

Politics of Culture in Iran

Anthropology, politics and society
in the twentieth century

Nematollah Fazeli

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Politics of Culture in Iran

Politics of Culture in Iran is the first comprehensive study of modern anthropology within the context of Iranian studies and politics in the twentieth century.

This book analyses the ways in which anthropology and culture in Iran have interacted with Iranian politics and society. In particular it highlights how and why anthropology and culture became part of wider socio-political discourses and how they were appropriated and rejected by the pre- and post-revolutionary regimes. The author shows that there have been three main phases of Iranian anthropology, corresponding broadly to three periods in the social and political development of Iran and including:

- The Period of Nationalism: lasting approximately from the Constitutional Revolution (1906–11) and the end of the Qajar dynasty until the end of Reza Shah's reign (1941);
- The Period of Nativism: from the 1950s until the Islamic Revolution (1979);
- The Post-Revolutionary Period.

This book also places Iran within an international context by demonstrating how Western anthropological concepts, theories and methodologies affected epistemological and political discourses in Iranian anthropology. *Politics of Culture in Iran* is essential reading for those with interests in Iranian society and politics and anthropology.

Nematollah Fazeli is Associate Professor of Allameh Tabatab'ai University of Iran and he specializes in Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies focusing on contemporary culture of Iran, ethnography and Higher Education Studies.

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Note on transliteration

I have adopted a simple system of transliteration, close to modern spoken Persian. All Persian and Arabic words and names are rendered in accordance with the transliteration rules outlined here, except when cited in sources in European language.

The full range of English vowels are used to express current Persian pronunciation of Arabic, Turkish, French and Persian words and names, though long and short 'a' are not differentiated. The following are some examples:

Q as in Abol Qasem

Gh as in Forughi

O as in Mardomshenasi

E as in Esfahan.

For dates I have pursued the following format. For material originally published in Persian the bibliography provides both Muslim solar calendar years (*Hejri Shamsi*) current in Iran and the equivalent years in Christian Era, respectively. In the body of the text and the notes, however, I provide the Christian Era dates, except for a few cases as noted. Finally, unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Persian are my own.

1 Iranian anthropology and ideology

Introduction

This book is a systematic empirical study of Iranian modern anthropology extracted from my PhD thesis called *Anthropology and Political Discourses in the Twentieth Century Iran* (SOAS, London University 2004). As a standard academic research project it had a certain research problem, a research subject, an objective and a theoretical and methodological framework. In this introductory chapter I introduce all these aspects. Furthermore, the theoretical and practical significances of this study for anthropology in general and contemporary Iranian studies will be explained. Also, at the end of this chapter, I shall introduce and highlight the organization of the book.

Anthropology as the research problem

This study is an ethnographic account of the formation and development of anthropology in twentieth-century Iran. It is ethnographic in the Geertzian sense that ethnography is conceived of as ‘an enterprise...whose aim is to render obscure matters intelligible by providing them with an informing context’ (Geertz 1983: 152). In the same way, this research is intended to contextualize modern anthropology in Iran within its pertinent socio-political context. My major questions in this study are: how has anthropology been relevant to Iranian society in the last century? And how did political changes affect Iranian anthropology? Through examination of these questions in this research I will attempt to ethnographically clarify the contextual meaning of anthropology in contemporary Iran.

To answer these questions, the socio-political situation and context in which the discipline is placed must be examined. I believe that ‘intellectual paradigms, including anthropological traditions, are culturally mediated, that is they are contextually mediated and relative; and if anthropological activities are culturally mediated, they are in turn subject to ethnographic description and ethnological analysis’ (Scholte 1969: 431). Gerholm and Hannerz formulate this hypothesis as the major question in the study of ‘national anthropologies’. They maintain: ‘Anthropology is an interpretation of culture. Could it be that this interpretation is itself shaped by culture? Could some of the differences between national

anthropologies be derived from differences between the cultural systems that have formed the anthropologies?' (1982: 13).

Having approached the subject from the above perspective, one observes that the genesis and development of Iranian anthropology were due to certain socio-political factors. I shall argue that during the last 100 years there have been three major phases of development of Iranian anthropology, and that these three phases correspond largely to three phases in the development of Iranian society. Such a triadic scheme seemingly represents a simplification, but this simplification will serve its purpose to examine the whole anthropological enterprise in Iran as a form of 'societal action', operating within and against a certain societal, cultural and political context.

The periods into which I want to break down the development of Iranian society during the last century are, first, the period of Nationalism, lasting roughly from the Constitutional Revolution (1905–11) and the end of the Qajar dynasty until the end of Reza Shah's reign (1941); second, the period of Nativism and anti-modernization movements, beginning in the 1950s and ending with the onset of the Islamic Revolution 1979 and third, the two decades after the Revolution, characterized by Islamization and a continuation of anti-Westernism. In what follows these periods and their relevance for anthropology are briefly explained.

With the turn of the twentieth century, Iran witnessed some major historical changes. In the first decade, the Constitutional Revolution took shape, changing some structural bases of society including the attitudes of elites towards culture. During the Constitutional Revolution era a group of prominent literati such as Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, Ali Akbar Dehkhoda and Zeynul 'Abedin Maragheh'i approached culture from the viewpoint of ordinary people, not that of the ruler and court which had been predominant for centuries. They sought to reform society and purify traditional culture of superstitions and obstacles, and to pave the way for modernization and rationalization. They adopted a 'critical approach' towards culture that was unprecedented in Persian literature and Iranian intellectual history. They began with the simplification of the Persian language and popularization of Persian folk literature. This movement was called a Literary Revolution (*Enqelab Adabi*) that aimed to democratize Persian literature and language.

To do so, they used Persian colloquial language in their writings. Jamalzadeh, the pioneer and founder of the modern Persian short novel, in *Once Upon a Time*, 1985 (*Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud*, 1921) called for a democratic revolution in Persian literature, which meant paying serious attention to a simple style of writing that common people can understand and enjoy, and shifting literary themes from courtly and aristocratic issues to those of 'ordinary and everyday life'. They believed the task of literature is not merely to produce aesthetically valuable texts, but more importantly to produce a critical representation of cultural and social problems as well. In their view, literature must function as cultural critique and knowledge should be for the service of ordinary people, not the governing classes. This Literary Revolution was mainly carried out through folklore studies, and eventually developed the foundations of Iranian folkloristics.

Then, in the 1910s–20s, the idea of an Iranian anthropology was further popularized by Sadeq Hedayat and his followers (Shahshahani 1986: 106). Hedayat approached Iranian culture and folklore from nationalist and modernist perspectives. In his view, Iranian culture comprised two distinctive elements: non-Iranian and Iranian. Islamic cultural elements were treated as ‘alien’, irrational and anti-modern, whereas the cultural elements remaining from the pre-Islamic period were taken as ‘genuine culture’, suited to a modern society based on European civilization. Hedayat’s approach towards Iranian culture became the guideline for all nationalist folklorists, and paved the way for a distinctively secular ground for modern folklore studies in Iran.

In the reign of Reza Shah (1925–41), the government actively encouraged folklore studies and used it to support and popularize the nationalist ideology of the state. The nationalization of the Persian language, the invention of national traditions and symbols, and other state policies created a need for an anthropological enterprise. In 1938 the Centre for Iranian Anthropology (CIAnt), the first Iranian institution for studying anthropological themes, was founded. The Centre was commissioned to document historical and existing Iranian cultural traits, in particular, folklore. Soon after its formation, the Centre established the Museum of Iranian Anthropology (*Muzeh Mardomshenasi Iran*), and the Museum of Ancient Iran (*Muzeh Iran Bastan*). Later, during Mohammad Reza Shah’s reign (1941–79), the Centre was considerably extended, and from the 1960s it produced a vast corpus of folkloric and ethnographic materials (Khaliqi 1974: 5).

In the 1960s–70s, Iranian folklore studies attracted further attention of both government and independent scholars. In 1965, government established the Centre for Iranian Folklore (CIF) under the auspices of the Iranian National Broadcasting Organization. The CIF played a very significant role in popularizing and spreading folklore studies around the country. At that time an intellectual movement against the Westernization of the society, in the name of modernization and development, had emerged. This anti-Western movement aimed to preserve traditional culture and focused on folklore studies, the revitalization of peasant culture, the extension of rural and nomadic studies and an emphasis on religious and Islamic culture. Ali Shariati put forward the theory of Returning to (Islamic) Self (*Bazgasht be Khishtan*), meaning Shi’ism, and Al-e Ahmad expounded a highly polemical and critical social theory of time, namely, ‘*Gharbzadegi*’ (Westoxication). Those theories created a new approach toward Iranian culture and produced an Islamic mainstream in Iranian anthropology. Furthermore, at that time Marxist and socialist intellectuals were active and a group of socialist intellectuals such as Samad Behrangi and Gholamhossein Saedi established a socialist discourse within Iranian anthropology.

Iranian anthropology evolved into an academic and professional discipline in the 1960s with the formation of the Institute for Social Studies and Research (ISSR – *Mo’asseseh Motale’at va Tahqiqat Ejtema’i*), and the Department of Anthropology of Tehran University (1971). In the 1960s and 1970s Iranian anthropology changed its focus to applied research to provide basic data for implementing government development programmes (Enayat 1973: 10;

Zahedi-Mazandarani 1996: 18). At the time, Iranian researchers published a host of ethnographic accounts of nomadic and rural communities (Sa'edi 1963, 1965; Varjavand *et al.* 1967; Afshar-Naderi 1968; Bajalan-Faroukhi 1968; Safinezhad 1968; Amanollahi-Baharvand 1975). Those studies mainly served the state policy of modernization.

Meanwhile, a large number of non-Iranian, mainly European and American, anthropologists came to Iran to do ethnographic fieldwork.¹ Overall, by 1979, Iranian culture and society had attracted a large number of non-Iranian ethnographers (Hassan-Larijani 1991; Safinezhad 1997; Spooner 1999), and Iran had become the second favourite ethnographic site in the Middle East for anthropologists (Antoun *et al.* 1976: 181). The foreign anthropologists' extensive studies of Iranian nomadic and rural populations 'today are considered as part of the classical literature of anthropology' (Spooner 1987: 108, 1999: 9). These studies were mainly based on the dominant anthropological discourses and theories of the time such as structuralism, cultural ecology and social organization theory. However, some have argued that these studies were in line with European Orientalist discourses and followed political aims (Street 1990). As will be seen, those studies had a clear effect on the progress of Iranian anthropology as well.

In 1979, with the Islamic Revolution, Iranian society fundamentally shifted into a new historical era, and many aspects of society, including academic and intellectual activities, changed. At the beginning of the Revolution, anthropology totally lost its academic position and its credibility as a respectable intellectual endeavour. Nationalism was treated as an anti-Islamic world view, and the cultural resistance against modernization and Westernization, that had motivated a group of intellectuals and created a nativist trend in Iranian anthropology, lost its social context because the new revolutionary state was not going to pursue the Westernization policies of the previous state.

Likewise, following the Revolution the country did not allow itself to be the subject of foreign anthropological studies until recent years, and, as Spooner explains, 'The post-revolutionary regime has been generally less favorable to ethnographic research' (1999: 12). This resulted partly from the anti-Western nature of the Revolution, and partly from changes in Western anthropology, whose students now pay more attention to Western societies. However, after a decade of decline, since 1989 anthropology in Iran has gradually regained importance and attracted much attention in society. During the 1990s, research and teaching in anthropology have been expanded and now many universities offer anthropology courses. This regeneration of anthropology in Iran evokes Levi-Strauss's prediction that 'anthropology will survive in a changing world by allowing itself to perish in order to be born again under a new guise' (1966: 126).

With this background, I pose the question, how did the changing socio-political context of anthropology affect the nature of the anthropological enterprise in Iran? This study examines why and how facets of Iranian culture were isolated to constitute a disciplinary subject – 'a process that occurs in all fields claiming parts of culture as their core, from early anthropology and philology to the present plethora of area and ethnic studies' (Bendix 1997: 5). I argue that Iranian society

has been, from the beginning of the last century until now, searching for *authenticity*, and in this process pre-Islamic, Islamic and modern cultures have been competing grounds for making various cultural and political discourses. *Authenticity*, I argue, was variously used as an agent to define the anthropological canon to differentiate it from other cultural manifestations and to create new paradigms in Iranian anthropology.

In a more tangible sense this research has two objectives: the first is to investigate the effect of certain crucial socio-political events on the genesis and development of anthropology in Iran. These events are the *Constitutional Revolution* (1906), the *Rise of the Pahlavi Dynasty* (1925) and the *Islamic Revolution* (1979). The second objective is to assess the changing relevance and status of anthropology in Iran by examining its impact as a branch of knowledge, as *ideological instrument*, *applied knowledge* and *cultural critique*. By pursuing these objectives, I want to demonstrate the reciprocal links between Iranian social sciences and society, and particularly to explore the *social logic* of anthropological enterprises, explaining how anthropologists created their own culture. As will be seen, ‘anthropologists, like many others in the social sciences and humanities, do not simply analyse and study culture but also produce it’ (Thomas 1999: 227).

The general underlying assumption of the research is that the growth and development of anthropology in Iran has to be viewed and appraised as a response to the challenges confronting Iranian society from the beginning of the twentieth century until the present. In other words, it is reasonable to assume that the emergence of an area of interest and specialization bears a close link with societal needs and national processes. Given this premise, I suggest that anthropology in Iran has been a socio-political phenomenon, which has developed in the context of Iranian socio-political processes. These processes are *nationalism*, *modernization* and *preservation of traditional culture*. Consequently, Iranian anthropology has never been involved with the purely theoretical questions discussed in anthropological schools like evolutionism, functionalism, diffusionism, structuralism and so forth. In response to the above processes, three main discourses in Iranian anthropology have developed: nationalism, nativism and Islamism. In the theoretical framework, these discourses will be separately explained.

I should mention that, although this investigation includes a historical review and examines past work, it is not intended to be a comprehensive survey, or a complete history of anthropology in Iran, but rather *it aims to be an investigation of the role of Iranian anthropology in the main ideological discourses*. These terms, ‘Iranian anthropology’ and ‘ideological discourses’, will be clarified in the following paragraphs.

Anthropology as the research subject

Iranian anthropology is the subject of this study. To begin with, it is necessary to define the meaning of the term, which I use as the equivalent of the Persian *mardomshenasi-ye Iran*. I use ‘anthropology’ as a general term to refer very broadly to any form of research or study dealing with the subjects and people whose

cultures and societies have been the traditional subjects of anthropological studies in Iran. Under the term anthropology I include a group of studies including ethnology, ethnography, social and cultural anthropology and folkloristics. This broad definition is necessary to do justice to the wide range of studies and diverse anthropological traditions that have been and still are present in Iran. However, Iranian concepts of these terms, which are used here, may differ from those in other societies and should be defined in more detail.

In a sense, the term ‘anthropology’ embodies the unity of a discipline which contains many sub-disciplines, such as ethnology, folkloristics, archaeology, mythology and linguistics, and which comes under various Persian terms including *ensanshenasi*, *mardomshenasi*, *nezhadshenasi*, *qoumshenasi*, *qoumnegari*, *tudehshenasi* and *mardomnegari*. In the broadest sense, anthropology in Iran is made up of two types of activities: *qoumshenasi* or *mardomshenasi* (ethnology or folk studies) on the one hand and *ensanshenasi* (anthropology) on the other. *Qoumshenasi* is, principally, a descriptive form of folk studies, or the study of self-identity, which consists in recording and interpreting socio-cultural phenomena of a particular part of one’s own society called *qoum* (ethnic group, people and folk). The object of *qoumshenasi* is folk and folk culture. However, in Iran’s history, as will be explained in later chapters, *qoumshenasi* has sometimes taken other cultures as its object, while remaining strongly tied to a descriptive method. *Tudehshenasi* (folkloristics) is also the science of material culture and is known as the main part of *qoumshenasi*.

Ensanshenasi, on the other hand, is characterized both by the study of others, of other cultures, and as a study that produces conclusions about the human condition and philosophical questions in general. *Ensanshenasi* uses generalizations and sophisticated theoretical assumptions that are part of a global tradition. This term is mainly used in Iran to refer to social and cultural anthropological traditions imported from the West. The Iranian concept of *ensanshenasi* also refers to philosophical and theological anthropology – matters that are excluded from this study.

Another Persian term that needs explanation is *mardomnegari*. *Mardomnegari* is conceived as the research method of *ensanshenasi*, *qoumshenasi* and *tudehshenasi*. It also refers to both the method and the product of anthropology. In general, *mardomnegari* is defined as the art of describing cultures, either ‘own’ or ‘other’, on the basis of some kind of eyewitness observation. In other words, it corresponds to ethnography, which anthropologists consider the hallmark of their profession that ‘distinguishes the discipline from other social sciences and humanities’ (McCurdy 1997: 62).

However, if we define ethnography as the description of cultures based on first hand or historical observation, there are various types of Persian writings that would be considered ethnographic. Persian ethnographic writings, like others, can be classified into two types: systematic and unsystematic. Unsystematic ethnography includes such writings as *safarnameh* (travel accounts), *zendeginameh* (autobiography), *vaqayehnameh* (chronicles) and *khaterat* (memoris). This category can be divided into two: first, the work of ‘missionaries, government employees, adventurers, and other incidental observers, who for their own professional reasons reside and travel in the community they are describing’ (ibid.: 13) and second, the work of

Iranian observers and commentators, modern and earlier, who although not consciously applying an ethnographic method are nevertheless describing community life for non-participants. By systematic ethnography I mean those writings which emerged in the 1960s in the context of modern anthropological knowledge and ethnographic methods, and which include folklore, nomadic, rural and urban studies.

Iranian anthropology can usefully be divided into 'the anthropological study of Iran' whether conducted by Iranian or non-Iranian anthropologists and 'anthropology as a branch of knowledge generated, developed, taught and studied by Iranians'. It is the latter that is the main subject of the present study – though here too, Iranians and their culture and society have been the main subjects of study by Iranian anthropologists, whether they live in Iran or abroad.

Methodological and theoretical considerations

In this section I will outline the methodology and theoretical framework of my research. First, I describe methodological considerations and the major perspectives of the research. In this section meta-anthropology, projection of ideology, discourse analysis, analysis strategy, evaluative criteria and fieldwork will be elaborated. Then, there will be a discussion of three main discourses or concepts that constitute the theoretical foundation of the research, namely, nationalism, nativism and Islamism.

Methodology

A meta-anthropological perspective The general perspective of this research is 'meta-anthropology', or, in other words, sociology of anthropology. This approach, as Stark defines it, 'is concerned, in the first place, with the origin of ideas, and not with their validity, it tries to understand why people have thought as they have, not to test whether what they have thought was the truth' (1967: 152). In this perspective, anthropology is a social phenomenon, like other subjects which anthropologists and other social scientists study. To trace the origin of ideas in anthropology in Iran, I have primarily postulated White's fundamental principle in his study of *Metahistory* (1973). He writes: 'One must try to get behind or beneath the presumptions which sustain a given type of inquiry and ask the questions that can be begged in its practice in the interest of why this type of inquiry has been designed to solve the problems it characteristically tries to solve' (quoted in Gilsenan 1982: 223).

Projection of ideology In interpreting ethnographies I will not try to decide whether a given account is better, or more correct. Indeed, I am not concerned with ranking twentieth-century Iranian anthropology in terms of either 'realism' or 'scientificity'. Rather, my purpose is to analyse the studies as 'projections' of a given ideological position. I should also mention that I take the Mannheimian conception of the term 'ideology'; that is, 'a set of prescriptions for taking a position in the present world of social praxis and acting upon it (either to change

the world or to maintain it in its current state)' (White 1973: 22). By virtue of this, the underlying methodological assumption of the research is Mannheim's theory of the relation between knowledge and ideology, that 'ideology is concerned equally with dominant and with oppositional forms of knowledge in a society, with accommodative strategies, and with knowledge deriving from the historical and social positions of its users' (Mannheim 1952; Kress 1985: 29).

Therefore, I am interested only in indicating how ideological considerations enter into the ethnographer's efforts in describing and explaining the ethnographic field. I will attempt to show that even the works of those ethnographers whose interests were manifestly non-political, such as Javad Safinezhad, Mahmud Ruholamini and Mortaza Farhadi, have specific ideological implications. The works of this group, I maintain, are at least consonant with one or other of the ideological positions of the times in which they were written.

Discourse analysis I have used the term *discourse* to refer to the structured set of ideas and statements that are politically and socially interrelated and reflected in the anthropological literature of Iran. Theoretically, I have followed a Foucauldian approach to the relation between discourse, power and knowledge. There are two different approaches to discourse analysis: sociopolitical and linguistic (Seidel 1985: 43). The former, mainly developed by Foucault, is the one I take. For Foucault, a discourse consists of a group of statements linked to a *referential* itself consisting of 'laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied in it' (1972: 191). In Foucault's view power produces discourse: 'There are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse' (Foucault 1986: 229); and 'power produces knowledge. Power and knowledge directly imply one another. There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not that presuppose and continue at the same time power relations' (Foucault 1972, in Davies *et al.* 1997: 16).

