

A. REZA ARASTEH, *Man and Society in Iran*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1964, xii+193 pp.

On entering the 1960's Iran became conscious that the political tasks of the State consisted in a large-scale reform of the economic and social structure, as revealed in the Six Great Reform Laws. The demand for a basic reform of the existing economic and social system had appeared in the field of politics at the beginning of the 1950's at the time of the Mosaddeq régime, but it remained uncompleted. The trend of events under the royal régime of the 1960's indicates that the established basis of the economic and social structure of Iran is now in such a condition that the forces of authority themselves accept the inevitability of a fundamental reform. Opinions are divided as to whether the royal régime's plans for reform will prove to be no more than slogans, or whether some real economic and social effect can be expected of them.

In such an atmosphere of reform, albeit that it is a reform "from above," the Iranian intellectuals, in particular the newly arising class of professional students of the social sciences and the humanities, are pressed by the necessity of re-clarifying the traditional foundations of Iranian society and the reality of modernization in Iran. At the same time there is increased interest among the intellectuals in the agrarian question, a question which has hitherto been ignored or left aside. The representative author Sayyid Alī Jamāl-zādeh, who is regarded as a socially-conscious intellectual, supports the present reforms carried out by the Iranian government, and in particular pleads the necessity of land reform on ethical grounds. However, it is nevertheless a fact that the vast majority of the intellectuals in the country seem to remain sceptical or critical of the present Shah's reforms. The author of the work under review is a social scientist of the younger generation who has been living outside Iran, and has now been publishing his views on social and educational questions in Iran for several years. It is clear that the standpoint of his social criticism does not appertain to the interior of the present power-structure in Iran, but is on the side of those who are opposed to the establishment.

A duality of intention is apparent in the book, and in evaluating it we must distinguish between these two intentions. The first intention is that of analysing the total structure of modern Iranian society in a positivistic and objective manner, and the parts of the book which come under this head are to be evaluated as contributions to sociological studies. The second intention is that of arraigning an unhealthy social and political system which represses the development of the human personality, an intention which springs from the intellectual's feeling that he is a victim of the present economic and social structure of Iran. The parts of the book which come under this head are to be evaluated as practical and clinical social criticism.

Adopting this division in our standards of evaluation, we find that by the first standard the book contains many inaccurate data when considered as a handbook of sociological studies, and it cannot be wholly trusted from the

positivistic point of view. It is rather in the second of the author's intentions, in the problem-consciousness and problem-methodology peculiar to the author's status as an Iranian intellectual (things which are absent from analyses made by European and American scholars) that positive significance is to be found. We say this because sociological studies of Iran in Europe and America have hitherto been in the nature of external criticism, and the reviewer feels that they should be corrected and developed by internal criticism.

We may say that studies of Iranian society by European and American scholars can be represented by the two studies by Professor Ann K. S. Lambton and Professor Donald N. Wilber.

In the former of these, *Islamic Society in Persia* (S. O. A. S., University of London, 1954) the "corporate structure of society" in Iran, and the character of the social ethic which has come into being in response to it, are historically expounded. We may summarize the view of the transition from the traditional Iranian society presented in this book by saying that the author is of the opinion that the disintegration of traditional society began at the latter part of the period of the Qājār dynasty, and in particular advanced rapidly under the Reza Shah régime, that with this disintegration the possibilities of exploiting the civic virtue derived from traditional society were lost, that as a result it became impossible to establish a modern society which would provide the social arena for the development of individual initiative, and that there was a consequent loss of vitality. The work under review follows the views of Professor Lambton concerning the basic theory of traditional society and the negative effect of the modern disintegration of it.

In contrast, in the second work mentioned above, D. N. Wilber, *Contemporary Iran* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), the author is principally interested in the politics of modern Iran, but he has a conception of the social structure as the basis of the political development and he attempts to plot the frequency-range of political change from the social structure. However, his basic concept of the continuity of social pattern as revealed in historical traditions is accompanied by the danger that complicated and many-sided social reality, especially the aspect of popular movements against authority, may be stereotyped by the manner in which an external observer builds up his view of behaviour patterns, and although the author's social theory is easily understandable for an American sociologist, it causes us to feel uneasy as to whether the people actually concerned, the Iranians, will accept his conclusions as valid or not. Above all, the book is written from the standpoint of promoting American policy in regard to unstable Iran, and it assumes that the supreme task demanded of sociology is that of strengthening the rôle of the social pattern in ways which will serve the convenience of upholding the present régime. In the above, the reviewer has attempted to establish the theoretical positions of these two works.

