pars Publishers, 1967.

———. *Pajouheshi dar Masa’el-e Nafti-ye Iran (An Investigation into Iran’s Petroleum Issues)*. Tehran: AmirKabir, 1976.

Sabahi, Houshang. *British Policy in Persia, 1918-1925*. London: Frank Cass, 1990.
Sackville-West, Vita. *Twelve Days in Persia: Across the Mountains with the Bakhtiyari Tribe*. London: Tauris Parke, 2009.
Sadiq, Issa Khan. *Modern Persia and her Educational System*. New York: International Institute of Teachers College; Columbia University, 1931.
Safavi, Fatemeh. "Doushizeh Lambton (Ms. Lambton)." *Tarikh-e Mo'aser* 5, no. 19 (2007): 85–129.
Safinejad, Javad. *Boneh dar Iran*. 3rd ed. Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1988.
———. "Il-e Bakhtiyari." *Kayhan-e Farhangi*, no. 264/265 (November 2008): 30–37.
Safiri, Florida. *Polis-e Jonoub-e Iran- SPR (South Persia Rifles)*. Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 1985.
Sahlins, Marshall. *Tribesmen*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentica Hall, 1968.
Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979.
———. *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*. New York: Vintage, 1996.
Saville, John. "The Welfare State: An Historial Approach." *The New Reasoner* Winter, no. 3 (1957): 5–25.
Sawyer, Suzana. *Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.
Sawyer, Suzana, and Edmund Terence Gomez, eds. *The Politics of Resource Extraction: Indigenous Peoples, Multinational Corporations and the State*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
Schayegh, Cyrus. *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong; Science, Class, and the Formation of Modern Iranian Society, 1900-1950*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.
———. "A Sound Mind Lives in a Healthy Body: Texts and Contexts of Modernist Discourse of Health, 1910s-40s." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 2 (2005): 167–88.
———. "Hygiene, Eugenics, Genetics, and the Perception of Demographic Crisis in Iran, 1910s-1940s." *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 13, no. 3 (2004): 335–61.
Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization and Perception of Time and Space*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
Schneider, Irene. *The Petitioning System in Iran: State, Society and Power Relations in the Late 19th Century*. Iranica 11. Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006.
Schorske, Carl. *Fin-De-Siécle Vienna: Politics and Culture*. New York: Vintage, 1980.
Schumpeter, Joseph. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008.
———. *History of Economic Analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1954.
———. "The Crisis of the Tax State." In *Economics and Sociology of Capitalism*, edited by Richard Swedberg, 99–140. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
Scott, G.B. "The First Survey of the Persian Oil Fields." *Naft* 7, no. 2 (March 1931): 6–12.
Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

Seccombe, I. J., and R. I. Lawless. “Foreign Worker Dependence in the Gulf, and the International Oil Companies: 1910-50.” *International Migration Review* 20, no. 3 (October 1, 1986): 548–74.

———. “A Disgrace to American Enterprise: Italian Labour and the Arabian American Oil Company in Saudi Arabia, 194454.” *Immigrants & Minorities Immigrants and Minorities* 5, no. 3 (1986): 233–57.

Sennett, Richard. *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1976.

Sepehr, Lesan al Saltaneh. *Tarikh-e Bakhtiyari*. Tehran: Yasavoli, 1982.

Shafiee, Katayoun. “A Petro-Formula and its World: Calculating Profits, Labour and Production in the Assembling of Anglo-Iranian Oil.” *Economy and Society* 41, no. 4 (2012): 1–30.

Shahnavaz, Shahbaz. *Britain and the Opening of South-West Persia 1880-1914*. London: Routledge Curzon, 2005.

Shakiba, Eshaq. *Negahi be Tarikh-e Mahshahr*. Shiraz: Navid-e Shiraz, 2007.

Shuster, Morgan. *The Strangling of Persia*. New York: Century Co., 1920.

Sinclair, Upton. *The Jungle*. New York: Bantam Books, 1981.

Smith, Neil. “Scale.” *Dictionary of Human Geography*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

———. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. 3rd ed. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008.

Somers, Margaret, and Fred Block. “From Poverty to Perversity: Ideas, Markets, and Institutions over 200 Years of Welfare Debate.” *American Sociological Review*. 70, no. 2 (2005): 260.

———. “Reply to Hicks: Poverty and Piety.” *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 3 (2006): 511–13.