Analysis strategy Besides historical documents, I analyse monographs and anthropological texts. In each period studied, the major texts and writings of prominent figures such as Jamalzadeh, Hedayat, Al-e Ahmad, Ruholamini, Fahimi and Farhadi will be examined. To analyse and assess the accounts being studied my methodological strategy is to interrogate and interpret the *contents* of the ethnographies, not the *research processes* that generated them. To read and analyse the studies, I distinguish their component parts. As Hammersley says 'In reading an ethnographic account it is important to distinguish among various aspects of it that serve different functions. The main aspects are: the research focus; the case(s) studied; the methods of data collection and analysis used; the major claims and the evidence provided for them; and, finally, the conclusions drawn about the research focus' (1998: 28).

For the purpose of this research, I deal with only the research focus, the major claims and conclusions of the works being studied. The ideological implications

of these elements of the studies will be analysed. I think that most of these elements are thoroughly known for everyone who deals with anthropology. But I should define how I want to identify the main claims in the studies. In the following I explain this issue briefly.

Evaluative criteria Within any ethnographic account there will be an abundance of claims made (Hammersley 1998: 36). In this study, *the ideological orientation of each description and statement will identify the major claims*. To identify the ideological claims I apply two criteria: *value judgements* and *evaluative statements* made by the authors. However, I consider, in each case, *the underlying theoretical assumptions* of the ethnographers, and how *the research topics* might be relevant to a specified *political ideology*.

The other criterion to identify the ideological orientation of a certain account is its *relationship with state policy*. Both applied research projects and basic research in anthropology have explicit policy objectives. As Koentjaraningrat says, 'It is also a fact that social science research in many developing countries, anthropological research in particular, is very much development-oriented, and indigenous anthropologists in those countries are much involved in problems of nation-building and can therefore not afford to abstain from political development'(1982: 176).

However, relations between ethnographers and the society they have studied have not always been in agreement with state policies. On the contrary, very often they have criticized governments and cultural positions in their own society. Anthropological knowledge could be an ideology of dissident intellectuals. Marcus and Fischer convincingly demonstrate that anthropology has constantly been cultural critique. They maintain, 'Cultural critique is always one possible justification for social research, but in some periods it becomes more widely embraced by social scientists and other intellectuals as the rationale and purpose for their work' (1986/1999: 114).

The twentieth century was such a period for many Iranian intellectuals, including ethnographers and folklorists. The writings of many major Iranian ethnographers and folklorists can be read as positional reactions to the ruling ideology, and/or to the transformation of the country from traditional to modern, Westernized, secular and dependent industrial society. Women's studies such as Mir-Hosseini's ethnographies, folkloric studies such as Samad Behrangi's works and Al-e Ahmad's ethnographies are examples in terms of Iranian critical anthropology.

Generally, critical works are based on specific political ideologies. Given this, in this study I apply '*critical orientation*' as a methodological criterion to identify ideological categories in the works being studied. But here I should mention that Harvey and others have argued that 'critical ethnography' is not confined to criticism of state programmes and policies; it can take several forms such as 'deconstruction of the social structure', 'contextualization of a subject in a wider context', 'defamiliarization' and 'epistemological critique' (Marcus and Fischer 1999: 137).

Ethnographic field research In addition to examining a large number of ethnographic texts of different genres, I have employed two types of personal ethnographic data. First, I have been a student and teacher of anthropology in

Iran for many years. So, this research takes advantages of my experience of learning and teaching anthropology in Iran. I obtained both bachelor's and master's degrees in social anthropology from Iranian universities. Between 1991 and 1998 I taught anthropology in different universities in Iran, and I have been involved in anthropological research in the country during the last decade. As will be seen, to examine the recent state of research and the teaching of anthropology I have used my own observations and experiences of anthropological courses and classes in this study, as an ethnographic source.

Furthermore, in order to complete and update my knowledge of Iranian anthropology, in the summers of 2000 and 2001 I conducted short periods of fieldwork in the three Universities of Tehran, Allameh Tabatabai and Mazandaran. I also visited several cultural and anthropological research institutes in Tehran. In addition to collecting texts and documents, I conducted interviews with students, teachers and researchers. I interviewed the heads and researchers of several anthropological institutes, including the CIAAnth, the Organization of Iranian Cultural Heritage, the General Office for Iranian Museums and the managers of other anthropological centres.

The people I interviewed were:

Javad Safinezhad, Former Head of the Department of Anthropology, Institute of Social Studies and Research, Tehran.

Mahmud Ruholamini, Professor of Anthropology, Tehran University.

Jalaloddin Rafi'efar, Head of the Department of Anthropology, Tehran University, and President of the Iranian Anthropological Association.

Naser Fakuhi, Professor of Anthropology, Tehran University.

Mortaza Farhadi, Professor of Anthropology, Allameh Tabatabai University.

Mohammad Mossavi, Editor of the Journal of Iranian Nomadic Studies.

Jalal Sattari, Eminent Scholar of Iranian Cultural Studies and Mythology.

Mohammad Mirshokrai, Director of the Centre for Iranian Anthropology.

Mohammad Hossein Beheshti, Secretary of the Organization of Iranian Cultural Heritage.

Ahmad Vakilian, Folklorist, Centre for Iranian Folklore.

Mehdi Fahimi, Editor and Co-author of *Farhang-e Jebbeh*.

Reza Kamari, Co-author of *Farhang-e Jebbeh*.

Numerous social science students of different universities in Tehran and Mazandaran.

Discourses and concepts

Nationalism Nationalism is a political doctrine which originally emerged in Europe in the late eighteenth century; by the twentieth century it was spread to societies across Asia, including Iran by intellectuals and political forces. It holds that 'humanity can be divided into separate discrete units – nations – and that each nation should constitute a separate political unit – a state' (Spencer 1996: 391).

In Gellner's view nationalism is a feature of modern society only, which has emerged in terms of the logic of industry and modernization. Gellner suggests that nationalism has three elements: *power, education and shared culture*, and holds that 'modern societies are always and inevitably centralized, in the sense that the maintenance of order is the task of one agency or group of agencies, and not dispersed throughout the society' (1983: 17).

The relationship between anthropology and nationalism, since their emergence, has been reciprocal and intimate. As many have insisted, 'nationalism shares an intellectual history with anthropology and serves as a reminder of the political implications of common anthropological assumptions about the world – for example, the idea that people can be naturally classified as belonging to discrete bounded cultures or societies' (Spencer 1996: 391). Anthropologists, on the one hand, have abundantly studied nationalism as a cultural phenomenon (e.g. Geertz 1963; Gellner 1983), and on the other hand, anthropological representations such as museums, ethnographic films and anthropological monographs have effectively bolstered nationalism and frequently been applied by nationalist governments and intellectuals (Wilson 1976; Cocchiara 1981; Herzfeld 1982; Handler 1988; Foster 1991). Nationalism, in turn, as a discourse, paradigm and sometimes as a certain sort of cosmology, has affected anthropologists in their views (Stocking 1983, 1985, 1996; Bendix 1997).

In this study I have used Nationalism to indicate a political ideology focusing on national identity and culture (shared language, history, territory, customs and religion) used to claim political legitimacy for the actions of either ruling or ruled groups. In Iran, however, national culture (the common culture that can be attributed to Iranians) has been historically a very complex entity and construct, subject to many different interpretations and representations. Consequently, as I shall illustrate throughout the book, different and sometimes contradictory concepts of nationalism have been constructed – for example, different forms of both secular nationalism and Islamic nationalism. I should emphasize that by nationalism I do not mean patriotism, though sometimes nationalists use this as an emotional resource.

Furthermore, in this study I am not concerned with examining nationalism from an anthropological point of view or how anthropologists have studied nationalism. Strictly speaking, I even do not focus on how anthropology affected nationalism; rather, the focus is on how nationalists used anthropological representations and how nationalism as a political discourse influenced Iranian anthropology.

According to existing empirical evidence, nationalism has contributed to and affected anthropology, in particular archaeological and folkloristic studies, in the following ways:

- 1 Nationalism as a methodological and theoretical paradigm of anthropological research. In this regard, many anthropologists like Turner, Dumont, Warner and Geertz have demonstrated the relationship between anthropology and nationalism by concentrating on the rituals and symbols of nations (Spencer 1996: 392). Spencer argues that Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and the Spread of Nationalism* (1983) proposes a new area

for anthropological inquiry: nationalist cultural production, for example, in mass media, consumption, art and folklore. The book has shown how archaeological, historical and folklore studies were cultural productions of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe. Anderson believes ‘nationalism to be a modern phenomenon’ and focuses ‘more on nationalism as a mode of political imagination, to be analysed more like religion or kinship, for instance, than like other political ideologies such as Marxism or liberalism’ (ibid.).

- 2 Nationalism as an educational and cultural policy, where nationalist governments establish and support anthropological research to highlight certain cultural symbols and topics in line with political objectives. This occurred in all modern European nationalist states in the nineteenth century. Hobsbawm and Ranger in *The Invention of Tradition* (1985) suggested that in totalitarian ideologies, such as Nazism, folklore is used to invent notions of national and racial purity with scientific authority. As we will see, all Iranian governments in the twentieth century applied and employed anthropological enterprises and findings to establish and propagate their political goals.
- 3 Nationalism as an intellectual concern where anthropologists follow a certain social and political commitment to enlighten, modernize, liberalize, reform and change a nation. In this case, anthropologists have to address public audiences and readerships. Likewise, in order to influence the masses and to attract a greater audience, those anthropologists have to focus on issues concerned with national sentiments and characteristics. Also, they have to employ a simple rhetoric and language understandable by ordinary people. Sadeq Hedayat and many other Iranian nationalist folklorists and ethnographers are examples of this trend.
- 4 Nationalism as a predominant cosmological and philosophical framework of thought in a historical epoch. In this case, anthropologists, like other thinkers and scholars, either unconsciously or consciously are under the influence of a nationalist zeitgeist. The best example of this is folklore and its rise in Europe. The history of folklore begins with the dramatic rise of European romantic nationalism in the first half of the nineteenth century. Inspired by philosophers like Vico (1668–1744) and Herder (1744–1803), nationalist scholars sought in folkloric materials the empirical basis for their claims about essential national character (Herzfeld 1982: 237). Material culture is another increasingly studied dimension of folklore, and is especially relevant to the discipline’s role in museums. Museums also often serve ideological ends such as promoting a sense of national unity by highlighting commonalities in artifact form (ibid.).

Not only folkloristics but also ethnography has been considerably influenced by a certain nationalist cosmology. Nationalism in Europe was merged with evolutionism and through evolutionism did affect anthropology. Gellner has demonstrated (1995) that in the early decades of the twentieth century there were two intellectual mainstreams: cosmopolitan liberalism and the nationalist–socialist leaning of ethnic groups, including German speakers.

Malinowski was intellectually influenced by the latter. 'The philosophical expression of the former', Gellner states, 'was the idea of Open Society... The latter interest expressed itself largely in the romanticism of *Gemeinschaft*' (Gellner 1995: 13). Gellner argued that the ideas of Progress and Evolutionism that were the predominant paradigm of Malinowski's time were also combined with that of nationalism, which gave Malinowski, the pioneer of scientific anthropology, 'plenty of support'. In Malinowski's view, 'he could remain a cultural nationalist or particularist' (ibid.: 16).

- 5 Nationalism as a personal and emotional motivation of anthropologists to study their own culture in search of identity and authenticity or the fulfilment of their family or class self-honour. Nationalism has been the class, tribe and social group ideology of anthropologists in struggling to maintain their rights, identity and political existence. As I shall argue, most Iranian ethnographers who have studied Iranian tribes have had tribal roots.

As will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 2, in the late nineteenth century Iran began to expand its relationships with the West. Within a decade, many Iranian intellectuals became familiar with European culture, technology and democracy. This caused Iranian intellectuals to seek a new cosmology and world view, to seek to establish a modern nation-state similar to those of modern Europe. In their view, Islam and the Arabs were a major cause of Iran's underdevelopment and weakness. Many intellectuals believed Islam to be a non-Iranian, Arab religion and saw it as an obstacle in the way of modernization or Westernization, as such. They wanted to replace Islam with a glorified pre-Islamic Iran and Zoroastrianism. Arab Muslim invaders were thus portrayed as causing Iran's decline (Keddie 1980: 99).

Modern Iranian nationalism was based on those presuppositions. However, in the twentieth century, Iranian nationalism diversified and took five main forms, each of which had some effect on Iranian anthropology:

Liberal nationalism This theory originated in the works of thinkers and writers like Mirza Malcolm Khan and Hassan Taqizadeh. This nationalism had little impact on Iran's anthropology, but it was in fact a first step towards noticing folklore in Iran during the Constitutional Revolution.

Romantic nationalism This is an ideology that originated in the works of thinkers such as Aqa Khan Kermani, Fath-Ali Akhundzadeh and Zein al-Abedin Maraghehi. They identified Iran with its pre-Islamic past and blamed all the problems of Iran on Islam. This trend had the most influence on Iran's anthropology by 1979. Sadeq Hedayat's folkloric studies can be placed in this trend.

Socialist nationalism This originated in the works of writers and activists like Talebof, Heidar Amu-Oghli and Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda. Later this trend evolved into communist nationalism. It expanded Marxist anthropology in Iran (Mashayekhi 1992: 86), especially from 1941 to 1953 when the Tudeh Party conducted many social surveys and much ethnographic research among Iranian nomads and rural areas (Zahedi-Mazandarani 1996: 10). Samad Behrangi's folkloric studies and Saedi's ethnographic writings fall in this tradition.

Diaspora nationalism After the Islamic Revolution (1979) many Iranian intellectuals, writers and academics left the country. The new state had a particular notion of academics, treating them as ‘Westoxicated’ intelligentsia who were against Islamic culture. Additionally, many among the diaspora of Iranian scholars were nationalists. Consequently, during the two decades after the Revolution they produced a wealth of material about Iranian culture and society, including anthropological accounts. These intellectuals differ from the romantic and liberal nationalists whom I have discussed in the following chapters.

Islamic nationalism This was first formulated by Sayyid Jamal al-din Asadabadi in his campaign against Western colonialism in Islamic countries. However, Islamic nationalism did not become a major discourse in Iran until the 1990s, when the Islamic state changed its politics to mix Shi’ism and Iranian national culture. In Chapter 6 this nationalism is examined in more detail.

Nativism Anthropology in Iran served modernization and anti-modernization movements in various ways. Here, I consider modernization and its opponents as two ideologies. By modernization I mean all the activities and policies that Iranian states have pursued for using and disseminating modern Western technologies, knowledge and social institutions. The Iranian state used anthropological knowledge to implement development programmes that can be understood within modernization discourse. This discourse was understood as Westernization aimed at destroying Iranian national and native culture. Therefore, a nativist discourse campaigning against Westernization took shape.

Folklore and anthropology have long served as vehicles in the search for the authentic, satisfying a longing for an escape from modernity. The ideal folk community, envisioned as pure and free from civilization’s evils, was a metaphor for everything that was not modern (Bendix 1997: 7). George Stocking observed that anthropology as a system of inquiry was ‘itself constrained – systematically structured – by the ongoing and cumulative historical experience of encounters and comprehensions between Europeans and “Others”’ (1983: 5–9). Anthropology as a discipline and a practice is part of an imaginary discourse that helps to shape the relationship between the West and its others (Scott 1992: 387–8). In the same way, anthropology in Eastern countries has helped to shape the relationship between the East and its Others.

Nativism, ‘in its broadest sense’ as Boroujerdi maintains, implies ‘the doctrine that calls for the resurgence, reinstatement or continuance of native or indigenous cultural customs, beliefs, and values’ (1996: 14). Like nationalism, nativism is a modern phenomenon in Third World countries, which stems from the socio-political circumstances after the Second World War. It is a cultural resistance to the penetration of the West among the wide range of different societies of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The main principle of nativism is to rely on a people’s own local, native, indigenous and historical culture in the process of development instead of European and Western knowledge, technology and culture. It represents the desire of non-Western societies for a return to ‘an unsullied indigenous cultural tradition’ (Williams and Chrisman 1994: 14; Boroujerdi 1996: 14).

To clarify nativism as a discourse I will compare it with nationalism. In a sense, it is hard to draw a boundary between them because they share some historical and social foundations, as well as common principles. For example, both emphatically stress the significance of a certain culture as 'authentic', one's own identity. Nativism and nationalism highlight the difference between self and other as a fundamental way to characterize a national and/or native culture. Furthermore, both were political reactions to Western colonialism and imperialism in the twentieth century.

However, there are features that differentiate nativism from nationalism. First, nationalism, as Gellner (1983) argues, is a product and ramification of modernization, whereas nativism is often pitted against modernization. Nativist thinkers reject modern technology, science and culture for the reason that they are Western and hence incompatible with the circumstances of non-Western societies. Second, nativism can sometimes be treated as anti-nationalism. This is because, whereas nationalism ignores diversities within a country in favour of the national culture, and tries to unify all groups into a single culture, nativist doctrine, on the other hand, requires taking into account all potential capabilities of a society, including those of ethnic and other minorities. Third, from an anthropological approach, nativism is a cultural phenomenon, which has some political implications, whereas nationalism is a political ideology with some cultural significance. This difference is important in that it represents two different foundations for these ideologies. Nativist thinkers try to restore and rediscover their indigenous knowledge and technology, but nationalists aim to make a powerful nation-state.

The call of nativist thinkers for cultural authenticity and the indigenization of knowledge was mostly rooted in a preoccupation with the Other: the West as an imperialist and colonialist entity. This attitude towards the West paved the way for criticizing Western social sciences. Indigenization of social sciences in the Third World is a critical response to Western knowledge. Park (1988: 157) has defined indigenized social science as an epistemological alternative to Western knowledge. This knowledge is based on the realization that Western cultural prejudices have been generalized under the rubric of universal knowledge. Loubser (1988) argued that the idea of indigenization indicates the increasing concern of Third World social scientists to expand scientific methods that deal with their own social problems, instead of 'universal' ones.

Likewise, it is important to consider that nativism has very deep roots in the internal contexts of the societies in which it emerges, and, therefore, it is not solely a process of cultural encounter with the West. For example, Amir-Arjomand argues that traditionalism, which is a type of nativist thought, has a very old history in Islam (1984: 195). He shows that, in Islam, traditionalism dates back to theological and philosophical debates between Mu'tazeli and al-Shafi'i (d. 820). He argues that in the twentieth century in Iran, traditionalism was a religious movement against dissident and secular intellectuals like Ahmad Kasravi (1984: 196).

Islamism Islam was the ideology of the Revolution of 1979. After the establishment of the new state, there was a strong zeal to Islamicize everything

including social sciences. Therefore, the most important factor in conceptualizing the current context of anthropology in Iran is the Islamic Revolution and its ideology of Islamism. The effects of the Revolution on anthropology in Iran might be analysed in two dimensions: first, the theoretical and epistemological debates on Islamic anthropology; and second, the social and practical effects of the cultural policy of the state, which brought about a set of socio-political changes in the anthropological enterprises. However, the idea of Islamicizing social science and creating an Islamic social science was formed by a global group of religious intellectuals before the Revolution and was not confined to a purely Iranian discourse.

In the 1970s, several trends came together to alter the social sciences. Social sciences were gradually conceived as a socio-political phenomenon rather than solely scientific or intellectual enterprise. First, a set of new epistemological debates emerged over conventional and classic social sciences, inspired by Foucault's (1972) theory of the relationship between knowledge and power, post-modern epistemology, anti-colonial debates, anti-Orientalist discourses and nativism. Second, a set of socio-political changes came about in Third World countries. The Islamization of knowledge was one consequence of that alteration in social sciences among Muslim thinkers. As Abaza shows in her fascinating comparative study of the Islamization of knowledge discourse in Malaysia and Egypt, 'the term "Islamization of knowledge" was first devised in Mecca in 1997,² which was followed up by other conferences in various Muslim countries' (2002: 9). It is difficult to define this as a unified movement. There are many different Islamic societies, with different readings of Islam. In addition, the causes of the movement among these countries were not the same. However, the first version of the Islamization of knowledge pointed out 'the principles essential to any attempt to make fashionable an Islamic paradigm of knowledge based on the Islamic worldview and its unique constitutive concepts and factors' (Al Alwani 1995: 81).

Al Alwani discerned six Islamization discourses, which constitute different views and practical meanings of the Islamization of knowledge:

(1) *The Islamic paradigm of knowledge* This concerns 'identifying and erecting a system of knowledge based on *Towhid* (the oneness of God)' (ibid.: 90). This requires the conceptual activation of the articles of faith and their transformation into a creative and dynamic intellectual power capable of presenting adequate replies to what are known as the ultimate questions. It also implies the elaboration of the paradigms of knowledge that guided historical Islam and its legal, philosophical and other schools of thought.

