

Early 18th Century Iranian Local Societies as Seen from Ottoman Tahrir Registers

(1) : Peasants and Nomads in Ardalan Province

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Little attention has been given to the rural society of pre-modern Iran. One of the principal reasons for this situation is the scarcity of historical material concerning the subject. In the present paper, using unexplored Ottoman archives, we try to present some observations on peasants and nomads in a local society of early eighteenth-century Iran.

The Ottoman archives in question are *tahrir defterleri*, cadastral records, concerning the western part of Iran. Now preserved in Başbakanlık Arşivleri in Istanbul, Turkey, they were compiled by the Ottomans when they occupied Iran on several occasions between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century. Most of them belong to the latter period, that is, the period just after the collapse of the Safavid Dynasty. They cover almost the whole territory of western Iran, such as Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Ardalan (Kurdistan), Hamadan, Kermanshah and Lorestan. Containing the names of all tax payers, various tax revenues, their amounts and the sum total in each town and village, they give us much valuable information on various socioeconomic aspects of Iranian cities and villages. Comparative study of these registers will provide us with a bird's-eye view of settlement patterns and productive activities in the whole western part of Iran.

Here, taking as an example the register on the province of Ardalan (TT1066), we offer a rough sketch on patterns in the size of population and cultivated land of rural settlements. Then we point out some characteristics of nomads of the region.