Somers, Margaret. *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Somers, Margaret R., and Christopher N.J. Roberts. “Toward a New Sociology of Rights: A Genealogy of ‘Buried Bodies’ of Citizenship and Human Rights.” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 4, no. 1 (2008): 385–425.

Stedman Jones, Gareth. *Outcast London*. New York: Pantheon, 1984.

Steinmetz, George. *Regulating the Social : The Welfare State and Local Politics in Imperial Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Strunk, William. “Britain, Persia, and Shaykh Khaz’al: The Genesis of a ‘Special Relationship.’” In *Islamic and Middle Eastern Societies*, edited by Roger Olson. Vermont: Amana Books, 1987.

Sunderland, David. “‘Disgusting to the Imagination and Destructive of Health’? The Metropolitan Supply of Water, 1820-52.” *Urban History* 30, no. 3 (2003): 359–80.

Sutherland, Jillian. “Education.” In *Cambridge Social History of Britain: 1750-1950*, edited by F. M. L. Thompson, 3:119–70. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Sventitiski, A. S. “Transport Routes in Persia.” *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 14, no. 2 (1927): 203–22.

Swearingen, Will. *Moroccan Mirages: Agrarian Dreams and Deceptions, 1912-1986*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

Swingedouw, Eric. “Neither Global nor Local: ‘Glocalization’ and the Politics of Scale.” In *Spaces of Globalization*, edited by Kevin Cox, 137–66. New York: Guilford Press, 1997.

Sykes, Christopher. *Wassmuss, "the German Lawrence."* New York: Longmans, 1936.
Sykes, Ella. "Persian Family Life." *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 1, no. 2 (1914): 3–11.
———. *Through Persia on a Side Saddle*. Piscataway: Georgias Press, 2008 [1901].
Sykes, Percy. *History of Persia*. 2 vols. London: McMillan, 1915.
———. "South Persia and the Great War." *The Geographical Journal* 58, no. 2 (1921): 101–18.
———. *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia: Or, Eight Years in Iran*. London: John Murray, 1902. (Kindle Edition)
Szreter, Simon, and Keith Breckenridge, eds. *Registration and Recognition: Documenting the Person in World History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
Taeb, Sa'id. *Az E'tesab-e Karkonan-e San'at-e Naft Ta Pirouzi-e Enqelab-e Eslami*. Tehran: Markaz-e Asnad-e Enqelab-e Eslami, 2003.
Tamadon, Mohammad. *Oza'e Iran dar Jang-e Jahani-e Avval*. Tehran: Tamadon, 1971.
Tapper, Richard. *Pasture and Politics: Economics, Conflict, and Ritual Among Shahsevan Nomads of Northwestern Iran*. New York: Academic Press, 1979.
———. "The Tribes in 18th and 19th Century Iran." In *Cambridge History of Iran: From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, 7:606–541. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
Taqizadeh, Seyyed Hassa. *Zendegi-ye Toufani; Khaterat-e Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh*. Los Angeles: Mohammad Ali Elmi, 1990.
Tarbell, Ida. *The History of the Standard Oil Company: Briefer Version*. Edited by David M. Chalmers. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003.
Taylor, A. J. P. *The Oxford History of England. 1914-1945*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1976.
Tetzlaff, Stefan. "The Turn of the Gulf Tide: Empire, Nationalism, and South Asian Labor Migration to Iraq, C. 1900–1935." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 79, (2011): 7–27.
Thane, Pat. "Government and Society in England and Wales: 1750-1914." In *Cambridge Social History of Britain: 1750-1950*, edited by F.M.L. Thompson, 3:1–62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
———. *The Foundations of the Welfare State*. London: Longman, 1982.
———. "The Working Class and State 'Welfare' in Britain, 1880-1914." *The Historical Journal* 27, no. 4 (December 1, 1984): 877–900.
Thesiger, Wilfred. *Arabian Sands*. London: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1959.
———. *Marsh Arabs: Seven Years with the Primitive Tribesmen of a Watery World*. London: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1964.
Thompson, E. P. "Customs, Law, and Common Rights." In *Customs in Common*, 97–184. New York: The New Press, 1993.
———. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage, 1966.
———. "Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism." In *Customs in Common*, 352–403. New York: The New Press, 1993.
Thompson, Francis M.L. *The Cambridge Social History of Britain: 1750-1950*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
Thomson, George. "Abadan in its Early Days." *Naft* 7, no. 4 (July 1931): 14–18.
Tilly, Charles. *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992.