(2) *Qur'anic methodology* This refers to Islamic methodological tools based on Islamic and Qur'anic philosophical foundations. Certainly, the landmarks of such a methodology are derived from the religious and cultural premises of the *Towhid* episteme (ibid.: 91).

(3) *A methodology for interpreting the Quran* This refers to applying modern social science to the understanding of the Quran (ibid.: 92).

(4) *A methodology for interpreting Sunnat* This would be a major source for clarification and explanation of the Qur'anic text (ibid.).

(5) *Re-examining the Islamic intellectual heritage* Regarding long history of Islam and its rich intellectual heritage, Muslims can establish a new discourse of knowledge based on a new reading and examining of their historical trend of knowledge production (ibid.: 93).

(6) *A methodology for dealing with Western thought* Finally, the sixth discourse deals with 'the Western intellectual heritage. If the Muslim mind is to liberate itself from the dominant paradigm and the ways in which it deals with the paradigm, it must construct a *methodology for dealing with Western thought*, both past and present' (ibid.: 90–7).

As will be seen, Iranian Islamicists and revolutionaries tried to establish all these discourses, and in addition the state made great efforts to *Islamicize the universities*. This presumes that if a university is Islamic, then its scientific products will be Islamic. In the Iranian perspective, a university is Islamic when all its constituent parts, including the lecturers, students, regulations, cultural norms, curricula, educational texts and even natural environment are formed in accordance with Islamic culture and injunctions.

The politics of anthropology

In recent decades the history and development of anthropology from political and social viewpoints have become a focus of anthropological attention (Stocking 1987; Jarvie 1989; Vincent 1990; Kuper 1991; Patterson 2001; Lem and Leach 2002). As already discussed, the relationships between anthropology, politics and society have been examined from different perspectives (Anderson 1983; Fabian 1983; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Anthropologists in recent years have been concerned to find out how ethnographies are produced and used in different cultures. In this new perspective, anthropology has to be seen, not as the science of culture, but as a cultural product like art, religion and ideology. The study of anthropology as culture calls for the consideration of the cultural context of anthropology. Carey argues that ethnography's 'faults and triumphs are pretty much characteristics of the cultures as a whole' (1986: 194). For instance, Denzin demonstrates that American ethnography turned to a postmodern and multinational stance as American culture experienced postmodern conditions. 'Difference and disjuncture define the contemporary, global, world cultural system that ethnography is mapped out into. The twice- and thrice-hyphenated American (Asian-American-Japanese) defines the norm' (1989: 284).

When we study anthropology in context, we find that links seem to exist between anthropology and all other aspects of human life. The comparative method is the anthropological equivalent of experiment, and so by making cross-cultural and historical comparisons it may be possible to test the innumerable statements about the nature, functions and correlates of anthropologies that have been made in the context of Western and non-Western cultures.

It is not necessary here to review all of this vast literature. In the broadest sense we can classify the existing debates on this agenda, meaning anthropology and its

political and social contexts, into three categories, though it is not the only possible categorization.

- 1 The debate on colonialism and anthropology, which mainly began in the 1970s, is still lively (Gough 1968; Hymes 1969; Asad 1973; Said 1978; Stocking 1982; Pels and Salemink 1994; Thomas 1994). In this debate, anthropology is accused of collaboration with colonial governments and imperialism. It is said that anthropological knowledge is methodologically and epistemologically contaminated by the colonial interests of the West (Thomas 1996: 112).
- 2 The debate on the politics of representation and ethnographic writing, which mainly began in the 1980s (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1999). The 'crisis of representation' is defined as 'uncertainty about adequate means of describing social reality' (Marcus and Fischer 1999: 8). This crisis has many aspects and stems from several epistemological and methodological issues. The key idea in this debate is that 'the writing and reading of ethnography are overdetermined by forces ultimately beyond the control of an author or an interpretive community' (Clifford 1986: 25). One of the major factors is politics. For instance, it is argued, 'This trend may have much to do with the unfavourable shift in the relative position of American power and influence in the world' (Marcus and Fischer 1999: 8). Because of this, Clifford claims, 'Different rules of the game for ethnography are now emerging in many parts of the world' (1986: 9).
- 3 Debates on the political nature of social sciences, including anthropology. Following Foucault's (1972) epistemological concept of 'the state of truth' and its relation with power, some have argued that knowledge, in particular in the social sciences and anthropology is inherently power oriented (Rabinow 1986).

However, Iranian anthropology, and its relation with political ideologies, has not yet been examined in any depth; this study is the first to do so. Nonetheless, there are authors who have provided materials and commentaries about anthropology in Iran, past and present. Detailed examination and criticism of existing materials will be offered at appropriate points in the following chapters. Here, I will just briefly introduce these studies.

The literature about anthropology in Iran can be classified into three categories:

Historical reviews These studies provide 'descriptive information' about the history of Iranian anthropology. Although so far there is no comprehensive and detailed historical account of Iranian anthropology, there are some bibliographical sources and short reviews that help us in this study. There are five main bibliographic sources, including Zamani and Bolukbashi (1971); ISSR's *Fehrest Maqalat Mardomshenasi* (Bibliography of Anthropological Articles) (1977); Hojjatollah Larijani (1991); Safinezhad (1997) and Shah-Hosseini (1998). These bibliographies comprise nomadic and folklore studies, and there is no reference to other

anthropological fields. Radhayrapetian (1990) gives a rich historical account of Iranian folk narrative studies, but excludes all other Iranian folklore and anthropological studies. There are several reviews of developments in Iranian anthropology, which confirm some of the ideas examined in the present study. Shahshahani outlines the history of Iranian anthropology from the early centuries of Islam until now. She emphasizes the role of Sadeq Hedayat as 'founder of modern Iranian anthropology' (1986: 68), and the CIAAnth established by Reza Shah. In a relatively comprehensive article, Zahedi-Mazandarani (1996) gives the richest historical review in Persian of Iranian rural and nomadic studies from the beginning of the twentieth century until 1980. Qodsi (1999) reviews Iranian nomadic studies from a sociological perspective, offering a statistical survey and comparison of such studies in different periods up to 1998. Other useful studies include those of Khaliqi (1974), Beihaqi (1988) and Ruholamini (1975).

Critical reviews The few studies in this category focus on the educational and social problems of anthropology, or examine a particular monograph (Shahshahani 1986; Farhadi 1995; Amanollahi-Baharvand 1996; Zahedi-Mazandarani 1996; Maqsoudi 1997; Azad-Armak 1999; Fazeli 1999). They discuss the problems that anthropology in Iran faces now, and examine the various epistemological, political and institutional shortcomings that led to the present crisis of the discipline (Enayat 1974; Shahshahani 1986; Farhadi 1994b; Amanollahi-Baharvand 1995; Zahedi-Mazandarani 1996; Fazeli 1998; Maqsoudi 1998; Azad-Armaki 1999). They explain various institutional and educational shortcomings, such as the scarcity of scientific sources, the absence of a professional association and the lack of trained anthropologists (Amanollahi-Baharvand 1996: 38–48); the absence of educational facilities; the political sensitivity of social science disciplines (Mahdi and Lahsaizadeh 1996: 40–7) and the theoretical and methodological immaturity of Iranian anthropology (Kousari 1998). The ambiguities in definitions of scientific concepts, the inability of Iranian anthropologists to manage research projects, the limitation of research problems and ignorance of applicable and practical aspects of anthropology, are other educational and scientific shortcomings (Maqsoudi 1997: 151–60). Regarding these problems, many speak of an 'identity crisis' in Iranian anthropology (Tehrani *et al.* 1987; Mahdi and Lahsaizadeh 1996; Azad-Armaki 1998, 1999). They believe Iranian anthropology has no function and it cannot contribute to solving current Iranian problems.

Enayat first critically reviews the genesis and development of Iranian political sciences (1976: 1–5) and then deals with sociology and anthropology. He shows that, in the 1970s, sociology and anthropology in Iran were flourishing. This growth was due, first, to the individual contributions of non-academic Iranian intellectuals, second, to the efforts of the ISSR and third, to the recognition by both public and private sectors of the necessity for sociological research for the execution of some of their policies. In terms of anthropological research, he refers only to the efforts of the ISSR (1977: 6–7). He argues that the main strength of its anthropological research was an active concern with living

problems and concrete aspects of the social structure of Iran. But he also reveals the main weakness: its neglect of basic research and theoretical issues (1976: 10).

Some scholars have focused on Iranian folklore studies (Beihaqi 1988; Farhadi 1994a). Farhadi reviews the state of folklore studies in Iran. He criticizes them for being superficial and not being analytical, arguing that ‘when the first steps in the ethnographic study of Iranian folk culture were being made, the ethnographers mistakenly supposed that Iranian folklore is only a host of superstitions, and therefore the task of folklorists is to identify and collect [information on] witchcraft and superstitions, instead of identifying and gathering local and folk knowledge and technologies, which are a treasure of scientific materials and techniques extracted from thousands of years of Iranians’ experiences’ (1994a: 89). Despite its richness and eloquence, Farhadi’s article fails to explain why Iranian ethnographers and folklorists focused on issues such as superstition and witchcraft and failed to pay attention to development issues.

Reviews of foreign anthropological studies of Iran As I have already mentioned, there have been several non-Iranian anthropologists working on Iranian culture and society. Although Iranians have not so far criticized these studies, they themselves have reviewed their studies extensively (e.g. Antoun *et al.* 1976; Spooner 1987, 1999; Street 1990; Tapper 1996). The foreign anthropological literature on Iran is vast and it is not possible and necessary here to review it. Brian Spooner’s two articles on ‘Anthropology’ and ‘Ethnography’ in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* together constitute the best bibliographic and historical study of the field so far. There are also many critical reviews of monographs of Iranian nomadic and tribal studies.

Writing a history of anthropology

In this section, I would like to make some concluding points about the significance, relevance and nature of this study. I would also like to highlight its limits, and some aspects of anthropology in Iran that, for the sake of space and relevance, I have not examined in detail. I begin with the question of relevance. As it has been discussed in the above section, the Politics of Anthropology, there has been a trend internationally in recent decades for anthropological attention to turn inwards, focusing on the history and development of the discipline from political and social perspectives (Stocking 1987; Jarvie 1989; Vincent 1990; Kuper 1991; Patterson 2001; Lem and Leach 2002). The relationship between anthropology, politics and society has been examined from different viewpoints (Anderson 1983; Fabian 1983; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Overall, these debates have made the ‘anthropology of anthropology’ a new theme in anthropological debates, and accordingly many Southern and Northern anthropologists have called for development of the theme in different contexts and with different focuses.

For instance, Adam Kuper, a leading historian of anthropology, has suggested writing ‘the ethnohistory of anthropology not as a separate specialty but as the context within which our work must be read’ (1999: vii). Uribe, an African

anthropologist, pointed to this concern in his suggestion of the need for an 'ethnographic undertaking on the actual practice of anthropology' (1997: 256), and Patterson has focused on the social history of anthropology (2001).

One significant point for the 'anthropology of anthropology' is that the social contexts of this discourse differ in the South from that in the North. In the North, anthropologists mainly discuss and write about anthropology and its history in order 'to make better sense of a theory or an approach in anthropology', to define and address the 'deep structure' of anthropological schools, 'to make explicit the concepts which underlie' a long term tradition of research and 'as offering the possibility of a really challenging reflexivity' (Kuper 1991: 131, 135, 139); however, anthropologists in the South discuss and write about anthropology and its history in order to clarify the actual social, political, ideological and educational problems of the discipline and society they live in.

Generally speaking, anthropology in the South, as a professional academic discipline, is still young, underdeveloped and marginalized. Therefore, it needs to be studied, introduced and established. Hence, Southern anthropologists must write about their discipline and themselves, not as a theoretical field, but rather as a practical need to establish a professional identity. A critical study of the tradition and ethnohistory of the discipline makes us aware and conscious of our strengths and weaknesses, and illuminates various practical and methodological problems in the path of the discipline. Likewise, it can provide Southern anthropologists with a more legitimate professional, social and intellectual background.

Furthermore, as has been discussed, anthropologies in the South, including Iranian anthropology, suffer from being absent from the global scene of the discipline. It is hoped that this study, as the first in-depth ethnographic examination and description of Iranian anthropology, will introduce it to the wider world community of anthropology and help to bridge a part of the existing gap between Northern and Southern anthropologies.

Apart from disciplinary issues, this study has a particular significant relevance in understanding contemporary political and cultural conflicts and problems in Iranian society. If anthropology is built on and emanates from the culture it studies, then 'anthropology of anthropology' is itself a kind of anthropological study of culture. In other words, ethnographic representation of ethnographic activities in a society is an ethnographic representation of the culture of that society, too. This can be manifestly seen in this present study. As will be seen I have examined ethnographically not only Iranian anthropology but also contemporary Iranian society. My study demonstrates that both Iranian anthropology and Iranian culture have been involved in an ideological conflict, a power struggle to define and build a so-called *authentic culture* and *identity* through a constant dialectical process of interpreting the cultural sources of Iranian society, namely, pre-Islamic, Islamic and modern cultural elements.

From this viewpoint, anthropology in Iran, and in the South, generally, is a kind of self-knowledge and self-realization, and an 'anthropology of anthropology' written by a native and or a local anthropologist is in turn a *double self-revitalization*. This truly is the case about this study, which is a self-knowledge of my culture,

my profession and my self. This may need further clarification. This study is an *auto-ethnography*, in the sense that John Van Maanen (1995: 9) has defined it as 'where the culture of one's own group is textualized' (Reed-Danahay 1997: 5); and 'as a text which blends ethnography and autobiography' (Denzin 1989: 27; Reed-Danahay 1997: 6). Hayano argued that auto-ethnography could have three significances '(1) search for entirely new theories, concepts and methods derived from other possible epistemologies; (2) emic or subjectively oriented data analysis, incorporating techniques and theories adapted from other disciplines and (3) applied, action, or radical anthropology emphasizing the practical uses of anthropology in support of one's own people and, therefore, of oneself' (2001: 75). Based on my experience in this study, I should add to this list another one: *self-realization*.

Nonetheless, as an auto-ethnographic study, it has its own limits and characteristics. The first is that an auto-ethnographer 'does not adopt the "objective outsider" convention of writing common to traditional ethnography' (Denzin 1989: 27; Reed-Danahay 1997: 6). Rather, it 'has been assumed to be more "authentic" than straight ethnography' (ibid.: 3). Given that, I should not claim this auto-ethnographic study of the history of Iranian anthropology as a 'true history' and or an 'objective history' of the discipline, though it has been said that there can never be 'a true history of a discipline' (Barnard 2000: 181). Alan Barnard maintains that 'there are at least five different histories and each portrays rather different visions of the discipline: a sequence of events or new ideas (e.g. Stocking 1987)... a succession of time frames (e.g. Hammond-Tooke 1997)... systems of ideas (Kuper 1983)... a set of parallel national traditions (e.g. Lowie 1937)... the progress of agenda hopping (e.g. Kuper 1983)'. Consequently, all histories are 'inherently relativistic' and 'subjective' (ibid.: 181).

However, this subjectivity and the relativistic character of historiography and autoethnography of the discipline do not diminish the scholarly value and significance of a native or indigenous anthropologist's work. Malinowski in his 'Foreword' to Fei Hsiao-Tung's *Peasant Life in China* (1939: xiii) wrote: 'If it is true that self-knowledge is the most difficult to gain, then undoubtedly an anthropology of one's own people is the most arduous, but also the most valuable achievement of a fieldworker' (Madan 1982: 8).

Regarding the above argument, and the new developments in Iranian anthropology, I should state that further research on the history and socio-political context of anthropology in Iran is still needed. First, this study is just one possible reading and interpretation of the history of Iranian anthropology among others. Second, my account has not examined all aspects and branches of anthropology in Iran. During the last decade intellectual and academic discourses and activities in Iran have increasingly grown and developed. To limit my study, I have not examined all of these developments in detail. Furthermore, in the process of working on this project I discovered and explored different dimensions and domains of the discipline that space has not allowed me to cover here. In what follows, I shall briefly summarize some of the missing dimensions, which can be seen as topics for further study of Iranian anthropology.

Power relations among anthropologists and academics in Iran This is one ethnographically significant topic that I have not discussed. It is important because it constitutes the social, political and cultural microcontext of the academic discipline. As can be seen I have focused on a macro level, that is, on relations between anthropological enterprises, the state, socio-political developments and political discourses and ideologies. Micro analysis would focus on the 'power relations' among practitioners of an academic field. My experience and observations show that power relations among Iranian academics are very complex and affect all the activities of academics and intellectuals. This is because of the ideological nature of the disciplines, and more importantly, because of the direct intervention of the state in academic affairs and intellectual fields.

Likewise, I have adopted and followed an *externalist approach* that allows me to demonstrate and illuminate the relations between anthropology and its social context and institutions. An alternative and complementary approach to this study would be an *internalist approach*, focusing on the theoretical and methodological validity, strengths and weaknesses of anthropological and ethnographic texts and products in Iran.

Iranian diaspora anthropology This is a relatively new part of Iranian anthropology that I have not discussed. In the years after the Revolution a large number of Iranian intellectuals, including several anthropologists, migrated to North America and Europe, while some Iranians born and brought up in exile have studied anthropology. During my PhD courses I became familiar with several students from the Iranian diaspora who have studied anthropology. Iranian diaspora anthropology includes both the anthropological study of the Iranian diaspora and the anthropology of Iran conducted by members of the Iranian diaspora. The former began shortly after the Revolution, and there is now a sizeable literature, mostly in English. The latter has been growing in recent years and has been marked by a small but significant number of ethnographic accounts of Iranian culture and society (e.g. Adelpkhan *et al.* 1993; Mir-Hosseini 1993, 1999; Adelpkhan 1999).

Local and minority anthropology Iran is a large country with a population of about 70 million including significant linguistic-cultural (Azarbayjani and other Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Baluch, Lurs and many others) and religious (Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian) minorities. Each of these minorities, many of whom are localized in particular provinces or cities, has its own customs, histories, folklore and modes of organization. As discussed in Chapter 6, during the last decade there has been a considerable growth in both government-sponsored and independent ethnological research on provincial populations. For example, among the hundreds of recent ethnological and folkloristic publications are many regional journals. These include cultural studies journals published by the General Office of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in the provinces of Khorasan, Tabriz, Shiraz, Hamedan, Kerman, Sistan va Baluchestan, Esfahan, Yazd, Ardabil, Arak (Markazi),³ Tehran and Qom.

In this study, I have focused on anthropology in Iran at the national level, and therefore, have excluded ethnological and anthropological studies of – and

by – the minorities and the provinces. However, it might well be that the dominant socio-political discourses in such studies differ little from what we have discussed here. The social and political logic of independent regional scholars can be understood mainly in the context of a regional ethnic discourse and ideology. The logic of state-sponsored studies of local and minority groups tend to be mainly in line with the state policy of cultural resistance against globalization and what the Leader Ali Khamene'i has called *tahajom-e farhangi* (cultural invasion) and new Islamic nationalism.

Another possible sub-field for research could be the anthropology of Persian-speaking peoples, including not only the dominant majorities in Iran and Tajikistan, where Persian is the official language, but a substantial minority in Afghanistan, where Persian (officially Dari) is a national language alongside Pashto. For instance, Roushan Rahmani, Professor of Folklore and Ethnology at the National State University of Tajikistan, has recently published a book in Persian on *The History of Collecting, Publishing and Studying Legends of Persian-speaking Peoples* (2001). He shows that there is a long tradition of folklore studies in Tajikistan, and that currently in the country there is a great movement of what the Tajiks call *folklor-shenasi* (Folkloristics). He also refers to the national movement of folklore study in Afghanistan.

Another separate field that I have barely touched in this thesis is the *Anthropology of Iran* – that is the study of Iranian society and culture by non-Iranian anthropologists. As we saw, these studies have had a major impact on the shaping of Iranian nationalism and other discourses.

Iranian ethnographic film This is another significant sub-field that I have not discussed. Ethnographic film-making has expanded considerably in the last decade. In the 1960s Nader Afshar-Naderi introduced ethnographic film as an anthropological project to Iranian academia, and himself made three short films; however, very few professional Iranian anthropologists have made films. The CIAAnth has currently been active in using film as a means of recording national and regional folk culture and knowledge, and many amateur and professional filmmakers have made ethnographic and documentary films about Iranian culture. The Cultural Heritage Organization has established an annual national film festival called *Yadegar* (Memorial), held on 18 May, the 'World Special Day of Museums'. According to reports published by *Miras-e Khabar* (18 May 2003) the news agency of the Cultural Heritage Organization, in the second festival held in 2003 in Tehran, Shiraz and Sanandaj (capital of Kurdistan province), the film section was the largest and most important: 101 films were screened, mostly classified as ethnological and ethnographic.