In clarifying the nature of modern man and society the work under review adopts the procedure of analysing the traditional society or culture in the light of its close connections with modern man and society in Iran. The

book is composed of the following sections :

- Section I. Man in Traditional Iranian Society
- Section II. Man in Contemporary Iranian Society
- Section III. A Measure for the Future

Section I covers the period from ancient society to the end of the 19th century, Section II the period from the Constitutional Revolution at the beginning of the 20th century through the Reza Shah régime up to the 1950's, and Section III is a prescription for the cure of the sick society of present-day Iran.

The first problem is that it is not made clear whether the concepts 'traditional' and 'modern' are to be regarded as sociologically or historically prescribed. In the case of the sociological term 'traditional' it would seem that, when it is used in contradistinction to the period of modern society, it must refer to something basically constituted by the society and culture of the late mediaeval times, i. e., from the Safavids to the Qajarids. We say this because hitherto the error of postulating classical Islamic society as the *Idealtypus* of the 'traditional' society has been general.

I would propose that 'tradition' in modern Iranian society should be defined as follows. Basically, we must look for the emergence of the modern period in history in the process of establishment within Iran of the semi-colonial system at the end of the 19th century, and we take the position that under the dual impact of imperialistic subjugation and capitalization not only did traditional society disintegrate, but it has been reorganized as a totality in the form of colonial capitalism. Consequently, we may expect that the traditional elements which survived into modern society, although in form not greatly different from what they had been during the previous stage of history, have acquired meanings which are altogether different from those of the period before the establishment of colonial capitalism, and have performed new social functions. In this context we shall have to treat elements which are described as 'traditional' as being 'modern' in the light of their social functions or rôles.

There is a particular need for opening up the field of studies in the economic and social history of the latter half of the 19th century, the period which paved the way for modern Iranian society. On the basis of the development of this hitherto untouched field of historical studies, sociology will no doubt prove capable of reaping a rich harvest. For example, it is necessary to follow up the coincidence in time between the rise, out of the overall movements in the relations of land tenure in the second half of the 19th century, of the landlordism which is characteristic of modern Iranian society and the process of the formation of the semi-colonial system in Iran. In order to make a sociological approach to such problems of modern history it will be necessary to achieve a new, total grasp of the relation between 'traditionality' and 'modernity,' not merely in the form of a simple dichotomy but in the form of a dynamic theory applied after clearly delineating the scene of imperialist domination in terms of world history.

In the same way, one of the problems whose historical position is difficult to fix accurately in terms of the dichotomy of 'traditionality' and 'modernity' is the problem of the social basis of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (*Ingilāb-e Mashrūtiyat-e Irān*) at the beginning of the 20th century. As the special characteristics of the social basis of this revolution, it is believed that the large cities, in particular the advanced cities in north Iran, were the centre of the revolution, and furthermore, it is known that the craft-guilds (*asnāf*) played a great rôle as a resistance organization. However, the guilds concerned in this situation exhibited a new direction of development which cannot be grasped if one regards the guilds as traditional autonomous associations of members of a certain trade, as is done in the book under review. The subdivided guilds of the kind mentioned by Professor Lambton, which were unable to form a unified civil society, allied themselves with *Anjuman-e Milli* representing whole cities when the Constitutional Revolution occurred, and further, at a higher level they formed the basic organization of a democratic political mechanism by entering into direct relations with the national *Majlis-e Shūrā-ye Milli*. Such moves as these did not occur in traditional society, and far exceeded the bounds of the traditional guild framework.

In the same way it is known that the craft-guilds formed the nuclei and vanguard of armed uprisings of citizens which occurred at the time of the Constitutional Revolution, but the behaviour for such revolutionary uprisings cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of the views of the author of the book under review, or of those of Professor Lambton, both of whom regard the guilds as being liquidated along with traditional society.

Next, in connection with the basic theory which the author employs in analysing Iranian society, we must note that he uses a theory in which society is bisected into a dominant group and a submissive group. According to this theory, the behaviour of individuals is determined by whether the individual belongs to the dominant group or to the submissive group, and further, an individual who is dominant in his 'little society' is submissive in the 'larger society,' thus being placed in a concentric scheme of relations, and the author discusses the links joining despotic rulers and the subjected from the heads of households in familial society at the bottom of the social scale to the King at the top. If the reviewer may add a higher level to this scheme, it would be quite natural to include in it submissive behaviour in relation to the foreign domination which stands above him exhibited by the monarch who exercises 'despotic' powers within the country.

From this point of view the author puts the greatest emphasis throughout his book on the insecurity which characterizes the situation in which individuals are placed in society, and he adopts a position which presupposes the persistence of 'oriental despotism' from ancient society down to the present day. We may evaluate the book's use of the contrast between men of power and oppressed as the basic viewpoint in analysing society as possessing a certain positive meaning, but it is regrettable that the author's pains in applying his theory of relations of domination result only in a superficial

grasp, since his theory does not include any strict economic analysis of relations of domination.