Tinker Salas, Miguel. *The Enduring Legacy: Oil, Culture, and Society in Venezuela*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

Torabi, Soheila. "Negahi beh Vaz'iyat-e Arzagh dar Iran dar Sal-haye Jang-e Jahani-e Avval (A Look at the State of Food Provision in Iran during the WWI Years)." *Ganjineh Asnad*, no. 3/4 (1991): 24–33.

Torpey, John. *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Torrens, H.S. "Cadman, John (1877-1941)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.lib.depaul.edu/view/article/32233.

Townsend, John. *Proconsul to the Middle East: Sir Percy Cox and the End of Empire*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2010.

Trattner, Walter. *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*. 6th ed. New York: Free Press, 1999.

Tripp, Charles. *A History of Iraq*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

———. "Natural Resources and Capitalist Frontiers." *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 48 (November 29, 2003): 5100–5106.

Vale, Lawrence. *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Van der Linden, Marcel. "The Promise and Challenges of Global Labor History." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 82 (October 1, 2012): 57–76.

———. *Workers of the World: Essays Toward a Global Labor History*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Verdery, Katherine, and Caroline Humphrey, eds. *Property in Question: Value Transformation in the Global Economy*. New York: Berg Publishers, 2004.

Vieille, Paul. *La Féodalité et l'Etat en Iran*. Paris: Anthropos, 1975.

———. "La Société Rurale et Le Dévelopment Agricole du Khouzistan." *L'Année Sociologique*, no. 16 (1965): 85–112.

Vieille, Paul, Zafardokht Ardalan, and Abolhassan Banisadr. "Abadan: Morphologie et Fonction du Tissu Urbain." *Revue Geographique de l'Est*, no. 4 (1964): 337–85.

———. "Abadan: Tissu Urbain, Attitudes et Valeurs." *Revue Geographique de l'Est*, no. 3–4 (1969): 361–78.

Vieille, Paul, and K Mohseni. "Ecologie Culturelle d'une Ville Islamique: Tehran." *Revue Geographique de l'Est*, no. 3–4 (1969): 315–60.

Visser, Reidar. *Basra Crude The Great Game of Iraq's "Southern" Oil*. Working Papers. Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2007.

———. *Basra, the Failed Gulf State : Separatism and Nationalism in Southern Iraq*. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2005.

———. "The Gibraltar That Never Was." *Historiae.org*, 2007. http://www.historiae.org/abadan.asp.

Visser, Reidar, and Gareth Stansfield, eds. *An Iraq of Its Regions: Cornerstones of a Federal Democracy?* New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Vitalis, Robert. *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*. 2nd ed. London: Verso, 2009.

Wacquant, Loïc. *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
Walker, Pat. *Between Labor and Capital*. Boston: South End Press, 1979.
Walkowitz, Judith. *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
Wallis, Ed, ed. *From the Workhouse to Welfare: What Beatrice Webb's 1909 Minority Report Can Teach Us Today*. London: Fabian Society, 2009. http://www.fabians.org.uk/publications/from-workhouse-to-welfare/.
Ward, Stephen. "The Garden City Tradition Re-examined." *Planning Perspectives* 5 (1990): 249–56.
Waterfield, Gordon. *Professional Diplomat; Sir Percy Loraine of Kirkharle, Bt., 1880-1961*. London: Murray, 1973.
Watson, Andrew M. *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World: The Diffusion of Crops and Farming Techniques, 700-1100*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
Watts, Michael. "Righteous Oil? Human Rights, the Oil Complex, and Corporate Social Responsibility." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 30 (2005): 373–407.
Webb, Beatrice. *My Apprenticeship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
Weber, Eugen. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.
Weizman, Eyal. *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*. London: Verso, 2007.
Williams, Mari. "Training for Specialists: The Precision Instruments Industry in Britain and France, 1890-1925." In *Education, Technology and Industrial Performance in Europe, 1850-1939*, edited by Robert Fox and Anna Guagnini, 227–50. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
Williamson, John W. *In a Persian Oilfield*. New York: Arno Press, 1977.
Wilson, Arnold Talbot. *Persian Gulf*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1954.
———. *SW Persia; A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*. London: Oxford University Press, 1941.
———. *Loyalties; Mesopotamia*. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.
———. "The Bakhtiyaris." *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 3 (1926): 205–23.
———. *A Precis of the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes and Shaikhs of Arabistan*, Report, Manuscript at British Library. (1911).
Wilson, William J. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
Wolf, Eric. *Europe and People Without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
Wolff, Richard D, and Stephen A Resnick. *Economics: Marxian versus Neoclassical*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
Worster, Donald. *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
Wright, Dennis. *The English Among the Persians: Imperial Lives in 19th Century Iran*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2001.