There are many more unexamined issues about anthropology in Iran than those I have mentioned. Although I am a native Iranian and an anthropological practitioner myself, with various experiences in the community of Iranian anthropology, it is not possible for me to explore and examine all relevant issues. As Aguilar puts it, 'given the diversity within cultural domains and across groups, even the most experienced of "native" anthropologists cannot know everything about his or her own society' (Aguilar 1981; Narayan 1993: 678). In the end, this

discussion concludes with Patterson's statement: 'The study of anthropology is a dialectical process. It is shaped by what the world is and who the anthropologists and the diverse peoples they study are' (2001: 2).

Organization of the book

This book is organized in seven chapters. Following this first chapter, which discusses methodological and theoretical issues, the other chapters trace the history of the discipline from the mid-nineteenth century until 2003. Each chapter is devoted to a particular period, except the final one, which offers a concluding discussion.

In Chapter 2, I examine the historical background of the formation of Iranian anthropology in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. I argue that the emergence of Iran into the modern world and the process of modernization, which began in the mid-nineteenth century and which still is in progress, created a great cultural crisis that resulted in heated ideological debates among Iranian intellectuals. Modernization involves the assessment and choice among possible paths of change. To modernize Iranian society, Iranian modernists and intellectuals had to decide what should be changed, what were the impediments to change and the form that change should take. These were not simple decisions because every change confronts traditions and established institutions. Therefore, modernization challenges the nature of society and demands cultural and intellectual re-orientations as well as institutional change. In the context of such confrontation and conflict, modernity and modernization are usually understood as antagonistic to tradition, creating a situation of crisis. This crisis has witnessed many debates about modernization. In twentieth-century Iran this conflict and crisis emerged in the form of ideological debates on Iranian identity and culture and were reflected in ethnographic and anthropological writings.

Chapter 3 examines anthropology in the reign of Reza Shah. In this period two major anthropological discourses emerged. One was an *official nationalist anthropology*, which stemmed from German-based nationalism in that its ultimate objective was to justify the authoritarian, despotic and autocratic rule of Reza Shah and to provide a political legitimacy for his dynasty. This strand led to a policy-making system and the establishment of new anthropological institutions. The first Iranian anthropological institution, the CIAntH, is examined in this ideological framework. The second discourse was that of an *intellectual nationalist anthropology*. Contrary to the first, this was based on a French model of nationalism in that it followed democratic and modernist ideals with social reform as its ultimate goal. This strand was shaped chiefly among the literati and folklorists. It is notable that, whereas governmental activities were totally centred on the collection and representation of material culture such as historical relics and archaeological remains, independent scholars focused mainly on linguistic and folkloristic materials and popular culture. Furthermore, this strand resulted in a *discourse of cultural criticism*.

Chapter 4 examines Iranian anthropology during Mohammad Reza Shah's time. In this period, four political discourses emerged, including an *official*

monarchist political ideology, Islamism liberal nationalism and socialism. Each of these discourses produced a different form of anthropological representation and ethnographic writing. The focus of this chapter is on the state's modernization and its Islamic and socialist opponents.

Chapter 5 examines Iranian anthropology in the post-Revolutionary era of the 1980s. I argue that the Islamic Revolution of 1978–9 brought an end to the nationalist discourse and anthropology lost its political base. In this period anthropology was challenged by an Islamic discourse.

In the 1990s, Islamic nationalist and reformist discourses emerged and provided a new ground for revitalizing and developing the discipline. Chapter 6 examines that restoration and the present state of anthropological activities of research and teaching. The book ends (Chapter 7) with a concluding discussion of the nature of anthropology in Iran and its future. I compare Iranian anthropology with other national anthropologies: Western, such as British and American, and non-Western anthropologies, such as Latin American. I argue that, despite the backwardness of anthropology in Iran, it has been a political tool for all political ideologies throughout the twentieth century. Moreover, because Iran, like other developing countries, has been involved in a crisis of cultural identity, it inevitably has needed anthropology. However, with the accumulation of academic experience and the growth of higher education, it seems that in future anthropology in Iran could turn into a more academic-based knowledge form.

2 Anthropology and Iranian cultures

Iranian anthropology 1900–25

Introduction

It is commonplace among students of Iranian society to trace any discussion of modern intellectual history back to the nineteenth century, which is regarded as a period representing the climax of traditionalism⁴ and the beginning of modern times. Since the nineteenth century, Iran has undergone remarkable political, social, economic and cultural changes, bringing about transformations in various aspects of life, and the modernization of the country.

The Qajar dynasty, which ruled Iran throughout the nineteenth century, created modern cultural and social institutions such as the Dar al-Fonun, which later I shall discuss about, instigated the publication of books and newspapers, and began to send Iranians to European countries in order to acquire modern knowledge and technology and transfer it to Iran. At the same time, relations between Iran and Europe expanded rapidly in other ways, too. These changes created a modern intelligentsia with new interests, concepts and aspirations. For the first time, they became conscious of, on the one hand, the progress and development of European countries, and on the other, the miserable situation of Iran. They wanted to create and establish a modern and developed country. They saw the dominant traditional culture of Iran, which since the Safavid era (c.1501–1722) had been religious and based on Shi'i Islam, as the major cause of the underdevelopment and backwardness of the country. They began to seek a new way of life and thought, and in the process began to question and redefine their concept of Iranian identity and society.

The major ideological trends that were dominant in European countries in the nineteenth century were nationalism, modernism and constitutionalism. The Iranian intelligentsia saw those ideas 'as three vital means for attaining the establishment of a modern, strong, and developed Iran' (Gheissari 1998: 23). Consequently, a conflict between traditionalism and modernity became understood as the core of the crisis. This finally brought about an intellectual 'paradigm shift in the theoretical approach to reality' (ibid.: 6). This intellectual shift can be identified as a redefinition of the concept of the self by Iranian intellectuals. From that time until the present day the question of self-definition and images of the self, at the levels of both personal and national self-image, has been one of the most problematic issues on the intellectual agenda in Iran.

In attempting to redefine the Iranian self, nineteenth-century intellectuals drew on three different images of the self: a modern self, based on Western culture; a national historical self, based on pre-Islamic Iranian culture, and a religious self based on Shi'ism. These images of the self, in turn, established three competing discourses: modernism, nationalism and Islamism. Later, at the end of the nineteenth century and during the early decades of the twentieth, nationalism and modernism became united and generated a modernist–nationalist discourse. This discourse reached a climax with the onset of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906, and continued until the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

All intellectual fields, including history, literature, religious studies and philosophy were dominated by the modernist–nationalist discourse (Adamiyat 1962, 1967; Vaziri 1993; Gheissari 1998). The intellectuals used anthropological studies, and in particular, folklore and archaeological findings, to reinforce the sense of pre-Islamic national identity. Many writers of all groups produced an abundance of travel accounts. These writings were the first form of modern Persian ethnographic work, and introduced the modern concept of anthropology in Iran. Moreover, the time in question was the high point of Orientalism, when European scholars had established a significant discourse about Iranian culture. Orientalist discourse had a clear political effect on Iranian intellectuals. Likewise, in order to simplify the excessively formal aristocratic Persian language and literature of the court, the Iranian intellectuals and literati began to use and study Persian folk language and folklore. This brought about a kind of modern folklore studies among the Iranian literati.

In this chapter, I shall examine these trends and their socio-political contexts. I have organized the chapter accordingly. The first section is an introduction to Persian travel accounts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this section, I review the contents of the most outstanding accounts and then analyse their ethnographic significance and political implications. The second section is devoted to Orientalist anthropological studies of Iran and their ethnographic and political significance. The final section is an introduction to Persian folklore studies and literature in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Travel accounts

As Poirier says 'We in fact owe the first form and notion of anthropology to travellers, philosophers and naturalists' (1991: 6). In the same vein, Iranian scholars argue that Persian ethnographic⁵ writing began in the early Islamic centuries when many writers began to write their autobiographies and personal observations (Khaliqi 1974: 5; Ruholamini 1975; Shahshahani 1986: 65). In this view, there are two kinds of anthropological traditions in Persian intellectual history: first, a scholarly trend that began with Abu Reihan Biruni's studies of India and Iran. I examine this trend in Chapter 5 in the context of Islamic anthropology. The second Persian anthropological tradition is that of travel accounts, which I shall discuss here.

The tradition of writing travel narratives and autobiographies has a long history in the Islamic world and Iran. This history can be divided into two main stages: the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century. In the Middle Ages, the first genre of Persian ethnographic writing began with travel accounts. Naser Khosrow's *Safarnameh* (Travelogue) (1975), the oldest account of travel in Persian prose (Zarrinkub 1996: 129) as well as the first Persian ethnographic writing, was written in 1034,⁶ when Iran was a part of the Empire of Islam. From the twelfth century onwards, in the Mongol and Safavid periods, there was no significant biographical or ethnographic text until the nineteenth century (Ashraf 1996),⁷ when Iranian modernization began and relations between Iran and European countries expanded.

In what follows I shall examine some of these accounts. In his study of Iranian travel writing from the Safavid period until the nineteenth century, Tabataba'i argues that during the period studied Iranians showed no interest in Western culture and society (1999: 58). Because of this, the very few Iranians who did travel to Europe and visited Western countries, such as ambassadors or businessmen, left no accounts of their travels. Tabataba'i argues that this was due to two factors: despotism and mysticism. Because the Iranian kings had absolute power and control over everything, people did not have the opportunity or motivation to know and write about other cultures; in other words, they were forbidden to acquire or display any kind of knowledge that might give them power and further opportunity for participating in society, economy and politics. Mysticism was a way of life, a way of thinking and feeling that discouraged Iranians for a long time from involving themselves with the real world, as Tabataba'i argues. Mysticism does not invite people to travel in the outside world; rather it encourages people to seek an inner spiritual world.

However, as Tabataba'i and Ashraf note, there are a few travel accounts from the sixteenth century. For example, *Khatayi Nameh* (1993) written in 1516 by Sayyid Ali Akbar Khatayi, an unknown author, and *Safineh Soleimani* by Mohammad Rabi (1978), Iranian ambassador in Siam in the years 1683–7. Although these accounts contain much historical information about the political system of Iran in the Safavid era and Far Eastern countries, their ethnographic value is insignificant. Iranian travel writing began in earnest in the nineteenth century, when relations between Iran and the West expanded.

In the nineteenth century, different genres of autobiographical and travel writing emerged and became highly popular in Iran. Persian autobiographical accounts fall into four main categories: first, accounts about European countries, some of which I review below. Second, different types of regional accounts of Iran (e.g. Naser al-Din Shah's *Safarnameh Iraq-e Ajam* (Qajar 1983); and *Safarnameh Khorasan* (Qajar 1975). Third, accounts of the Hajj, which became popular in the second half of the century. In an unpublished paper, Jafariyan (2000) lists 29 Persian travel accounts of the Hajj written in the nineteenth century. Fourth, diaries and biographies such as Naser al-Din Shah's *Diaries* (Qajar 1999).

To limit my study I focus here on Persian accounts of European countries, which are the earliest and are politically significant and ethnographically richer

than the others. Examination of the Persian autobiographical literature of the nineteenth century requires a separate study.

Accounts of travel to European countries

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a number of Iranians travelled to European countries, and several wrote descriptive accounts of their experiences. As Denis Wright (1985) and Tabataba'i (1999) state, the earliest Iranian travel writing about Europe is *Tohfāt al-Ālam* (Covenant of the World), written in 1798–1801 by Abdul-Latif Musavi Shushtari (1984). The son of Nematallah Jazayeri, one of the grand clerics of the Safavid period, Abdul-Latif was born and brought up in Shushtar, and went to Hyderabad in India, where he stayed for many years.

As Tabataba'i (1999) argues, *Tohfāt al-Ālam* is the first text to give Iranians a vision of Western history and society. Having lived for a long time in India, Shushtari became familiar with British people and culture and, based on his conversations and familiarity with the British, provided an encyclopaedic account of the social and political history of modern Europe as it was then. It contains detailed information about the French Revolution, the discovery of America, the European Renaissance and the rise of Napoleon, and customs and everyday life in European countries, in particular France and Britain.

Shushtari admires European advancement and tries to explore and explain the causes of European development. He identifies three factors that made modern Europe: independence of Church and State (1984: 251), the rule of law (*ibid.*: 275) and modern technological innovations (*ibid.*: 156). The rule of law and the limitation of the King's powers in England was a novel idea in the Iranian political realm. He writes: 'After the passing of power from the king... the founders of the state divided this power into three, between the king, the nobles, and the commons in such way that whenever the necessity of attending to a major political matter occurs, no decision is taken regarding it until the three parties are in agreement' (Wright 1985: 47).

Although he saw many differences and conflicts between Islam and Western culture, he admires the British political system, for in Britain law rules everywhere. He describes the 'edalatkhaneh' (house of justice) and how both King and people respect the law.

However, Abdul Latif never visited any European country and all his information was collected from English sources and his Indian and British friends. Because of this, his description is not first-hand ethnography, though he was a pioneering figure in introducing Iranians to European society and culture.

Mirza Abu Taleb Khan Esfahani's *Masir Talebi fi Belad Afranji* (1994; written in 1804) is another early Persian travel account of the West. Abu Taleb was an Iranian who lived in India and travelled to Europe in 1798 in order to 'rid himself of sorrow and see the wonders of the West'. Unlike Abdul Latif, Abu Taleb did visit Europe, and was the first Iranian traveller to describe his experiences of western society. On returning to India he began to write about his observations

over four and a half years in Great Britain, France, Southern Europe and the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of his book he maintains that his purpose in writing it is to enlighten the inhabitants of 'mamaleke eslami' (Muslim societies) who were in sheer ignorance (1994: 5), though he would refrain from describing issues that are not compatible with Islam (*ibid.*: 4). Nevertheless, he provides a very rich description of social, political and cultural life in Europe, and particularly in Great Britain, and as Wright argues he did take into account every aspect of European life and culture, because 'many of the customs, inventions, scenes, and ordinances of Europe, the good effects of which are apparent in those countries, might with great advantage be imitated by Mohammedans' (quoted by Wright 1985: 48). Like Abdul Latif, he focuses on political and social issues that were unknown to Iranians: political freedom, the Industrial Revolution in England and the values of the British judicial system. He discourses on the values of a Western education. Mirza Abu Taleb's writings 'revealed the life of the countries he visited and brought for the first time a vivid picture of the West to the attention of the Persian reading public' (Farman-Farmayan 1968: 135).

Hajj Mirza Abol Hasan Khan, Fath Ali Shah's first ambassador, wrote another early account of travel to Europe, *Hayratnameh Sofara* (Amazing Record of the Ambassadors). He travelled to London in 1809 and stayed there about four years. Like Mirza Abu Taleb, Abol Hasan Khan's attention was attracted to many aspects of the everyday life of British people that were quite unknown in Iran. He drew attention to the limited powers of the English king, which struck all Iranians who visited Britain in the nineteenth century. For example, Mirza Abu Taleb Khan wrote that 'even in the event of war the king may not act alone but must consult his Councillors and subjects' (in Wright 1985: 67).

One of the most significant Persian travel accounts of Western society was that of Mirza Saleh Shirazi (1983, written in 1819). In 1815, Abbas Mirza, governor of Azarbayjan, sent five Iranians to London to study modern sciences (Shahidi 1983: 23). One of them was Mirza Saleh, the first Iranian student to study a modern European humanities discipline and 'earliest author of a Middle East student's autobiography' (Menashri 1992: 66). The account begins with a very short chapter about the purpose, story and departure time and place of travel. Chapter 2 describes his journey to Britain through Russia (pp. 56–162). Chapter 3, the main body of the book, describes Shirazi's four years living in England and his study of the history of Britain. The last chapter recounts his return journey to Iran and his observations of Turkey.

To explore and understand the depth of the politics and culture of Russia, Britain and Turkey, Shirazi adopts a historical approach and mixes his ethnographic and personal observations with historical data. Because of this, the account is an Iranian reading of the history of the modern world, in particular England. The political aspect of the account is explicit on every page. Shirazi's main purpose is to explain to Iranian readers what made Russia and Britain successful in achieving and constructing a just, free and developed society. Like Abdul Latif, he sees the rule of law, parliament, freedom and justice as the key features of the British political system. He describes Britain as 'the land of freedom'

(*velayate azadi*) where everyone is safeguarded and protected under the rule of law, and where all citizens – king and ordinary people – are equal (1983: 205). He gives a detailed description of the customs and everyday life of Londoners, and shows how social order is structured and internalized within the society and people's minds. For example, he describes modern social institutions located in London, such as the Parliament (*mashveratkhaneh*) (p. 249), the municipality and Mayor of London (p. 281), prisons (p. 282), churches (p. 284), hospitals (p. 288), schools (p. 290), mental hospital (p. 291), newspapers and press (pp. 292, 295), museums (p. 304) and pubs (p. 307). In chapter 4 (pp. 374–436), he portrays the Ottoman Empire as a despotic and underdeveloped country, and explains the issues that are relevant to Iranian society and political life such as political corruption at court, poverty, lack of social order, despotism and illiteracy of the people.

Another significant *Safarnameh* of the time studied was Mirza Mustafa Afshar's *Safarnameh-ye Khosrow Mirza be Petersburg*. Afshar was a member of Abbas Mirza's court in Azarbaijan and served as personal official secretary on Prince Khosrow Mirza's mission to Russia in 1829. In his account of nearly ten months in Russia, Afshar openly compared and contrasted Russia with Iran. His main purpose was to discover how Iran would cope with the modern age (*asre jadid*) and how to create a progressive programme in Iran (Afshar 1970: 235). His purpose was to reform Iranian education by adapting the Western system. He describes the precedent of Russian reform and explains its benefits and the route to reform. The following passage contains his ideas concerning European form of education as a vehicle of modernization and 'progress'.

The establishment of such European-style schools in the Kingdom of Iran would be extremely simple and easy. A few masters of Western sciences could be brought to Iran, and one of the schools for the children of nobility of the land could be selected and they could be gathered together there and several people of high moral conduct could be selected to supervise them. The students would learn both Iranian sciences from Iranian teachers (*modarrisin*) as well as Western sciences from Western instructors (*moallemin*)... In this way, whether from amongst the military or the men of the pen, accomplished and capable servants will be obtained for the governments who will be informed of the world situation and the complicated ways of the world... From this best management, the splendor and improvement of the kingdom would increase daily.

(Ibid.: 236–7, quoted in Ringer 2001: 61)

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, hundreds of other Persian travel books have been written which cannot be described and analysed here. My aim is merely to draw attention to these texts as a form of Persian ethnographic writing, and to their political and ideological significance. The above-mentioned texts not only paved the way for modernization in Iran, but also drew attention to cultural issues such as 'everyday life' and 'ordinary people's manners of behaviour

and thought'. From then onwards, many thinkers began to write about those issues, which had not been common before.

These accounts were the first ethnographic representations of the modern world in Iran as well as the first modern Persian ethnographic writings. As many have argued, these writings had a great impact on Iranian modernization (Ringer 2001). As Ringer writes, 'the travel literature provided a particularly rich source for the understanding of attitudes towards Iranian *deficiency*... These travelogues were predicated on the perception of a "deficiency" and consciously sought to accurately evaluate its causes and potential resolution' (ibid.: 53–4). Travel literature played a significant role for Iranians in constructing a Western Other, on the one hand, and a new image of the self on the other hand. It is also notable that almost all Iranian travellers in the nineteenth century had no theoretical understanding of the philosophical and structural aspects of modern European societies; they mainly described what they observed and experienced (Tabataba'i 1999: 83).⁸

Orientalism

As stated earlier, in the latter half of the nineteenth century a modern notion of national identity began to form among Iranian intellectuals, which became known as the ancient Iranian Nationality/Identity. At that time intellectuals wrote and published books and journals with accounts of Iran's ancient splendours. They created an influential nostalgia for pre-Islamic Iranian history, and lamented the influence of the Arabs and Islam. In their view, Islam and the Arabs had damaged Iranian civilization and had turned Iran into a poor and weak country. To awaken the Iranian populace to their glorious past, they popularized stories of Achaemenian and Sassanian military and cultural achievements, and of the religious superstition and obscurantism that Arabs created and circulated in Iran.

In this enthusiasm for cultural nationalism, Iran was partly inspired by European nationalism and Orientalism. The source of Iranian nationalist thought was a European romantic nationalist ideology formed and based on the ideas of Johan Gottfried von Herder, the German philosopher who supported the Aryan Theory in the early nineteenth century and expounded the fundamental principles of romantic nationalism. Herder's nationalism was based on four premises: first, each nation, by nature and history, is a distinct organic unity with its own unique culture; second, each nation must cultivate its own culture and national soul developing from its past experience and third, the national soul is expressed best in its language and, particularly, in its folk poetry and folklore. Finally, it is possible for the continuity of a nation's development to be interrupted (Wilson 1976: 27); this had been the case with Germany and also was true of Iran.