In this way the individual's behaviour in society is discussed in terms of a dichotomy between 'the submissive character' and 'the despotic character,' but between these two the author postulates an 'independent character' which he finds represented in traditional society in the relatively autonomous craft-guilds of the cities and the community life centred on the wards.

The author maintains that the society of these guilds, with their excellent independent and autonomous functions, has been destroyed by modern Iranian society, and as a result the autonomous spirit and independent character which were preserved by that guild society have been lost, and this has been the cause of maladjustment in modernization. This point has been clearly indicated by Professor Lambton, and attention has been drawn to it as a general tendency in the modernization of West Asia by Professor Hamilton A. R. Gibb. Professor Gibb calls to task those modernists who are incapable of nurturing the positive aspects of traditional society, and who bring about great maladjustments in modernization by promoting a total negation of tradition.

The special characteristics of the author's view of man and view of culture are to be found in the manner in which he squarely faces dehumanization, in his adoption of a point of view from which culture is regarded as one process functioning unconsciously as an effective mechanism to secure a man in his existential and social insecurity, and in particular in his attempts to re-evaluate the creativity of 'the submissive character.' In so doing he defines the individual's 'value system' as "a system of values which encourages the individual to overtly accept adversity without forsaking his integrity," and under the rule of despotism he believes that a way of self-realization for the individual is to be found, in particular, in Sūfism. He regards religion as being that which incites the submissive traits, a mass projection of the passionate feeling for religious martyrs who, like oneself, have suffered in the interests of submissive people, and he thinks of religious movements as social movements supported by these groups.

It is clear that the author's view of man and society has this strong bias in the direction of negativism. This demands our fullest respect as an emanation of the mind of an intellectual who has had experience of the difficult conditions of an undeveloped country. For such a mind 'modernization' is not confined to the economic aspect alone, but means a society which will make possible the recovery of a "healthy character" by all the members of the society, a growth of humanity, and a restoration from a state of dehumanization. We must accept this as a legitimate criticism of the Western theory of modernization in Asia. When he takes up traditional society and modern society the author considers Iranian society under the three heads of urban society, tribal society, and village society, and seeks out the social patterns in each. While he points out that, among these three, tribal society and village society form the real basis of Iranian society, the

actual state of these sections of society is not made fully clear. In spite of all, it is clear that the author's main interest is in urban society, and his limitations are apparent in his superficial and fragmentary approach to the problems of village and tribal society from the side of urban society.

In Section III the author puts forward his remedies for the ills of this society, based on the foregoing diagnosis. As is well known, in Iran at the present day the following three political lines for economic and social reform are existent struggling against each other. The first is the line of the present Shah, the second is that of the National Front, and the third is that of the Tudeh Party. Among these, American policy in relation to Iran has chosen the first, and wholly opposed to the second and third. The work by D. N. Wilber which we have mentioned above distinguishes among these three by calling the first 'positive nationalism' and the second and third 'devastative nationalism.' In contrast to this, the author of the work under review publicly expresses a position which is near to the second line, that of the National Front. This National Front has been illegal since the fall of Mosaddeq in 1953, but it draws strong support from the intellectuals today. Its political aims are those of safeguarding of the basic rights of the Iranian people, the holding of free elections, and opposition to both new and old colonialism, and it calls for the overthrow of the royal régime as an illegal régime which infringes the basic rights of the Iranian people.

The conclusion which the author arrives at with help of his social analysis is that in Iran, as in the other countries in Asia and Africa, it will be impossible to attain a recovery of humanity in society unless national liberation is realized in fullest measure. That is to say, he elicits the logic that national liberation is a pre-condition for the establishment of modern man in Asia.

The point that national liberation in Asia and Africa must inevitably be attended by an ethical aspiration towards the recovery of deprived humanity is something which must be given the fullest consideration by Western social scientists. For example, the character of Mahātmā Gāndhī's leadership in Indian nationalism shows the importance of the ethical element which accompanies nationalism, and the same fact is shown by the extreme emphasis placed on the ethical element in the present stage of construction in People's China. In the same way, as a future direction for West Asian society Professor Gibb predicts a strengthening of ethicalism as a means of filling up the ethical void in parallel with the strengthening of the leadership of the State.

As a sociologist the author warns us of the depth of the roots of disease in present-day Iranian society. Above all, the book calls for reappraisal of economics-centred development plans for underdeveloped countries.

As the author points out, Iran has been sacrificed in the interests of America's cold war policies, and the national liberation which is the pre-condition for true modernization has been frustrated since the collapse of the Mosaddeq régime. The book makes it clear that final stability in Iranian society cannot be attained without Western understanding of the inviolable principle of thoroughgoing Asian national liberation. (*Kan Kagaya*)