Wright, Gwendolyn. *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Ya'qubinejad, Ali. *Raiis-e Naft*. Tehran: Yadvareh Ketab, 1994.

Yektayi, Majid. *Tarikh-e Darayi-e Iran (History of Iranian Finances)*. 2nd ed. Tehran: Parviz Publishers, 1961.

Yeoh, Brenda. *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment*. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003.

———. "Street Names in Colonial Singapore." *Geographical Review* 82, no. 3 (1992): 313–22.

Yergin, Daniel. *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power*. 2nd ed. New York: Free Press, 2008.

Yousefi, Mohammadi. *Tarikh-e Khorramshahr*. Tehran: Nil, 1971.

Zirinski, Michael. "Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and Teh Rise of Reza Shah 1921-26." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 4 (1992): 639–63.

———. "Render therefore unto Caesar the Things which are Caesar's: American Presbyterian Educators and Reza Shah." *Iranian Studies* 26, no. 3/4 (July 1, 1993): 337–56.

Zoghi, Iraj. *Masael-e Siasi-eqtesadi-e Naft-e Iran*. Tehran: Pazhang, 1991.

Zola, Emile. *Le Ventre de Paris*. Paris: Livre de Poche, 1997.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift is een sociale geschiedenis van het ontstaan van de Iraanse olie-industrie en de vorming van de arbeidersklasse daarbinnen in de provincie Khuzestan in Iran tijdens de eerste decennia van de 20e eeuw tot aan het uitbreken van de Tweede Wereldoorlog (1908-1941). Het proefschrift concentreert zich op de vorming van de bebouwde omgeving van Abadan, een industriestad die snel werd gebouwd door de Anglo-Persian Oil Company om 's werelds grootste raffinaderij te huisvesten tijdens een turbulente periode tussen 1909 en 1927. Abadan werd al snel het hart van een onderneming die meehielp met het transformeren van lokale omstandigheden, maar ook van de nationale economische en politieke relaties, regionale geopolitiek en het mondiale industriële kapitalisme.

De belangrijkste stellingen van dit proefschrift zijn drieledig. De eerste stelling is dat het vormen van de arbeidersklasse in de olie-industrie de ontmanteling van de bestaande vormen van het sociale en economische leven in de regio met zich meebracht. Door de grondonteigening van de lokale bevolking werd industriële loonarbeid het belangrijkste alternatief om in levensonderhoud te voorzien. Om de sociale geschiedenis van de oliewerkers te kunnen duiden is het belangrijk om de landelijke en pastorale werelden waaruit arbeiders kwamen te begrijpen, net zoals het belangrijk is te onderzoeken hoe ondergeschikte werknemers en bevolkingsgroepen zich verzetten tegen de gedwongen ondergang van hun vroegere sociale leven, hoe zij over hun nieuwe omstandigheden onderhandelden en hebben bijgedragen aan de vormgeving van de moderne industriële en extractieve orde van het oliekapitalisme dat hun wereld verving.

De tweede stelling is dat het vormen van de olie-industrie in Iran niet simpelweg de verspreiding van kapitaal, technologie en kennis van het westen naar een 'achterlijk gebied' betekende, maar dat het een voorbeeld is van verweven Global Labor History waarin de vereisten van kapitaalaccumulatie en de formatie van de natie-staat verschillende regio's, populaties, en vormen van economische activiteit bij elkaar brachten. Dit proces ging vaak gepaard met geweld. De derde stelling is dat de sociale geschiedenis van arbeid in de olie-industrie het beste bestudeerd kan worden als een stedelijke geschiedenis, omdat de interacties van de talloze sociale factoren die

direct of indirect betrokken waren bij de constructie van de olie-industrie samen kwamen en op elkaar inwerkten binnen de bebouwde omgeving van Abadan.

De benadering van dit proefschrift is interdisciplinair, zowel theoretisch als methodologisch. Het combineert inzichten van de kritische sociale geografie, marxistische politieke economie en sociale geschiedschrijving met een poststructuralistische analyse van machtsverhoudingen. Methodologisch steunt dit proefschrift op veldwerk van de auteur uitgevoerd in de provincie, gecombineerd met uitgebreid gebruik van primair archiefmateriaal en secundaire historische en analytische literatuur.