European romantic nationalism and the Aryan Theory inspired many European archaeologists, philologists, folklorists, historians and anthropologists to study ancient Iranian culture. Consequently, the folklore and archaeology of Iran have been studied and recorded since the nineteenth century.⁹ These studies had

a significant impact on the thinking of Iranian intellectuals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mostafa Vaziri, an Iranian scholar, has minutely and convincingly examined the relationship between Iranian nationalism and European studies of Iran (1993). He argues that, based on the study of antiquity and philology, European scholars classified and codified civilizations according to language categories, and accordingly they separated Iranian from Arab and Semitic civilizations. In particular, they used philology as a basis for theorizing a racist ideology and for squeezing the complex historical fabric of the Orient into a narrow national context.

Perhaps, the most significant and influential outcome of these studies was the Aryan Theory. Vaziri argues that Orientalists used many Iranian languages such as Avestan, Median, Old Persian, Middle Persian, Soghdian and Parthian as sources for the Aryan Theory, and they discovered that there had been some connection between the German, Celtic and Old Persian languages (1993: 24). In addition, Vaziri argues that, like history, literature, philology and archaeology, 'anthropological studies were methodologically used in an Aryan context to reinterpret and vitalize a sense of Iranism' (ibid.: 25). Although anthropology as such was not known to Iranians in the nineteenth century, Iranian historians and literati used mythology and folklore to construct a new national identity.

Mythology and nationalist history

The resources of Iranian nationalist historiographers were comprised of existing archaeological ruins, literary texts, mythologies and rituals and customs. To arouse the patriotic sentiments of the people against Arabs and Islam, they needed to create influential symbols. So, 'mythological and historical heroes such as Kayumars, Mazdak, Anushiravan, and Kaveh Ahangar were recreated and reconstructed as the symbols of justice, religion, and Iranian national heroes' (Tavakoli-Targhi 1990: 95). Many historians of that time, such as E'temad al-Saltaneh (1993), Mohammad Hossein Forughi (1895–7) and Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani (n.d.), described the social and cultural life of Iranians in the pre-Islamic period using pre-Islamic mythology to arouse the people. Among the icons frequently invoked is Kaveh the Blacksmith (*Kaveh Ahangar*).¹⁰ As Tavakoli-Targhi states, Kaveh's famous banner was 'interpreted as Iranian national flag in Forughi's Sassanid history (1895–7); and Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani in *A'ineh Sekandari* portrayed Kaveh as the vanguard of revolution' (ibid.: 96).

In his writings, Kermani emphasized the importance of history and mythology for the advancement of Iran. As he put it, 'A nation that does not know its history and the tools of its advancement and decline is like a child who does not know his father and ancestors' (quoted in Adamiyat 1967: 148). We could say he was the pioneering figure of modern Iranian mythological and folklore studies. He believed that 'we can, to some extent, by investigating fables, myths, and proverbs find out the habits and characteristics of Iranian people' (ibid.: 150). In an article entitled *Esfadeh Makhsus*, Kermani lists the following five major sources for Iranian

history, most of them anthropological materials:

- 1 antiquities such as archaeological objects and ancient scripts;
- 2 ancient myths, which peasant folk have memorized and passed from generation to generation;
- 3 historical books such as Herodotus's History;
- 4 Babylonian, Syrian and Egyptian histories;
- 5 old language, words and idioms that refer to historical events (ibid.: 149–50).

Combining myth with historical narrative in a discussion of 'Fables of Old Iran' (*Dastan-haye Iran Bastan*), Kermani speculates on the meaning of Persian names:

In every nation the formation of words and languages is based upon the names of the objects that it holds sacred...in the Aryan nation, because agriculture was a noble trade, and because it [the nation] was partly warlike and brave, it worshipped the sun and fire; therefore the sphere of words formed by them comes from... [these sources] and whatever else connected to these [objects]... thus, the majority of the names of animals and human beings were taken from the stars.

(Ibid.: 101)

The Shahnameh

In the use of folklore for historical reconstruction, the folklore endeavour that concerns us, the principal goal was to search the past for models on which to shape the future, to seek the pure national foundation of the past on which to build the society of contemporary Iran. Reconstruction of the past, therefore, was not simply a reconstruction of events but an attempt to find in earlier society a record of Iranian national spirit, a repository of the national soul. For the nationalists, the mighty deeds supposedly performed by the Iranians of antiquity were the natural consequences of a heroic spirit working upon the people, a spirit possessed in abundance in ancient Iran but lost during later years through Arab-Islamic domination and through the gradual disintegration of Iranian culture. Thus, Iranian scholars turned to their folklore record, and particularly to their heroic epic poem, the *Shahnameh*, to delineate both the actions and the spirit of ancient Iran, and then to urge their countrymen to serve the fatherland.

The *Shahnameh* of Abolqasem Ferdowsi (935–1020) is one of the most popular texts in Persian literature and the best source of Iranian myths. It consists of a series of episodes, which are connected and chronologically ordered. The *Shahnameh* is aesthetically and historically significant because it narrates the mythological origins and some of the history of the Iranian people who entered the Iranian plateau region before 1000 BCE (Hillman 1990: 14–15). However, its most recent significance is political. In the late nineteenth century, the *Shahnameh* played a crucial role in spreading Iranian folk mythology, and later, in

the twentieth century, it became one of the cornerstones of folklorists. Mahjub, in a study of its significance, argues that recitation of the epic in the coffeehouses increasingly displaced the narration of popular religious epics such as *Hossein Kord Shabestari*, *Eskandarnamēh*, *Romuz Hamzeh* and *Khavarnamēh* (Mahjub 1985).

National culture and characteristics

National festivals such as Nowruz, Chahar Shanbeh Suri, Sizdah Bedar and Mehregan, together with the Iranian Calendar (*Sal-e Hejri Shamsi*), with all their relevant rites and mythologies, attracted the attention of the nationalists. From the nationalist viewpoint, these rites were pure Iranian cultural practices that depict the national resistance of the people against the penetration of Arab-Islamic and all other alien cultures over more than a thousand years. They approached those festivals and rites as evidence of the continuity of Zoroastrianism, the oldest Iranian religion. Unlike archaeological relics and other ancient Iranian cultural elements, which were almost unknown to the populace, national festivals and rites had been a part of everyday life for everyone. They had always been the main tangible component of Iranian cultural identity.

Sayyid Hassan Taqizadeh (1878–1970) with his newspaper, *Kaveh* (1916–21), was the pioneer in drawing attention to Iranian national customs and characteristics. Named after the blacksmith hero of ancient Iranian myth, *Kaveh* had an enduring effect on ideological aspects of Iranian folkloristics¹¹ and anthropology and in fact sowed the seeds of both Europeanization and cultural nationalism (discussed in more detail here). Taqizadeh released the first issue of *Kaveh* in Berlin in 1916.¹² In the article ‘Dibacheh’ (Preamble), published in the first issue of the second year (1917), he lists 17 points that might be considered in the process of modernization of Iran. One of them is the ‘revitalization of ancient Iranian national customs’ (Taqizadeh 1917). In the article ‘Monazereh Shab va Ruz’ (Debate between night and day), Taqizadeh expressed his opinion on cultural issues, clearly and radically advocating Westernization.

In Iran today we often see people debating the advantages and the disadvantages of Western versus Iranian civilization and culture. One might hear the statement that Europeans may have made significant advances in medicine, but in the science of *nahv* (syntax, grammar) they are incomparable to Iranian scholars, or that the Russians may have plenty of cannons but that when it comes to using them, they cannot aim straight. Such claims and pretensions are meaningless, and we need to recognize that we have fallen behind Western civilization both spiritually and physically by some hundred thousand *farsangs*, in knowledge, technology, music, poetry, manners, life, spirit, politics and industry. We should therefore only strive to retain our *melliyyat* (nationality), that is, our racial identity, language and history, and beyond that seek to pursue European advancements and civilizations without the slightest doubt or hesitation. We must surrender to Western civilization totally and unconditionally.

(1920: 3)

Despite his call to follow the West, in 'The new path' (*Rah-e Now*) Taqizadeh insists that, 'In a single word we must accept the fact that, with the exception of our language and a few customs which have survived and are Persian in origin, there remains nothing that is part of our national heritage' (1919: 10). He proposes, 'Iranians should seek to restore those ancient national traditions and customs that were worthy of preservation' (1920: 3).

Nowruz festivities and the Iranian calendar were the focus of *Kaveh*; later, other nationalist journals such as *Iranshahr*, published by Hossein Kazemzadeh Iranshahr, also drew attention to these issues. Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, one of the major contributors to *Kaveh*, reviewed the historical background of Nowruz in issue 5–6 (1916), while Taqizadeh examined Nowruz and the Iranian calendar in issue 4. In issue 1 of *Iranshahr* (1920), in an article on 'The basis of Jamshidian Nowruz' (*Asas Nowruz Jamshidi*), Kazemzadeh examines the history and chronology of Nowruz from the reign of King Jamshid until the twentieth century. He emphasizes how Nowruz survived after Islam and in particular during the Safavid era. Later, many tried to show that Nowruz and Islam have always coexisted in Iran without any problem. For example, Mohammad Mo'in and Sa'id Nafisi, two prominent Iranian scholars of the time, published papers on Nowruz, Mo'in in 'Jashne Nowruz' (1946) and Nafisi in 'Jashne Nowruz dar tarikh Islam' (1941). Later, from the middle of the twentieth century onwards, ancient Iranian customs became a regular topic in most cultural journals, as I shall elaborate in Chapter 3.

Archaeology and the identity question

In his well-known work *Imagined Communities* (1983), Benedict Anderson argues that modern nations are imagined in that members of a nation cannot see each other, and their sentiments and senses as a unified nation are imagined. Because of this, to form a nation people needed some tangible and perceptible evidence and objects such as land, archaeological relics, texts and maps. He shows how in Europe people saw the objects that enabled them to create their national community. This visual experience also allowed them to imagine the invisible, such as expanded frontiers or new historical texts and maps, while offering an occasion to interpret past representations. In that process archaeology played a significant role in forming modern national identity. As an archaeologist has argued, archaeology has been, perhaps, the most useful of disciplines in recovering communal pasts (Shennan 1989: 10).

Archaeological enterprises and the political significance of historical relics have been known to Iranians from very ancient times. As Hodjat, an Iranian archaeologist, argues, Iranians have always been aware of the communicative capability of historical remains and have knowingly used them in transmitting their message to subsequent generations (1996: 123). From time immemorial, by depicting the significant events of their times in rock-face relief panels and leaving behind innumerable epigraphs clearly addressed to future generations, they have made it clear that, first, they were keen to establish a relationship with history and expected more than a mere utilitarian function from their monuments and

artefacts, and second, that they believed such art works to be capable of fulfilling this mission.

The gold and slabs (dating back to 520–518 BC) discovered in 1933 in the Apadana of Takht-e Jamshid (Persepolis), which are considered the foundation plaques of the building, and their repetition in Hamadan, constitute a good example of an effort to establish communication with future generations, particularly in view of the information they supply in three languages, and clearly attest to the cultural function of historic works of art some 2,500 years ago. To demonstrate his argument, Hodjât refers to several cases such as the Bisotun inscription of Darius (530 BC), which expresses the vow, and the first universal edict, that all works of art should be preserved: ‘O you who see this mausoleum in the future do not ruin it; if you preserve it to the best of your ability, may God be your friend and grant you long life’ (1996: 123).

Another Iranian archaeologist, Malekshahmirzadi, argues that in the Middle Ages archaeological excavations were known in Muslim societies, particularly Iran. For instance, he refers to Mas’udi’s *Meadows of Gold* (Masoudi 1989) and maintains that perhaps the first excavation licence granted in Iran was that proclaimed by the Caliph Ma’mun (in the 830s) (1998: 13–14).

However, during the nineteenth century and until the Constitutional Revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century, Iranians, as Malekshahmirzadi shows, were quite unaware of their valuable historical relics and archaeological sites (ibid.: 14). For the Iranian authorities, the historical relics mainly had economic value and they frequently sold them to foreigners very cheaply. The most significant and best-known example was the contract by which Naser al-Din Shah granted the exclusive right of excavation in Iran to France on 12 May 1895 (ibid.: 35).

The modern understanding of archaeological relics dates to the late nineteenth century when nationalist intellectuals began to attack the ignorance and betrayal of the Shah and his court in wasting the national heritage of the country. Zeinul Abedin Maraghe’i, for instance, in his travel narrative (*Siyahatnameh Ebrahim Beg*), criticizes the plunder of the national heritage of Iran by French and other *Farangi* (Westerners), and the Prime Minister’s treason in selling that heritage (Maraghehi 1965, 1: 133, in Malekshahmirzadi 1998: 41). When nationalism reached a peak on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution, archaeological knowledge and historical relics acquired an importance that must be examined.¹³

Perhaps one of the first Iranian intellectuals to resort to archaeological remains in an extreme nationalistic view was Fath Ali Akhundzadeh.¹⁴

In a letter to the editor of the national newspaper of Iran in 1866, Akhundzadeh took issue with the iconography of national self-representation chosen by the newspaper:

First: the picture of a mosque which you have reproduced in your paper as a symbol of the Iranian nation seems, in my opinion, inappropriate, since if by the word ‘nation’ you mean its accepted meaning; in other words, if you mean the people of Iran, the mosque is not peculiar to the people of

Iran – in fact all the sects of Islam possess mosques. The symbols of the people of Iran before Islam are ancient Persian monuments, that is to say, Persepolis, the castle of Istakhr, and so on. After Islam, one of the most famous monuments is that of the Safavid kings, who spread the Twelver religion . . . So it is imperative for you to find such a symbol to represent, on the one hand, the ancient kings of Iran and will recall, on the other, the Safavid rulers.

(Cole 1996: 38)

In her fascinating study of the formation of Iranian territorial nationalism, Kashani-Sabet (1999) argues that, while Iranians in the nineteenth century did not carry out archaeological excavations, non-Iranian archaeologists conducted several missions to Iran and their findings strongly influenced Iranian nationalism. She refers to the Gardanne mission that brought French explorers, among them Captain Truilhier, who surveyed ancient Persian ruins. She argues that the most influential archaeological discoveries were those of Sir Henry Rawlinson (1847), ‘who deciphered the Achaemenid inscriptions at Bisotun . . . Mohammad Hassan Khan E’temad al-Saltaneh, a luminary of the royal court in the 1880s, ranked Rawlinson among the eminent scholars of his time, pointing out that among his many honours, Rawlinson had also received the Medal of the Lion and the Sun from the shah for his accomplishments’ (Kashani-Sabet 1999: 41–3).

During two decades from the onset of the Constitutional Revolution (1906) to the reign of Reza Shah (1925), a movement for the preservation and restoration of the National Cultural Heritage (*Miras Farhang Melli*) took shape, which was the natural outcome of the nationalist attention to historical relics, and proved the capacity of archaeology in this discourse. In his study of the history of heritage policies in Iran, Hodjat provides a detailed description of the formation of heritage policy concerning architectural and archaeological enterprises. Here, I summarize some of his findings. In 1907, after the establishment of the first Parliament in the Constitutional Revolution, namely the National Consultative Assembly, the nationalist revolutionaries ratified an article that determined the creation of an Office of Antiquities. This interest in Iranian antiquities partly explained the scholarly attention to pre-Islamic Persian culture. Two years later, the Parliament passed a law in favour of ‘forming libraries . . . and establishing historical museums . . . and preserving ancient work’ in the Ministry of Sciences. By 1910, the Office of Antiquities was established and ‘a temporary museum for the registration and protection of antique objects’ had been created (document quoted by Hodjat 1996: 186).

To bolster these efforts, Mortaza Khan Momtaz al-Molk established a Museum for National Artefacts (*Asar-e Melli*) at the Dar al-Fonun College in 1915–16. By 1925, however, some intellectuals contended that ‘this degree of activity for preserving the national artefacts of Iran is not sufficient and for an old nation like Iran, whose ancestors’ reserves are stored in the soil, more effort thus deserves’. In keeping with this nationalist spirit, the creation of a National Artefacts Society (*Anjoman Asar Melli*) in 1925 was announced (*ibid.*: 9).

In 1925 a Municipal Law ratified the creation of museums and offices for the preservation of ancient monuments (ibid.: 165). These offices made several attempts to restore and preserve national monuments and historical relics. The following document attests to the attitude of political elites towards historical and archaeological relics. It is a letter written in 1914 by the Director of Endowments of Esfahan to the Minister of Sciences, which speaks of the writer's awareness of the necessity of conserving historic relics.

To the respected Minister of Endowment and Sciences... Although Europeans have, for many years, with various motives and by numerous devices, cheaply acquired Iranian antiquities, which, as all historians will attest, each magnificently represent the glory, antiquity, and independence of the Iranian country and nation, selling them for large sums in places where such items are traded, and although no considerable loss has yet been inflicted upon Iranian wealth, if the everlasting government does not take appropriate measures and persists in its negligence, before long all the tiles of mausoleums, shrines, mosques and other holy monuments, as well as other objects, will be plundered at the hands of Europeans and be lost.

(Ibid.: 168)

Folklore and modernist literati

Nineteenth-century Iran witnessed a literary renaissance. Persian prose and literature adopted a simpler and more realistic style. Among intellectuals and writers there emerged a genuine interest in the language and lives of ordinary people. And under new socio-political and economic conditions, Persian literature underwent extensive changes in content and form. The literary renaissance was due to several factors, such as 'the introduction of printing in the second decade of the nineteenth century, the publication of lithographed Persian literary works and translations of Western literary and scientific sources, the foundation of schools (specifically the *Dar al-Fonun*), student travel grants to Europe, and the development of the press and journalism' (Radhayrapetian 1990: 86).

Perhaps the most influential of these factors was the establishment of the *Dar al-Fonun*, a modern school, which was inaugurated in 1851. Before that time, the traditional religious educational system was the only one in Iran. The school had different functions:

- 1 introducing and disseminating modern western secular sciences in Iran;
- 2 transforming modern culture and language in Iran;
- 3 holding public lectures and discussions;
- 4 publishing newspaper and textbooks;
- 5 translating Western literature.

(Menashri 1992: 57)

Each of these functions contributed to the formation of modern knowledge and thought, including anthropology and folkloristics. For example, the school

published 162 books before the Constitutional Revolution (1905). Among these publications were ten travel accounts about European countries. As we saw, travel literature was the first genre of ethnographic writing in Iran in the period; in addition, historical books made Iranians familiar with the European Orientalist–nationalist viewpoint.

Navabpour (1981) argues that with the development and growth of the literate class, more knowledge and information was needed about social and cultural aspects of the country and the world. Society was becoming more conscious and the intelligentsia had to respond and meet the people's need and thirst for knowledge through journalism and the translation of European literary and scientific works. This caused writers to focus on the life of ordinary people and to deal with issues affecting the lives of their countrymen and the 'common people'. This trend was intensified and dramatically promoted at the time of the Constitutional Revolution:

The literature of the Constitutional period was...mainly of a topical character; it aimed at communicating a content that should be comprehensible and give pointed expression to the ideas of the patriotic struggle then being waged. As regards form, of first importance was always the clarity of the formulation of the thought and its comprehensibility for the broad masses and an inclination to use folk-literature as a medium of expression.

(Ibid.: 45)

One of the first Persian texts exemplary of the new style of writing is Maraghehi's *Siyahatnameh Ebrahim Beg*. Writing about the significance of this work, Browne maintained that it is hard to say whether Maraghehi's 'travels (*Siyahatnameh*) of Ebrahim Beg should be reckoned as a novel or not. The hero and his adventures are, of course, fictitious, but there is little exaggeration, and they might well be actual' (1924: 468). The other outstanding work is the Persian translation by Mirza Habib Esfahani of James Morier's *The Adventures of Haji Baba of Ispahan* (1897), one of the pioneers of modern Persian literature and folklore.

Ali Akbar Dehkhoda was another important pioneering scholar who played a very significant part in folklore studies. Dehkhoda was a political activist and social democrat (Adamiyat 1976: 273) and, therefore, the populace and ordinary people had a crucial place in his thoughts and writings. He criticized the complexity and Arabic style of Persian texts and called for a plain and simple style that the populace could comprehend (Dehkhoda 1983a: 9). He was one of the first Iranian thinkers to realize the value of the lore of the people. He believed that folk knowledge, like other knowledge, is an invaluable treasure of accumulated experience and awareness. He wrote, 'Among Iranians very profound thoughts and folk knowledge have always been prevalent' (ibid.: 246).

Although Dehkhoda wrote a four-volume collection of *Persian Proverbs and Adages* (1983b), his first and perhaps most significant contribution to folklore was a series of satirical articles entitled 'Charand Parand' (Fiddle-Faddle) first published in *Sur*

Esrafil (reprinted in Dehkhoda 1983a). ‘The significance of the ‘Fiddle-Fiddle’ articles was twofold: first, the issues discussed and secondly, their appeal to the populace, since they were written in colloquial Persian with frequent use of popular proverbs and expressions’ (Ghanoonparvar 1984: 4). In fact, Dehkhoda’s ‘Charand Parand’ articles contributed a great deal to the development of twentieth-century Persian folklore studies. As we will see, Hedayat and his followers used folk language in their writing and also collected folk language from different parts of Iran and studied it as a kind of knowledge.

Dehkhoda’s articles vividly showed the potential capacity of folk speech in political discourses. They strongly stimulated the revolutionaries to use folklore as a natural vehicle for the expression of revolutionary themes. They attracted the attention of the masses and thereby influenced the whole political climate of that time (1983a: 107). ‘Charand Parand’ to a certain extent ‘owed its success to the fact that it was intelligible to ordinary folk and at the same time entertaining to the intellectual elite and sophisticated men of letters’ (Saidi Sirjani 1996: 218).

Browne translated two specimens of ‘Charand Parand’ in his *History of Persian Literature in Modern Time*. I quote a paragraph of one article, which exemplifies the folkloric style.

In the old days there was in the world one great Persian Empire with the state of Greece as its neighbour. At that time, the Persian Empire was puffed up with pride. It was very well pleased with itself, and if you will pardon the expression, its pipe took a lot of filling. Its ambition was the King-of-Kingship of the world, Pet of the Province, Beauty of the Privy Chamber, Chamber of the Presence, or, Minion of the Kingdom. Nor had they yet slides in their palaces.

(1924: 479)

However, the founder and best representative of this literary trend was Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh. In 1922 Jamalzadeh published a collection of six satirical short stories *Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud* (Once Upon a Time) in Berlin. Literary historians usually regard this collection as the beginning of a new trend in Persian prose. Dargahi argues that ‘this collection began Naturalism in modern Persian writing... the aesthetic principle of his Naturalism [was] a form of local color’ (1974: 18).

Apart from Jamalzadeh’s pioneering role in the history of Persian literature as founder of the modern short story, his innovative style (the use of colloquial idioms and folk language) played a very important role in introducing and bring to the fore in intellectual discourses the common people’s life and language. Jamalzadeh’s Naturalism was a kind of ethnographic genre that describes and ‘emphasizes details of setting, accent and dialect, costume, and individual and social life almost as an end in themselves’ (ibid.: 19). Jamalzadeh’s colloquial style was in sharp contrast with classic Persian court style. This had a strong political

significance. Jamalzadeh was quite aware of this political significance and wrote a 'Preface' to the book in which he advocated simplicity in literature and called for a *demokrasi-ye adabi* (literary democracy). In his view, simplicity in literature was a way to 'democratize' literature and society. He argues that 'in all the civilized countries which have found the clue to progress, plain, unaffected composition which is easy for the masses to comprehend has overshadowed other kinds of composition' (ibid.: 25). He advocated writing for all the people, not just for the elite. Jamalzadeh's call for a 'literary democracy' was essentially intended, as he stated, to educate the masses and to preserve the common expressions of the people. And, indeed, the *Once Upon a Time* stories engage in social criticism written in a language that Jamalzadeh believes reflects the expressions of the people. A few writers, such as Mirza Habib in his translation of *Haji Baba of Ispahan*, had attempted earlier to introduce colloquial language into fiction writing, but Jamalzadeh addressed this issue more directly. As I shall argue, Jamalzadeh's style and thought were followed by Sadeq Hedayat, Ahmad Shamlu and Jalal Al Ahmad in their attempts to study Iranian folklore and describe the mores of the people.

Conclusion

As Cole lucidly explains (1996: 35–6), two approaches to the self in the process of the construction of national identities have been common. In the first, where 'the self is conceived as unitary, as possessed of an original authenticity that can be recovered', an authentic self is the core of nation. The second 'incorporates a territorial patriotism into a more universalist view of humanity and recognizes multiple selves and multiple others'. Iran's case is compatible with the latter. For Iranian traditionalists, Islamic Shi'ite culture has been the authentic self. Conversely, the modernists took European and modern Western culture and civilization as authentic, while the romantic nationalists treated the Ancient Iranian Culture as ideal and utopian.

In these discourses, the task of anthropological enterprises, along with that of other humanities, has been to contribute to the construction of the self by discovering and representing the idealized, utopian and authentic cultures. Because the question of identity is not merely a historical and cultural concern, but more importantly a political practice, the quest for identity in nineteenth-century Iran brought about a serious political struggle and finally contributed to the advent of the Constitutional Revolution.¹⁵ This power struggle required and created a body of knowledge depicting the new Iranian national self and identity.

As Foucault maintains, 'the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information. Conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power' (1977: 51). Furthermore, power in any society 'cannot be established, consolidated, nor implemented without the production, accumulation, and circulation and functioning of a discourse' (ibid.: 93). Given these premises and my own examination, the political developments of

nineteenth-century Iran urged a need for anthropological knowledge and produced a modern nationalist discourse.

As we have seen, in the nineteenth century, modernist intellectuals in Iran, as in Turkey, Egypt and other Islamic countries were mostly enchanted by European nationalism and secularism. At the beginning of the nineteenth century,

Persian travel accounts changed the prevailing images of the west and western from the somewhat monolithic, vague, and exotic Other, generally regarded with hostility, to that of an Other, albeit still alien, whose advancements in social, technological, and even political arenas should be emulated by Iranians.

(Ghanoonparvar 1993: 8)

Furthermore, we argued that European Orientalists (particularly folklorists, philologists and archaeologists) in the nineteenth century developed a nationalist discourse based on the Aryan doctrine which influenced Iranian intellectuals. Accordingly, from the second half of the century, nationalism gradually filled the hearts of intellectuals. As a result, anthropological studies came to flourish in the form of folklore, archaeology and mythology, which could more directly apply in nationalist discourses. As the present study shows, at this stage, Iranian anthropology did not develop as a professional discipline but was able to introduce its potential into political discourses and to define its identity as a national intellectual outlook and instrument. The legacy of this phase for the next stage was the following issues:

- Intellectuals became aware of the political application and significance of anthropological studies.
- By the end of the nineteenth century and start of the twentieth century several topics, such as national customs, oral and folk speech, folk narratives, myths, archaeological objects and the everyday life of the people, became the focus of research.
- The government became responsible for restoring, preserving and conserving the national cultural heritage and, accordingly, the state established an institution and set up particular regulations. This resulted in a cultural policy-making system that ultimately paved the way for the institutionalization of anthropological studies such as archaeology and folkloristics.
- Because romantic nationalism was the predominant spirit and discourse of the time, there was created a set of criteria by which the culture of the society was divided into three elements: religious, ancient and modern (European). Anthropological knowledge became an instrument for the politicians and intellectuals to present a new model of culture, mixing modern and ancient elements.

3 Anthropology and nationalism

Iranian anthropology 1925–41

Introduction

This chapter examines anthropological enterprises during the reign of Reza Shah (1925–41). The coming to power of Reza Shah marked a new epoch in the history of Iran, generally, and of Iranian anthropology, in particular. Several points might be considered in this regard. First, the political and intellectual elites, for the first time, became acquainted with European concepts of anthropology, and various writers began to produce texts under the rubric of anthropology, folklore, archaeology and mythology. Second, although this new concept of anthropology was imported and copied from Europe, it was subject to the political situation of the country, adapted to the predominant nationalist discourse and addressed intellectual and political needs. Third, to use anthropology for realizing political goals, the government established new organizations to collect folklore and carry out archaeological excavation. Fourth, because of the massive growth and establishment of modern cultural institutions such as colleges, schools and mass media, cultural activities flourished, and the presentation of anthropological themes through travel narratives, autobiographies, histories and literary texts was greatly fostered.

Several factors were responsible for these developments such as the political ideology of the Pahlavis, the intellectual atmosphere and the rapid socio-cultural changes within society. To study these factors and in line with our goals, the following questions will be examined:

- How did modern anthropology emerge in Iran? What *political, scientific* and *social factors* were responsible for it?
- Which elements characterized the modern concept of Iranian anthropology?
- To what extent did Reza Shah's policies, in particular *nationalism, secularism* and *modernism*, affect anthropology?
- How and to what extent did elements in *European Oriental Studies*, particularly *racism*, affect the anthropological enterprise?
- To what extent did independent intellectuals such as *Sadeq Hedayat* contribute to Iranian folkloristics?
- To what extent did anthropological enterprises develop? What were the *strengths and weaknesses* of the discipline in this period?

To this end, I have organized the present chapter in four main sections.

- The first section briefly describes the predominant political and intellectual discourses and circumstances of the country.
- The second section examines the first concept of modern anthropology with a focus on *Aryanism*.
- The third section describes anthropological institutions including the Centre for Iranian Anthropology (CIAAnth), the Anthropological Museum of Iran (MIA) and the Museum of Ancient Iran (MAI).
- The last and longest section is devoted to Sadeq Hedayat.

Political discourses in Reza Shah's time

Reza Shah's policies were based on three ideologies: nationalism (archaism), modernization (Europeanization) and secularism (de-Islamization) (Banani 1961). As already mentioned, nationalism was shaped in the second half of the nineteenth century and climaxed in the Constitutional Revolution (1906). It resulted from European Oriental Studies, the Aryan Theory, the critical situation of the country and other factors. As we saw, it became the ideology of the intelligentsia, ended Qajar rule and brought about the Pahlavi dynasty (1925). In the new state, it became the official political ideology.

While during the Constitutional Revolution nationalism was employed by Iranian intellectuals to rouse people to rebel against the Qajar rulers, in the context of the new modern nation-state its role was to provide political legitimacy and popularity for the new monarch. Reza Shah did not rely on the traditional sources of political legitimacy: religion and tribe. Rather he chose a policy of modernization, which was a popular desire, without making any change in the despotic monarchic political system. However, he needed a political ideology to justify his dictatorship and to show his concern for the people. Nationalism was compatible with both modernization and the monarchic system. To distance himself from Islam and at the same time attract secular nationalists, he adopted the romantic nationalism which had been created in the country long before. He supported and created the discourse of nationalism based on pre-Islamic Iranian culture. The family name he chose for himself, Pahlavi, was a reference to the ancient language of the pre-Islamic Sassanids and vividly symbolized the nature of his political ideology (Gheissari 1998: 46). He planned to restore ancient Iranian symbols and heroes. 'Many public places were given ancient Pahlavi names' (*ibid.*). Further, he supported the movement to purify the Persian language of words taken on loan from Arabic, and founded the Iranian Academy, *Farhangestan*. His cultural policy was to homogenize all ethnic groups into one national culture, and to establish a modern nation-state with a strong army, a functional administrative state and to create a modern Iran based on European experience. Such a policy of rapid modernization was common at that time in other Third World countries, Turkey being a prominent example (*ibid.*: 47).

More controversially, Reza Shah also promoted secular ideals, emphasizing anti-Islamic culture and anti-clericalism in particular. He instituted a wide range of fundamental changes aimed at secularizing the very foundation of Iranian society. These include: removing the judicial system from clerical control and turning it into a modern and non-religious one; changing prevalent Islamic customs and norms by, for example, forbidding men, other than those in the clergy, from wearing turbans, and prohibiting women from wearing the veil and eliminating religious materials from the education curriculum and establishing secular knowledge and modern, Western-oriented academic disciplines, culminating in the foundation of Tehran University in 1934 (Fallahi 1993: 57).

In sum, Reza Shah's greatest wish was to make Iran a modern society through Westernization. For him, as for most of the Constitutionals, Westernization could be achieved by mimicking and importing modern institutions such as modern industry, in particular railways, roads, education, health services and all the other symbols of progress and civilization (*tamadon*). As will be seen, this desire had very shaky foundations and was based on a misunderstanding of Western culture and civilization. Katouzian refers to this as pseudo-modernism:

Pseudo-modernism... is characteristic of men and women in those societies that, regardless of formal ideological divisions, are alienated from the culture and history of their own society... but unlike the European modernists themselves, they seldom have a real understanding of European ideas, values, and techniques. Thus, third world pseudo-modernism combines the European modernist's lack of regard for specific features of third world societies with a lack of proper understanding of modern scientific methods and social development, their scope, limits and implications, and whence they have emerged. That is how modern technology... is seen as omnipotent, and capable of performing miracles, which would solve any and all socio-economic problems once purchased and installed; why traditional social values and production techniques are regarded as inherent symbols, indeed causes, of backwardness, and sources of national embarrassment; and why industrialisation is viewed not as objective but object, and the installation of a modern steel plant not as a means but as an end in itself.

(1978: 101)

Anthropology in the reign of Reza Shah

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the government and independent intellectuals were keenly interested in anthropology. As will be seen, both were motivated by the same ideas: secular-modern and romantic nationalism. However, there was a clear political difference between them. In view of this, I classify these trends into two categories: first, *an official nationalist anthropology*, which stemmed from German nationalism in that its ultimate objective, was to justify the authoritarian, despotic and autocratic rule of Reza Shah, and to

provide a political legitimacy for his dynasty. This strand was followed by a policy-making system and the establishment of new anthropological institutions.

The second trend was *an intellectual nationalist anthropology*. Contrary to the first, this was based on a French model of nationalism in that it followed democratic and modernist ideals, and the ultimate goal was social reform. This strand was shaped chiefly among the literati and folklorists. It is noteworthy that whereas governmental activities were totally centred on the collection and representation of material culture such as historical relics and archaeological remains, the independent scholars focused mainly on linguistic and folkloristic materials and popular culture.

Furthermore, this second strand led to a *discourse of cultural criticism*. However, both categories had a shared presupposition, which was Aryan Theory. Hence, in this part, I will first discuss Aryan Theory and its impact on anthropology in Iran; then I shall describe the place of Iranian anthropology in the context of *official nationalism*, and then the role of *intellectual nationalism*.

Aryan Theory and anthropology

The first notion of modern anthropology, meaning anthropology as a systematic study of man and culture, emerged in Iran in the 1930s. Before this time, as we saw, there was only a genre of literary ethnographic writing in the form of travel accounts, autobiographies and historical texts. According to the new notion, anthropology was a branch of history for making enquiries into the old cultures, and its ultimate goal was to identify the characteristics of the human races. Anthropology was considered a significant branch of knowledge for Iran because the Aryan race, as European scientists believed (as discussed in the Chapter 2), was among the noblest races if not the noblest one, and an equation was made between Aryan and Iranian. In addition, it was said that Iran was the cradle of human civilization and the so-called modern scientific enquiries proved that Iranian contributions were significant in the shaping and evolution of modern Western civilization. Therefore, it was thought that this young discipline was able to support the glorification of Iranian culture, civilization and race. This theory laid the foundation for Iranian nationalist anthropology.

In Chapter 2, I introduced early European anthropological studies of Iran and Herder's ideas; here more should be said about the Aryan Theory he supported. As Vernoit notes, Max Muller (1853) introduced the word 'Aryan' into English and European usage as 'applying to a racial and linguistic group when propounding the Aryan Racial Theory' (1997: 16). However, Max Muller himself refuted his Aryan Theory and wrote:

I have declared again and again that if I say Aryans, I mean neither blood nor bones, nor hair, nor skull; I mean simply those who speak an Aryan language . . . to me an ethnologist who speaks of Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair, is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a brachicephalic grammar.

(quoted in Vernoit 1997: 17)

Vernoit explains that Muller's Aryan hypothesis was based mainly on Indian studies, but German and French scholars, especially Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, soon extended it to Persia. Gobineau, a zealous racist and pro-German, published his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* in 1855 (1900), and asserted the superiority of the white race over others; he identified the 'Aryans' – that is, the Germanic peoples – as representing the summit of civilization. He advanced the theory that the fate of civilizations is determined by racial composition, that white and in particular Aryan peoples flourish as long as they remain free of black and yellow strains, and that the more a civilization's racial character is diluted through misunderstanding the more likely it is to lose its vitality and creativity and sink into corruption and immorality. Gobineau took Persia as the motherland of the Aryan race and extensively studied Persian history and race. He released the results of his studies in *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (1866) and *Histoire des Perses* (1869).

The Aryan Theory, particularly the emphasis by Gobineau and Ernest Renan on the greater evolutionary potential of the 'Aryan' over the 'Semite', had an immense impact on Iranian political thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As said by Vernoit: 'The Aryan population of Iran was believed to have the potential to be "progressive" while Semite Arab culture was considered "redundant" and "non-developmental." The "Turanian" Turks received even less esteem, and their cultural achievements were considered negligible or indebted to Iranians or the Aryan world' (ibid.: 14–15).

The zeal for Aryanism and nationalism was vividly reflected in the paper that introduced anthropology in Iran, 'Elme Ensanshenasi' (The science of anthropology).¹⁶ It was published in 1937 in *Ta'lim va Tarbiyat* (Teaching and Training), the official journal of the Ministry of Sciences, when Reza Shah gave an order to establish the CIAAnth. Fazlollah Haqiqi, the author, begins by defining anthropology:

Anthropology is a science that discusses the human organism and what is made by him... anthropology generally is a science whose subject is the previous history of man. Because human behaviour and the human body evolved from very ancient times and races, [anthropology] has nothing to do with the future. To achieve its objectives, anthropology makes great use of physiology. Furthermore, to illustrate its various subjects, anthropology has to use the findings of many sciences such as linguistics, biology, the science of historical relics [archaeology] and geography.

(1937: 165–6)

The author then reviews the history of anthropology. He argues that before the eighteenth century we had no accurate and scientific knowledge about man except for some mythological and religious narratives, which are superstitions, and that Linnaeus was the first scientist to classify man as an animal species. He briefly mentions many developments in studying the physical dimensions of human races, such as the studies of Cuvier, Thomson and, especially, Darwin and Broca.

He divides anthropology into two main branches: first, general anthropology, which discusses ‘all collective and individual behaviour of human beings’, all the problems related to the origin and longevity of the human races and changes resulting from inheritance and marriage. This branch has several offshoots such as prehistoric anthropology. The second main branch of anthropology is *nezhadshenasi* (ethnology). The last part of the article is devoted to ‘the usefulness and utilities of anthropology’. ‘Anthropology is a necessary science for politicians who want to move a people to a place which is appropriate to their racial features; and for businessmen who have to make contact with various peoples, and for physicians’. He concludes that anthropology is necessary for Iran because:

We are the Aryan race and this science can help us to discover our superiorities and idiosyncrasies... Fortunately in these auspicious days... anthropology pays attention to studying and collecting evidence of the intelligence, life and civilization of the Aryan people who are civilized and have always carried the light of civilization. Being inherently talented and intelligent, Iranian Aryan people have always disseminated knowledge and civilization throughout the world for thousands of years.

(Ibid.: 170)

Although the author refers to some social and cultural issues, he focuses on anthropology as *nezhadshenasi* and limits it to physical anthropology. He was not a politician, and his article reflects the opinion of intellectuals about anthropology.

Another demonstration of the attitude of policy-makers and politicians towards anthropology occurred in 1938 when, a year after its inauguration, the *Bongah-e Mardomshenasi*, later the CIAAnth, held a scientific conference in Tehran. The proceedings of the conference were published in *Majaleh Amuzesh va Parvaresh* (Magazine of teaching and training) in December 1938. It contains seven articles and an anonymous preamble by the Centre. The preamble discusses the significance and necessity of anthropology for Iran. It argues that all nations pay serious attention to their past, preserve historic relics, and collect and exhibit the works and symbols of their ancestors because these materials give them new insight and ability to understand their glorious past. Then the author mentions many non-Iranian nineteenth-century anthropologists who made enquiries into Iranian culture and society, like de Hudset, a teacher at the Dar al-Fonun in 1863, and Polak in 1865–6, among others. The author argues that these scientists studied the physical features of the Iranian population. The author of the Preamble argues that:

On the basis of d’Hally’s Theory in *Human Races and the Principles of Ethnography*, anthropologists classified the characteristics of the Iranian race, and put it among the noblest human races. For instance, Khanikof wrote *Memoire sur l’ethnographie de la Perse*¹⁷ and J. Hussay in 1887 published *Les races*

humaines de la Perse; and Renan and Gobineau studied Persian history. All these studies were witnesses to the immense importance of the Iranian race (Aryans). (CIAAnth 1938: 5)

Among the authors of papers presented at the conference was Mohammad Ali Forughi Zoka al-Mulk, an eminent political ideologue, Reza Shah's first Prime Minister (*Ra'is ol-Vôzara*) and a member of the scientific council of the Bongah-e Mardomshenasi. Forughi's article is the text of a lecture entitled 'What is anthropology?' (Forughi 1938: 9–23), which in fact constituted the manifesto of the official nationalist anthropology of the 1930s. I outline the main points of this lecture.

Forughi first distinguishes between the meaning of *mardomshenasi* in the Persian language and that of the modern discipline.

We must not take *mardomshenasi* as *adamshenasi* (knowing the personality and characteristics of individuals). *Adamshenas* is a person who is able to say who is a good or a bad person. But anthropology is the science of man; it is a subdivision of '*elm ol-hayat* (biology).