De stedelijke en geografische benadering van het proefschrift biedt een uniek perspectief op de sociale geschiedenis van arbeid in de olie-industrie. De bebouwde omgeving van Abadan was de materiële en fysieke plaats die werd gevormd door de acties en interacties van alle belangrijke maatschappelijke actoren die betrokken waren bij het tot stand komen van deze mondiale industrie, en op haar beurt omlijstte deze omgeving de activiteiten van deze actoren en bood hen structuur. Sommige van deze maatschappelijke actoren waren direct betrokken bij het ontstaan van de olie-industrie. Deze actoren betroffen de lokale landelijke bevolking van boeren en veehouders, die als loonarbeiders, bewakers en tijdelijke arbeiders in dienst van de olie-industrie waren. Het ging ook om Iraanse regeringsfunctionarissen die ernaar streefden om de industrie te reguleren en om het gezag van een opkomende natie op te leggen aan een afgelegen provincie. Tenslotte bestonden deze actoren ook uit internationale oliehandelaren, aanleggers van boortorens, ingenieurs, accountants, stedenbouwkundigen en adviseurs, die de eerste fundamenten van het oliekapitalisme in de Perzische Golf legden.

Er waren echter ook andere sociale actoren betrokken bij de vorming van de olie-industrie, die weliswaar niet in deze sector werkten, maar toch hun levens erdoor zagen veranderen, en zelf bijdroegen aan de consolidatie van de olie-industrie. Tot deze secundaire actoren behoorden soldaten, Britse diplomaten, kinderen en verre families, stedelijke grondbezitters, politieke activisten, smokkelaars, prostituees, bedelaars, lokale boeren, handelaren, politiemensen en arme migranten die naar de stad kwamen om in de marges van de olie-industrie te leven en te werken. Dit proefschrift toont aan dat de bebouwde omgeving van Abadan tot stand kwam door de

interactie van al deze actoren, waardoor de sociale geschiedenis van olie en de vorming van de arbeidersklasse in de olie-industrie in Khuzestan in essentie de geschiedenis van stadsvorming is.

Hoofdstuk 1 legt het theoretisch kader van dit proefschrift uit. Het introduceert en beschrijft een aantal concepten waarmee de kritische benadering van de sociale geschiedenis van olie in dit proefschrift bestudeerd wordt. Deze concepten zijn o.a. *oil complex, oil habitus, and oil encounter*.

Hoofdstuk 2 onderzoekt de regionale en nationale configuraties van de Perzische Golf en Iran die vanaf de late 19e eeuw tot 1926 bepalend waren voor de wereldpolitiek van het Britse imperium. Het analyseert de perspectieven en motieven van verschillende politieke actoren in Iran, Engeland, Brits India, en Khuzestan, en evalueert de gevolgen van de ontdekking van olie en de ontwikkeling van de olie-industrie op hun onderlinge verhoudingen. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien dat hoewel de Britse staat na het einde van de Eerste Wereldoorlog eenheid uitstraalde, ze in feite geplaagd werd door interne spanningen en praktische beperkingen terwijl ze geconfronteerd werd door de mogelijkheden en gevaren van het politieke systeem in Iran en de olie-industrie die daar gebouwd werd. Dit hoofdstuk beschrijft zodoende de mondiale en regionale geopolitieke achtergrond die nodig is om de sociale geschiedenis van de Iraanse olie-industrie te begrijpen.

Hoofdstuk 3 onderzoekt de lokale agrarische en pastorale samenlevingen in het zuidwesten van Iran omdat ze deel uitmaakten van de mondiale verhoudingen van het oliekapitalisme. Dit hoofdstuk kijkt naar de politiek van eigendom en de wettelijke contracten tussen het oliebedrijf, stamhoofden en lokale zakenmensen om het proces waarmee lokale samenlevingen ondergeschikt werden gemaakt aan de olie-industrie inzichtelijk te maken. Het verbindt ook de rurale populaties, het achterland van Abadan en het fysieke landschap met de olie-industrie. De sociale geschiedenis van olie en arbeid zijn namelijk niet alleen verbonden met de plaatsen van directe productie (de raffinaderijen), exploitatie (de olievelden), maar ze zijn ook verbonden met de rurale gebieden waaruit olie-arbeiders gerekruteerd worden en die getransformeerd werden doordat olie-installaties de bestaande economische en sociale levensvormen vervingen.