(Ibid.: 9)

Then Forughi divides '*elm ol-hayat* into several branches, one of which is natural history, which has its own different sections such as *ma'refat ol-heivan* (animal biology). He concludes that man is a type of animal species and, accordingly, anthropology is a subdivision of animal biology which itself is a part of natural history (ibid.: 11). The subject of anthropology, in Forughi's opinion, is the study of the process of human evolution and transformation. 'All living creatures, including man, have been on an evolutionary path; therefore there was a time when we were not in our existing form' (ibid.: 12). He argues that this is a new theory about man, and before that everybody thought God created man. Forughi maintains that Ferdowsi put this theory forward in his *Shahnameh* (ibid.: 17). He states that one of the major problems in modern anthropology is to examine racial differences and to demonstrate how human races have made connection and have related with each other throughout history. Forughi introduces different fields and issues in anthropology such as religion, politics, economics and, especially, folkloristics. In conclusion, he explains the significance of the discipline. First is the ability of anthropology to provide self-consciousness and self-knowledge (*khodshenasi*). The other significance of anthropology, in Forughi's opinion, is the applicability of this knowledge for politicians who wish to find a reasonable policy for national unification and social reforms.

Leaders of people and statesmen can obtain great benefits from anthropology. Through anthropology they realise how and by what means the unification of a country is attainable; in which direction society is going; how one can lead the masses and nations toward progress; what are the weaknesses and strengths of society; which parts should be reinforced and which ones destroyed; what politics and policies are suitable for a certain society; what things make a society superior over others; what things make people happy and propitious...

... Anthropology has special value for Iran because, first, Iran is a vast area with different types of climatic conditions; therefore different cultures and peoples have been living in our country over thousands of years. Secondly, Iran has been the land of human beings from the oldest times; hence, it is said that it was the cradle of human civilization. Anthropological study in Iran can therefore be useful for anthropology *per se*, and for us in particular.

(Ibid.: 20, 23)

Although there are ambiguities in Forughī's speech, he was evidently aware of how anthropology could support and serve his nationalist ideology. One of the ambiguities is that when he classified anthropology among the natural sciences and as a subdivision of natural history, he did not explain how a natural science could be beneficial for politicians and leaders. However, the need for anthropology in policy and organizations, as mentioned by Forughī, is obvious today, and the task of applied anthropology is to meet those needs. But applied anthropology is not a part of the natural sciences; it is a part of social science and the humanities. The only way that anthropology could serve the leader of the Iranian people, as Forughī understood, was by making enquiries into ancient Iranian history and the Iranian race, namely the Aryans. By so doing, anthropology could support the nationalist ideology of the government.

Forughī also pointed to the significance of folklore as a part of anthropology. In this field, too, he did not give a clear idea of what folklore is. His notion of folklore was based on two points: first, there were some bad ideas and elements in Iranian folklore, which were against plans for social reform, yet a part of folklore is our authentic cultural heritage. The task of folkloristics was to support the government in purifying Iranian culture of its weaknesses.

Forughī's opinions were taken up by the Bongah-e Mardomshenasi and reflected in other governmental cultural activities. At this time, Iranian archaeologists, too, began to contribute to the Aryanist discourse. For example, in a series of articles published in 1943, Parviz Behnam provided evidence for Iranian Aryan origins. In the following sections, I will demonstrate how Aryan Theory and official nationalism were key to government establishment of, and support for, anthropological institutions.

Anthropological institutions

From the beginning of the Pahlavi monarchy, the political leadership realized that, in order to propagate nationalism in the interests of legitimizing and popularizing the monarch, they needed to establish new cultural organizations under government auspices. Consequently, a cultural policy-making system was shaped in order to establish and manage new institutions such as schools, museums, research centres, journals, newspapers, publishing houses, a broadcasting organization, universities and theatres. Anthropology, as a form of cultural knowledge that is able to serve nationalism, took a high position in government planning, and

several anthropological institutions were established, including *Muzeh Iran Bastan* (MAI), *Markaz Mardomshenasi Iran* (CIAntH), *Muzeh Mardomshenasi Iran* (MIA), *Markaz Bastanshenasi Iran* (Centre for Iranian Archaeology, CIArch) and *Anjoman Hefze Asar Melli Iran* (Society for the Protection of Iranian National Heritage, SPINH). Some of these institutions were anthropological research centres; others indirectly supported anthropological enterprises. Here I will describe those directly relevant to anthropology.

The Centre for Iranian Anthropology: formative phase

One of the anthropological research centres in Iran today is the CIAntH, which operates under the auspices of the Organization for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage. It was also the first Iranian anthropological institution, and the only one that has been more or less active for over 60 years. The Centre's history illustrates the impact of political developments and reveals its political nature. It can be divided into five stages:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1936–41 | Establishment of the Centre and the beginning of modern anthropology in Iran. |
| 1958–68 | Reopening of the Centre after 17 years' closure. |
| 1968–79 | Development of the Centre as a national institution. |
| 1979–89 | Considerable reduction of the Centre's activities in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution. |
| 1989 to the present | Resumption of activity, with a shift of the Centre's political orientation towards Islamic policy. |

Of these five stages, only the first concerns this chapter, while the others will be dealt with in later chapters.

In 1935, on Reza Shah's orders, the Farhangestan (Iranian Academy) was established, with Foroughi, the Prime Minister, as its president. The Academy was the government's leading cultural organ for implementing nationalist policy through Persianization and developing new ideas. The Academy sought to purify the Persian language of alien words and to support the state's secularist and nationalist cultural policies.¹⁸

In addition, the collection and study of Persian folklore was defined as one of the permanent duties of the Farhangestan in its Articles of Association (Yasami 1936: 90). Therefore, soon after its establishment, the Farhangestan proposed to study and collect Persian folklore and to create an institute for this purpose (Imani-Namvar 1975: 680). This shows the prime position of folklore in government concern and policy. Putting folklore into the context of the Farhangestan meant, first, that it was taken as a literary rather than a socio-cultural phenomenon; second, it shows that the Farhangestan intended to employ Persian folk language and literature for purifying the Persian language and strengthening national identity over other ethnic and regional identities. Rashid Yasami, a master at the School for Teacher Training (Daneshsaraye Ali) and a renowned

Persian poet, was ordered to provide a plan for implementing the Farhangestan's proposals for folklore (Yasami 1936: 90).

In March 1935, the Ministry of Sciences held an official meeting of the Directors of the Offices of Education of all provinces. At this meeting, Yasami, Professor W. Hass (a German anthropologist, who was appointed to provide a plan for establishing an anthropological institute and museum) and André Godard (a French architect and archaeologist who was the executive manager of the Office of Antiquities) presented their proposals and explained the importance of folklore and archaeological enterprises in Iran. At the end of the meeting the following proposals were agreed upon:

- Establishment of an institute for collecting folklore.
- Establishment of a special folklore library.
- The Office of Education in each province to be responsible for collecting the folklore of the province.
- Each Office of Education to establish a department for archiving the folklore of the province.
- All government agencies, both civil and military, to be ordered to cooperate with the Offices of Education in collecting folklore.
- Establishment of an ethnographic museum in Tehran. All folklore materials collected from throughout the country to be kept in the museum of anthropology in Tehran.
- The Ministry to dispatch experts to the provinces for supervision.
- A prize to be awarded annually to the best practitioner in collecting folklore.

(Ta'lim va Tarbiyat 1936: 41–2)

The quality of the plan indicates the government's keen interest in folklore, which was unprecedented in the history of Iran. In a long speech 'On Folklore', Yasami clarified the definition, scope, significance, method and state of folklore studies. He declared that folkloristics is a new science: 'Whereas our predecessors thought sciences belonged exclusively to the elite, folkloristics proves that among the masses there is a treasure of knowledge and experience'. He then dealt with the history of folklore studies and emphasized that it was a European science. 'In the last century European scholars began to study the remains of ancient humans and to collect, classify and preserve antiquities and historic relics'. He quoted statistics to demonstrate the significance and state of folklore studies in European countries. For instance, in Germany about 1,700 books had been published on folklore, and 20 periodicals and 20 academic courses were dedicated to teaching folklore.

Yasami vividly explains the various functions and uses of folkloristics. First, folkloristics identifies the influences of certain races on others; second, it reveals the capability and knowledge of a people; third, it discusses the root of literary works; and finally, it represents our customs, art and culture (*ibid.*: 88–9). He ended the speech by offering a comprehensive plan for collecting and studying the folklore of a community. In this plan, all folkloristic materials are divided into nine

categories: legends, folk songs, local terminology, proverbs, ancient and historic relics, natural setting, customs and beliefs and historic documents such as governors' and royal edicts (ibid.: 42–51). Yasami's speech was the first fieldwork guide for folklore study in Persian.

In February 1936 the Ministry of Sciences accepted the Farhangestan's proposals and the necessity for the systematic survey and collection of folklore, and commissioned an eight-member committee to put into effect the plan for the foundation of the CIAnth and MIA. The members were Mohammad Ali Forughi Zoka al-Mulk; Sa'īd Nafisi, one of the brightest men of learning of the time and later a member of the Royal Society for Culture; Dr Qasem Ghani, an eminent and talented literary scholar and critic; Dr Rezazadeh Shafaq, an eminent literary scholar; Nasrollah Falsafi, a well-known historian; Rashid Yasami, the renowned poet and literary scholar; Masoud Keyhan, a geographer and Ali Hanibal (Majur Masoud Khan), a Russian-born folklorist.¹⁹ Although none of these men were professionally familiar with anthropology, they were among the best scholars of Persian literature and Iranian history.

The committee provided its Articles of Association (*asasnameh*) and the Ministry of Education ratified them on 5 September 1936. The first Article describes the objectives and nature of the Centre:

In order to collect accurate information and documents on the various ethnic groups and peoples who were resident and/or are living in the country of Iran, and also in order to study the different dimensions of their material and spiritual life, the Ministry of Sciences will establish an anthropological institute.

(Ibid.: 29)

According to the other Articles, the Centre consisted of two departments: *nezhadshenasi* (ethnology) and *tudehshenasi* (folklore). In addition, each department would set up three separate units: a museum and library; a scientific consultative society and an office for teaching and publication. The content of the Articles proves that the Ministry had great ambitions in establishing the Centre and had agreed to support it at the highest level. In accordance with the official procedure of that time for the inauguration of new institutions, Reza Shah 'gave the order and permission' to establish the Centre and Museum (*Amuzesh va Parvaresh* 1938: 9).

The Centre focused mainly on public appeals for the collection of folklore, and had not made much progress by the end of Reza Shah's rule in 1941. Its major achievement was the establishment of the MIA, as will be explained later.

What is in the term mardomshenasi?

Anthropology as a modern scientific discipline was quite a new field in Iranian academic circles. What would they call this new field of knowledge? In the 1930s and 1940s 'anthropology' and 'ethnology' were translated into Persian variously

as *ensanshenasi*, *mardomshenasi*, *nezhadshenasi* and *qoumshenasi*. All these words have different philosophical and political connotations in the Persian language.

Masoud Keyhan, a member of the Centre's first committee, states that 'the first name of the Centre was "Bongah-e Ensanshenasi," and [two years] later it was changed to "Mo'asseseh Mardomshenasi"' (1956b: 1). Rezazadeh Shafaq, another member of the committee, explains why they decided to make this change:

The term *mardomshenasi* was chosen as equivalent to the western word *anthropologie*²⁰ because *anthropologie* derived from a Greek term compounded of two parts, *anthropos* meaning *ensan* or *adamizad* [human beings], and *logos* meaning knowing. In the Persian language, *mardom* literally implies both *qoum* (a people) and human beings. Therefore, *mardomshenasi* at the same time covers the meaning of *qoumshenasi* (*ethnologie*).

(1956: 7)

Although this explanation is literally correct, there are other reasons which reveal the political implication of their decision. *Ensanshenasi* has two different meanings. First, it refers to the science of man, which studies the physical aspects of human beings in general, such as biology and physiology. Given the Centre's strong racist and Aryanist conception of the discipline, it is not surprising that the committee at first chose *ensanshenasi*.

The second meaning of *ensanshenasi* relates to its application in Islamic knowledge and literature, where it covers anthropology in the theological sense, and comprises philosophical, mystical and religious knowledge and views on man (Soroush 1988: 190). This was, perhaps, the main reason for changing to *mardomshenasi*. Interestingly, soon after the Islamic Revolution, the state officially banned the use of *ensanshenasi* for the modern academic discipline. An official statement argued that *ensanshenasi* is an old field of knowledge in Islamic sciences and philosophy, and *mardomshenasi* is the appropriate term for the modern empirical and experimental study of human beings and culture (Ruholamini interview 2000).

Mardomshenasi, as a term that was quite popular and known to the common people, was more consonant politically with the *raison d'être* of the Centre, which was the propagation of nationalist sentiment among the populace, employing folklore to this end. For a term with a firm grounding among the ordinary people, *mardomshenasi* was the best choice. As Dr Shafaq explained, 'The common meaning of the term *mardomshenasi* is known to everyone; in Persian commonsense it implies a moral sense, which means to know people and their values morally' (1956: 2). He exemplified this application of the word by quoting his own poem, which criticized the Ministry of Education's anthropological activities in verse:

The Ministry of Education has based its manner upon
A baseless principle. It disseminates ignorance and ingratitude in every way
On the one hand, it does not appreciate the value of those who know
On the other, it builds the Museum of *Mardomshenasi*

(Ibid.)

In addition, before *mardomshenasi* became the equivalent of anthropology, *nezhadshenasi* (the science of race) was a common term in Iranian academia. In this regard Mahmud Ruholamini, professor of anthropology at Tehran University, explains:

This discipline [anthropology] was brought to Iran and taught there in the early decades of the twentieth century by masters whose expertise was philosophy. One of the earliest instructors of this discipline was a German philosopher called Wilhelm Hass. He began to teach in the Faculty of Literature and in Daneshsaraye Ali. His course was called Nezhadshenasi. And Nezhadshenasi was the first book in this field, published in 1325.

(Interview 2000)

The Centre did implement several programmes to popularize folklore and inform the people of its significance. On the basis of several reports sent regularly by the head of the MIA and his assistants to the Ministry of Education, it is evident that the Centre was very active. Researchers from the Centre were dispatched throughout the country to give lectures, collect folklore and conduct interviews with people (Imani-Namvar 1975: 71). According to the available evidence, however, during this period the Centre²¹ did not succeed in its goal of providing folklore data from all parts of the country as well as studying Iranian racial characteristics (ibid.: 72).

Several factors were responsible for this failure of the Centre. First, neither the government nor the Centre had a genuine interest in studying folklore. They adopted folklore as a tool of propaganda to show the interest of the new state in ordinary people and their life. This approach to folklore caused the Centre to focus on presenting lectures and disseminating propaganda programmes. Furthermore, the attention to folklore and the existence of this kind of institution were taken as symbols of civilization and modernity. Masoud Keyhan highlighted this issue when he stated:

It is evident that the power and greatness of different countries are due to the presence of various institutes of art and sciences, and universities and laboratories. Fortunately, a myriad of institutes have been formed under the leadership of His Majesty and are carrying out their responsibilities. We hope that the number of these scientific organizations, which is a sign of the advancement of a people, will increase so that we will not remain behind the train of civilization.

(1956a: 4, quoted in Shahshahani 1986: 70)

The lack of experts who could collect and study folklore can be added to the causes of the Centre's failure. At the time there was no school to train anthropologists, and Iranians had a very superficial concept of this branch of knowledge. As mentioned earlier, not even the members of the scientific council of the Centre had any experience of anthropology or folklore. The articles they wrote to introduce the field were often inaccurate. They described anthropology variously as

folklore and part of literature or philology, as a branch of the natural sciences, as the study of material culture, or as a science that is interested in past ages as part of history.

Though the Centre has been criticized for having been ‘imposed from above’ and as ‘mere window dressing’ (Shahshahani 1986: 70), despite its shortcomings, it had its merits. It laid both an institutional and a political foundation for folkloric and anthropological studies, with the possibility of future development and fruitfulness. Moreover, it had a positive impact, both directly and indirectly, on public opinion regarding folklore (Radhayrapetian 1990: 105–6).

The Anthropological Museum of Iran

The most important accomplishment of the CIAAnth in the 1930s and 1940s was the establishment of an anthropological museum. According to the initial decision of the Ministry, within the CIAAnth there would be a museum for gathering various ‘objects related to Iranian costumes during different periods’ (*Ta’lim va Tarbiyat* 1936: 27). According to the official report of the Office of Museums, published in 1975, the MIA was established in 1935 and officially opened in 1937.

At the beginning the main objective of the museum was *nezhadshenasi* (the study of race) and carrying out physical anthropological research projects to study the racial characteristics of Iranian people and the changes caused by mixing with other races; the other aim was *tudehshenasi* (folklore).

(Imani-Namvar 1975: 70)

Professor Hass was the founder and the first director of the MIA. According to a document in the Archives of the French Ministry of War, he was a German spy (Ayati 2000: 377). His mission in Iran was to propagate and disseminate the racist and Aryanist ideology of the Nazis, and cultivate Iranian groups sympathetic to the Third Reich. Although Hass was partly responsible for orienting Iranian anthropology in an Aryanist and racist direction in the 1930s, he played a very crucial role in extending anthropological enterprises in the country. He founded the first anthropological museum and was its director for a decade, and he also established and taught the first anthropological course in Tehran University. At the official meeting of the Ministry of Education in March 1935 he delivered a speech entitled ‘On the tasks of an Anthropological Museum’, which became the manifesto of the MIA. He presented his speech in Persian very eloquently. First, he explained how nineteenth-century anthropology emerged:

The nineteenth century is named ‘the age of natural science’, but it deserves to be called ‘the century of history’ because in this period history has been promoted to an unbelievably high degree and has succeeded in such great and innumerable achievements. For the first time, themes related to the quality of evolution and transformation of customs and civilizations of nations have been precisely scrutinised, and the evolutionary stages of

various peoples from primitivism to civilization have been studied. In terms of comparison between different civilizations, the attempts made are innumerable and therefore anthropology and prehistory develop immeasurably.

(Hass 1936: 94)

Then he explained the role of anthropology in shaping *hoviyat melli* (national identity) and *esteglal melli* (national independence). The right and claim to national independence from either scientific or practical points of view are based on national identity. In other words, to obtain independence each nation must demonstrate and prove its distinct nationality and identity. This formidable task was the duty of historical sciences. Owing to this fact, everywhere that national consciousness had been awakened and roused, it became a common duty to collect and study the historical sources. Given this, the institution of anthropology in Iran has two duties: first, a scientific task which is to study the physical and spiritual life of Iranians from the onset of social life up to now in order to discover and examine its rules. If this duty is not properly carried out, the science of anthropology will remain partial and incomplete. The second task is a national engagement, because no nation can gain awareness about its place and significance and credit in the world except by knowing the history and customs of its ancestors (*Ta'lim va Tarbiyat* 1936: 95–8).

After the meeting, the MIA took shape. The MIA had two sections: a section for collecting *ashya-e madyi* (visible objects), and a section for *ashya-e na-madyi* (invisible objects) such as songs, fables, myths and local dialects. To collect folkloristic materials, they called upon all people to send their materials to the MIA, and the Minister of Education (Ali Asghar Hekmat) sent out an official statement to the schools requesting teachers and students to collect folklore (The General Office of Museums 1976: 71). To encourage people to collect folklore, in 1937 the MIA announced it would award a prize and special honorary medal to anyone who contributed to the museum (*ibid.*: 84). In order to extend the folklore movement to all cities and villages, in the same year the museum authorities decided that the Office of Culture should establish a local society for anthropology in each city. These societies should support their local museums of anthropology (*ibid.*). Alongside galleries, within the MIA a library was formed, which by 1976 had 1,608 books and 1,190 Persian and non-Persian journals, all in the field of ethnography and museology. The MIA was extended and by 1976 had 45 galleries such as the Music Gallery and the Gallery of Life. The latter was the largest in the museum, and displayed a wide range of objects under many headings: Peasant Lifestyles, Wood Crafts, Pottery, Inlaid Works, Light Instruments, Wedding Ceremonies, Baths, Historical Documents, Coffeehouses, Hats, Shoes, Craft Industries, Religious Objects and Jewellery.

In 1938 Hass delivered a lecture in the Institute of Anthropology and gave a report on the state of the MIA entitled 'The Great Ethnographic Museums and the Iranian Ethnographic Museum' (*Amuzesh va Parvaresh* 1938: 24–9). In the lecture, Hass described some of the greatest anthropological museums in European countries and their significance. Hass's aim in this speech was to draw

the attention of Iranian politicians and authorities to the significance of museums and to get more support for the MIA. He explained that ethnographic museums had been established and extended throughout the world for two reasons: first, the advancement of empirical science and particularly of the evolutionary theory in anthropology and biology; second, the capability of the museum to influence the masses. He distinguished between museum and collection. 'A scientific collection must be a complete and comprehensive collection of objects in a certain scientific field, because its objective is to meet the scholarly needs of researchers, but a museum is made for representing objects for the populace'. The functions, arrangement and exhibited objects of a museum deserve full attention.