Hoofdstuk 4 onderzoekt de mondiale effecten van de Eerste Wereldoorlog op de opkomst van olie als de primaire brandstof die de plaats van kolen in nam en de

opkomst van het Fordsime – een sociale en politiek-economische orde gebaseerd op industriële massaproductie en consumptie – mogelijk maakte. Dit hoofdstuk onderzoek de transformaties van industriële arbeidsverhoudingen, de invloed van massapolitiek en de veranderende rol van de staat die sociale maatregelen introduceerde als reactie op toenemende conflicten tussen sociale klassen. Deze analyse biedt maakt het mogelijk om de ontwikkeling van industriële arbeidsverhoudingen in de Iraanse olie-industrie te kunnen plaatsen binnen het kader van Global Labor History. Het laat zien dat deze verhoudingen niet reeds bestaande praktijken waren die vanuit Groot-Brittannië en de rest van Europa naar Iran getransplanteerd werden, maar dat ze onderdeel waren van grotere mondiale trends.

Hoofdstuk 5 en 6 integreren deze inzichten in de micro-analyse van de stedelijke en sociale transformaties van Abadan in het interbellum, toen de consolidatie van de olie-industrie plaatsvond. Hoofdstuk 5 onderzoekt de vestiging van het rekruteerbeleid en de beperkte sociale maatregelen die de oliemaatschappij tegen wil en dank, en met enig paternalisme introduceerde om arbeiders en hooggekwalificeerde werknemers aan te trekken voor werk in de extreem moeilijke omstandigheden van de olie-industrie. Deze maatregelen bestonden uit onderwijsvoorzieningen om Iraanse arbeiders beter op te leiden, de bouw van sociale faciliteiten voor Europese werknemers, en de vestiging van pr-activiteiten om het imago van het bedrijf te verbeteren.

Hoofdstuk 6 concentreert zich op de stedelijke politiek van Abadan en de transformatie van deze door migratie en industrie gevormde stad. De oliemaatschappij probeerde in naam van de bestrijding van besmettelijke ziektes en de bevordering van de volksgezondheid een hiërarchische en rationele orde aan Abadan op te leggen. Maar deze maatregelen creëerden exclusief voor Europese en geprivilegieerde werknemers bestemde enclaves en leidden tot vormen van segregatie die kwaad bloed zetten bij de benadeelde groepen. Er ontstonden solidariteitsbewegingen in Abadan die olie-arbeiders en andere inwoners samenbrachten in collectieve acties tegen de pogingen van het oliebedrijf om mensen te evacueren en exclusieve enclaves te creëren. Deze bewegingen die ‘het recht op de stad’ opeisten creëerden nieuwe vormen van stedelijke identiteit, en smeedden nieuwe politieke allianties die het oliebedrijf en de Iraanse regering dwongen om met de olie-arbeiders te onderhandelen.

Hoofdstuk 7 bevat de conclusies van het proefschrift over de sociale geschiedenis van Abadan, de provincie Khuzestan, de olie-industrie, de werkende klassen in het interbellum en het schets de contouren voor toekomstig onderzoek.

Curriculum Vitae

Kaveh Ehsani was born in 1960 in Tehran. He grew up in Iran, but received his high school degree in England. He studied economics, anthropology, and philosophy for his BA degree at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst (1984), where he also received his Masters in Regional Planning in 1987. He began his doctoral studies in Human Geography at the Johns Hopkins University in 1987, working on the topic of "Peasants, Modernization, and Revolution in 20th Century Iran." In 1990 he worked as a consultant to the World Bank (Washington, DC) on revising the policies for involuntary resettlement due to development projects. Between 1989-90 and 1992 he was conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the Khuzestan province of Iran, while also working as a regional planner on the post-war reconstruction of rural areas in the heavily damaged region. In 1994-1998 he was a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Illinois in Chicago. Between 1998-2008 he worked in Iran as a consultant on a number of projects: for the UNDP on drought relief in rural areas; the Social Science Research Council (New York) on the project "Cities and Citizenship in the Middle East"; the first elected City Council of Tehran on "Defining Institutions of Participatory Urban Governance." In 2008 he was appointed as a lecturer at DePaul University (Chicago). During 2013-2014 he has been a research fellow at the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), where he completed the present dissertation for his doctoral degree from Leiden University. From fall of 2014 he will be an Assistant Professor of International Studies at DePaul University. Ehsani has been a member of the editorial committees of the journals *Middle East Report* (*Merip*) in Washington DC since 2003, and *Goftogu* in Tehran since 1998. He has published many articles and book chapters on Iran and the Middle East, on the topics ranging from urban studies, regional and socio-economic development, cinema and visual arts production, and geopolitics.