Despite its extensive activities, the MIA was not successful in introducing and supporting Iranian traditional culture; on the contrary, it was treated as a symbol of imitation of the West. For instance, Sadeq Hedayat vehemently criticized the government's efforts in this regard as just 'to stage a show' which 'like other imitations of the Pahlavi period turned out to be a loathsome caricature' (1999: 182). He noted that 'the term *mardomshenasi* was coined and a museum was established under this name. To the layman it is not clear whether it is meant to be a museum of ethnography, sociology, anthropology or a secret intelligence office' (ibid.).

Hedayat criticized the lack of authenticity, continuity and adequate information about the items gathered in the MIA. He considered the plan for sending official requests to the education departments of provinces to obtain folk narratives from school children to be just a formality and stated that the documents collected were void of scientific value. Not all regions and provinces answered the call. Referring to the available data, Hedayat considered a majority of the recorded documents to be worthless because of the lack of information about the collector and/or the narrator; but he indicated that there were some which were usable and of value for future research (ibid.).

Although the MIA was a new institution in Iran and anthropology was a European term, it is necessary to consider that, alongside the potential capacity of the MIA to reflect the government's modernist ambitions, it also could serve to justify their planned radical programmes to change and diminish traditional culture and life. Politically, the government needed to show its loyalty, reverence and respect for the culture of its people and masses. Iran is a country with a long history and deep-rooted traditions. If a government tried to abandon their traditions entirely, it would provoke the people to resistance against its programmes and even to rebel against its sovereignty.

Therefore, the MIA had a threefold political function in relation to the government: first, it was an emblem of a European and contemporary society; second, it could temper the violence of the experience of modernization and justify the government's attitude towards the people and their culture and third, nationalism required proper attention to people and their language, customs, myths and overall culture. This museum and the centre were established to meet these needs. Of course, it could be said that because the Islamic Revolution of 1979 was both anti-Western and, initially, anti-nationalist,²² it proved that the

Pahlavis had failed to win the people over to their radical Western-oriented policies and had also failed to show their loyalty to Iranian culture.

The Museum of Ancient Iran

I do not intend to focus on archaeological enterprises in this study. However, in order to demonstrate the role of archaeology as part of anthropology in the nationalist policy of the government, I very briefly introduce and analyse the *Muzeh Iran Bastan* (the Museum of Ancient Iran, MAI), which was inaugurated in 1935. It was the logical outcome of the development of archaeological enterprises in Iran.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, in 1874 Momtaz ol-Mulk founded the *Muzeh Melli* (National Museum), the first Iranian museum. In 1931, the government passed a law according to which a part of the findings of every archaeological excavation belongs to the state. Because the National Museum's space was limited, it could not contain all the objects accumulated. Therefore, a new museum was established and named *Muzeh Iran Bastan* (MAI) (Imani-Namvar 1975: 54).

To demonstrate the underlying political dimensions of the MAI it is enough to examine its architectural design and name. The architecture of the MAI was one of the best exemplars of Reza Shah's nationalist policy. André Godard, who later founded the Fine Art Faculty (*Daneshkadeh Honar-haye Z'iba*) of Tehran University, designed the MAI. The design was not only Sassanian, but also copied the arch of the Palace of Khosrow (Taq-e Karsra), the Sassanian seat of government, which strongly recalled the memory of what had been overthrown by the Muslims.

The other notable point about the MAI is its name. In Persian there are several words meaning past (*gozashteh*) such as *qadim*, *kohan*, *atiq* and *bastani*. *Kohan* is culturally a positive word to describe the ancient rich history and background of something, but it has no political significance, whereas *qadim* and *qadimi* communicate a negative sense of being too old. *Atiq* refers to something valuable and very old; it is a very specialized word for antiquities, but it could not be used for indicating a certain time in history. Finally, *bastani* indicates very old and ancient times and, in particular, the period before Islam.

This institution effectively became the leading centre of archaeological undertakings in the country, with a specific focus on Iran's pre-Islamic cultural heritage. I also should mention that although the focus of the MAI was the collection of archaeological objects of the pre-Islamic period, it has always had a special gallery for the Islamic period because so many materials found through excavation belonged to this period and the government had to keep them.

Intellectual nationalist folklore studies

As already mentioned, the 1930s and 1940s were the era of Nationalism, and many countries in the world were filled with a strong nationalist spirit. In Iran, too, nationalism was the zeitgeist of the 1930s and 1940s, and intellectuals were

especially zealous in their attempts to revitalize ancient Iranian culture. Taking advantage of newly established modern institutions and media, intellectuals succeeded in producing a vast amount of nationalistic literature. Ancient Iranian annual festivals such as Nowruz, Mehregan, Tirgan and Sadeh; mythological heroes; ancient modes of dress; systems and principles of education, everyday life, the army, economic affairs, culinary culture, ancient religions, in particular Zoroastrianism²³ and its holy texts and monarchical culture and its values, norms, emblems and myths were all dominant topics of this rhetoric and discourse. Publications on these themes aimed to paint a vivid and attractive picture of ancient Iranian culture for ordinary people rather than to produce academic texts for students and experts.

In this nationalistic discourse, folklore studies flourished and became one of the most popular topics. This interest in folklore was partly the intellectual legacy of the Constitutional Revolution and partly motivated by the substantial social upheavals and consequent cultural changes.

Additionally, with the rapid process of modernization and Europeanization, the face of the cities was changing, and traditional beliefs and values were losing their foundations. As a corollary, society was distancing itself from its past, which created public interest in folk and traditional life, and several writers began to describe peasant life nostalgically, among them Ahmad Kasravi, one of the most renowned thinkers of the time.²⁴

Sadeq Hedayat: founder of Iranian folkloristics

The most outstanding writer and intellectual to pay serious attention to folklore studies was Sadeq Hedayat. Although he is one of the best-known Persian writers, and his life and works have been described and appraised in various languages, his folkloristic writing and work has received little attention.²⁵ Here, I introduce and review all his folklore writings and studies, and, in line with this concern, examine the ideological implications and context of his works.²⁶

Sadeq Hedayat (1903–51) was a highly gifted scholar and writer who founded the first Iranian folklore movement in the 1930s. Following him, many scholars such as Amir-Qoli Amini (1944), Kuhi Kermani (1954), Fazlollah Sobhi-Mohtadi (1953) Abolqasem Faqiri (1963), Abolqasem Anjavi-Shirazi (1975, 1976) and Mahmud Katira'i (1999), began to collect folklore focusing on Iranian customs, Persian proverbs, fables and folk narratives. However, Hedayat's significance is derived not only from his position as the architect of Iranian folkloristics but also from the fact that his writings were some of the best representatives of the intellectual atmosphere of the time; in a sense, he was the spokesperson of his generation. To understand Hedayat's folkloristic writing and scholarship it is first necessary to become acquainted with his ideals and motivations.

Hedayat's thought

Unlike Hedayat's life and writings, which have been a controversial issue since his suicide, his political ideology is clear: most commentators are unanimous that

Hedayat was a zealous nationalist and an anti-Islamist. Hedayat was enthusiastic and nostalgic about the glorious past of ancient Iran. Because of this, he left Iran for India to learn ancient Iranian languages. His strong nationalist feelings led him to write several stories to revitalize Iranian ancient myths and heroes. However, Hedayat also was known as an 'incurable pessimist' (Eshaqpour 1994: 7). As opposed to nationalist Constitutionalists such as Akhundzadeh, Aqa Khan Kermani, Jalal al-Din Mirza and Maraghehi, who were optimistic about the future of Iran and wanted to build a nation-state based upon its glorious bygone ages, Hedayat was a pessimist with a philosophical despair that led him to commit suicide in Paris in 1951. As Eshaqpour notes, 'Like modern Iran, Hedayat was suspended on a border line between the East and the West' (ibid.: 8).

Hedayat, like many other nationalists of the time, was also a passionate Aryanist and strongly anti-Semitic. In the Preface (*Dibacheh*) of *Neyrangestan*²⁷ he accused the Arabs and Jews of destroying authentic Iranian culture (*farhang asil-e Irani*) (1999: 28). As I shall argue, the Preface to *Neyrangestan* was one of the best representations of Iranian nationalist Aryanism. Hedayat argues that throughout history, Iran has been the crossroads of different peoples who brought their cultures into the country and destroyed the purity and authenticity of Iranian culture:

What is noticeable is that not only did the *melale biganeh* (foreign nations) bring so many superstitions into Iran but they also attempted to destroy Iranian heritage and tried to change everything that had Iranian origins and roots into an *ajnabi* (alien) form.

(Ibid.)

To depict ancient Iranian glories and how the Semites destroyed them, Hedayat produced a number of historical dramas, mainly tragedies, such as *Parvin Dokhtar-e Sasan* (Parvin: The Sassanian Girl) (1932a), *Maziyar* (1933a) and *Aniran* (1931, with B. Alavi). These writings clearly reflect not only Hedayat's nationalist and Aryanist views but also his strong anti-Islamic attitude. As a result, from the 1979 Revolution until the rise of the Reformists in 1996, reprints of these works were banned in Iran.

Hedayat was perhaps the most prominent and influential Iranian writer of the twentieth century who manifestly and confidently wrote against the Islamic world view. He did not want to reform and modernize Islam, or tie it to pre-Islamic Iranian religions as Kasravi did. Rather, he attempted to dismiss Islam in all ways possible. Consequently, he always admired Maziyar and Abu Moslem Khorasani for their resistance against the Arab conquest and the influence of Islam. In the preface of *Maziyar* he claims that through this resistance these Iranian heroes were attempting to regain their country from the Arabs, because:

They had not forgotten the glories of the Sassanian period, and their 'racial and intellectual superiority' to the Arabs. Yet it is pointed out that, by the time of Maziyar's rebellion, intermarriage with Arabs had 'polluted' the blood of some Iranians, and social intercourse with them had contaminated

Iranian purity with ‘Semitic filth’ resulting in ‘cheating, treachery, theft, bribery’, etc.

(Katouzian 1991: 74, quoting Hedayat 1933: 12)

Another main line of Hedayat’s thought was his desire to end the despotic and totalitarian political system in Iran. As a modernist, he favoured rapid social reforms and modernization, but not Reza Shah’s pseudo-modernist policies and programmes. He clearly and sharply criticized Reza Shah and his dictatorial behaviour. Hedayat’s notions and ultimate goal of intellectual activity, including folkloristic endeavours, were thus in sharp contrast with Reza Shah’s policy of folklore activities.

The other important part of Hedayat’s thought concerned the life of ordinary people. This can be seen in his writings, most of which are about the ordinary people’s language, beliefs and culture. Not only the present-day life of ordinary people but their past life, too, was at the core of Hedayat’s works. Some of his works, such as *Taraneh-ha-ye Khayyam* (The Melodies of Khayyam) (1939), *Favayed Giyahkhari* (The Advantages of Vegetarianism) (1976), [*Ẓand Vahuman Yasn*] (1944a), *Parvin Dokhtar Sasan* (1932) and also *Buf-e Kūr* (The Blind Owl) (1952b), which is his fictional psychological masterpiece, are representations of a mixture of Iranian history and folk culture. Throughout these works, Hedayat is always in search of the past. Katouzian argues that Hedayat’s interest in *Taraneh-ha-ye Khayyam* was due to his nostalgia about Iran’s past. Hedayat loved folklore partly because these materials were the remnants of Iran’s glorious past. In *The Blind Owl* he writes:

I deeply felt in myself the pleasure of these fables, proverbs and customs – I felt that I’ve become a child and just now that I am writing, I express my feelings, all these feelings belong to the present, they are not of the past. As if these gestures, thoughts, desires and habits of ancestors that are transmitted to the next generations by these proverbs have been a very necessary part of life.

(1952b: 64)

However, Hedayat’s attention to ordinary people and folklore was critical as well. As I shall argue, he never admired ordinary people and in works such as *Alaviyeh Khanom* he portrays malevolent and nasty characters. As Eshaqpour (1994) argues, Hedayat always had ambivalent feelings towards the ordinary people. In ‘*Tarik-khaneh*’ and many other writings, he calls the common people *rajjah-ha*, a powerful pejorative word attributing a set of negative characteristics. At the same time, as a zealous nationalist, he loved the country, its past and culture.

Hedayat’s folkloristic studies

Hedayat encouraged and supported young talented writers to collect and study folklore. Many of them later became leading folklorists, such as Anjavi-Shirazi,

Sadeq Homayouni and Mahmud Katira'i. He also founded *Majaleh Musiqi* (Music Magazine) and contributed to many other journals, such as *Sokhan* (Discourse). He also contributed to the creation of Ali Akbar Dehkhoda's *Amsal va Hekam* (Proverbs and Aphorisms), published in four volumes between 1929 and 1932, which was the most outstanding Persian folklore study of the time (Katira'i 1979: 26). As Mojtaba Minovi mentioned, Hedayat gave his collection of proverbs to Dehkhoda (Radhayrapetian 1990: 100).

Hedayat's folkloristic contributions can be classified into three categories. First, the collection of folklore materials; second, the usage of folk language in his literary writings and third, methodological and theoretical discussions. Although Hedayat was not a pioneer in the use of ordinary folk and colloquial language in literary work – as we saw, it was a legacy of Jamalzadeh – he popularized folklore as a literary genre among Iranians. Likewise, Hedayat was the first Iranian to collect and analyse folklore materials. He was also the first scholar to write methodological guidelines in Persian.

His original research, comprising all his work on the collection of folklore, was mainly focused on gathering folksongs, folk narratives and popular beliefs, and was published in such books as *Owsaneh*, *Neyrangestan*, *Tarane-ha-ye Amiyaneh* (Folksongs), *Matal-ha-ye Farsi* (Persian Proverbs), *Amsal va Estelahat-e Mahalli* (Local Idioms and Proverbs), *Qesseha va Afsaneh-ha* (Narratives and Fables) and *Jadugari dar Iran* (Witchcraft in Iran).²⁸

Hedayat's theoretical discussions are very few; they include four articles about data-collecting techniques – the first comprehensive methodological guidelines for the discipline in Iran, originally published in the magazine *Sokhan* (1944); and the introductions to his scholarly books such as the preface to *The Melodies of Khayyam* and *Neyrangestan*. In the following paragraphs I will introduce and review these studies.

Folksongs

Owsaneh A footnote on the first page of *Owsaneh* reads, 'This writing was first published in Tehran in 1931 in the form of a small 36-page booklet. Later, it was published in *Majalleh Musiqi* in 1939 (1999: 163). *Owsaneh* is Hedayat's first folklore study. It is a collection of Persian folksongs with a short analytical discussion in the Preface about the significance of folksongs and folk narratives in modern Iran. The book consists of five separate sections of collected data including 'Children's rhymes' (*Taraneha-ye Bache-ha*), 'Songs of nursemaids and mothers' (*Taraneha-ye Daye-ha va Madar-ha*) and 'Folksongs' (*Taraneha-ye Amiyaneh*). Literally, *Owsaneh* is a Pahlavi variant of the Persian *Afsaneh*, meaning legend, myth or tale. The title symbolizes Hedayat's romantic nationalist outlook.

Although Hedayat wrote a methodological guide for collecting folklore material, he himself never applied the methodological rules. None of his folklore work contains the requisite information about time, place, informants, interviewees, sources and techniques used in his research. *Owsaneh* is a valuable folklore study, but it contains no account of how the materials were collected, and therefore the

reader cannot discover when or where these songs were popular, and who were the informants. We do not know whether Hedayat gathered the data from field-work and by his own observations, or took them from other sources. As we saw, Hedayat classified the folksongs into three categories: children's, mother's and folk songs. But he did not justify the classifications he used. As Radhayrapetian notes, 'There are other categories of folk songs, such as work songs (*Taraneh-haye Kar*), which are not included. It is also noteworthy that "The Riddles," a very short section of the book, cannot be classified as "song," but it seems Hedayat included them in this category because they are in rhymed verse' (1990: 97–8). Furthermore, Hedayat did not analyse the material collected, and his work remained a descriptive report.

However, the Preface to *Owsaneh* is significant. Hedayat discussed the cultural state of Iranian society and presented a critical view of Iran, which was original and influential. Here again we see the ambivalent attitude of Hedayat and his generation towards the modernist social and political trends of the early period of Reza Shah's rule. As modernist and progressive thinkers, they admired Reza Shah's Europeanization and modernization policies. But, as nationalists, how could they accept and admire the extinction of national traditions and customs?

The Preface begins with Hedayat's regret for the disappearance of Iranian folklore in the process of *tajaddod* (modernity). He argued that modernization would eventually lead to the disappearance of folk narratives, songs and beliefs, which have been transmitted down through earlier generations and are preserved only in memory. Then he discussed why folklore and folk songs in particular, are significant for our time. We must not neglect them but collect them, because:

- they are 'remnants of our ancestors';
- they are useful and have different cultural functions, as 'if they were futile and unnecessary they would not be [*sic*] remain up to now';
- they are 'compatible with the masses' ethos and morale';
- they are meaningful and 'always convey a philosophy or a moral idea';
- they have aesthetic and literary value;
- they communicate in a simple language;
- they are 'derived from our national soul' and 'some of them were made by the Aryan race in the pre-historic period'.

(1999: 161–5)

To demonstrate the significance of folklore, Hedayat defines and classifies folksongs and compares them with classical literature and art. For example, he argues that many poets compiled and published poems, but today we don't read them because times and ideas have changed and they have lost their significance. But folksongs have always been significant to our life and we love them (*ibid.*: 164). Some folksongs have literary value and, despite their simple content, compare favourably with the creations of the great poets (*ibid.*: 165).

Most of Hedayat's discussion is devoted to the final point, which I have listed earlier. He praises folksongs as a cultural legacy of ancient Iranian culture, not for

their value *per se*, meaning folksongs have been significant to our life and we love them, rather than that they have literary value. He attributes the origin and creation of Persian folksongs to pre-Islamic times, maintaining that:

Without doubt there is no document of the origin and versifier of these songs; it has not yet been identified whether they were composed by anonymous poets or whether they are part of the native poems which were prevalent in pre-Islamic times...but the content and structure of most of them show that they are related to native Iranian legends.

(Ibid.)

A group of folksongs, he notes, have maintained their pre-Islamic style and are exemplary of the prehistoric era of the Aryan race (ibid.: 167). In a footnote he emphasizes that signs of ancient Iranian culture can be seen in many contemporary customs, proverbs and narratives, and he mentions some examples. Most of the Preface is devoted to arguing that there are similarities between the Avestan poetic style and Persian folksongs, which attests that Iranian people have not abandoned their pre-Islamic language.

In his concluding statements, Hedayat points out that *Owsaneh* is the first section of a two-part book, the second part being an extensive collection of folk beliefs and customs, by which he evidently means *Neyrangestan*. He had plans to expand *Owsaneh* in the second edition, based on the data he had in his possession; and he hoped to involve the readers in this effort, expressing his gratitude in advance for their cooperation.²⁹

Neyrangestan *Neyrangestan* (Hedayat 1933b) is the first book-length attempt at recording Iranian folklore. Its title makes a very critical point. In modern Persian, *Neyrangestan* literally means a set of deceits and trickeries. Hence, the title suggests how the book treats its subject matter, in particular religious beliefs and customs. However, as Hedayat explains, *Neyrangestan* 'has been a Pahlavi religious prayer book, similar to common prayer books, that considers a very odd and bizarre effect of worship' (1999: 25). There is an irony in the title: indeed it is very close to the ideological nature of the book and deserves careful attention. On the one hand it dismisses folklore as a set of *neyrang*; on the other hand, it refers us to pre-Islamic Iran, which we know Hedayat to approve of. In fact, *Neyrangestan* is a selective collection of folklore, including religious rites and folk beliefs, which was still more or less prevalent among the ordinary people.

Hedayat organized the book according to a classification of folk beliefs and customs relating to the life cycle, including birth, marriage and death. The first part is a lengthy introduction followed by, 'The rites and customs of betrothal and weddings', 'Pregnant women', 'Children', 'Beliefs and ceremonies', 'Rites of illnesses', 'Asking and praying for needs', 'Rituals of sleep', 'Death', 'Time beliefs', 'General rulings', 'Plants and crops', 'Animals', 'Birds', 'Some ancient festivals', 'Places and famous things' and 'Folk legends'.

Neyrangestan suffers from several methodological shortcomings. First, as in his other works, Hedayat did not explain how he collected the data and to what

extent they were his own observations or taken from other sources. Anjavi-Shirazi maintains that Hedayat had a nurse called Omelu who narrated to him most of the materials collected in *Owsaneh* and *Neyrangestan* (1976: 411). Katira'i states that Hedayat collected the data from family and household members, through direct interviews with informants, and from correspondence with friends and acquaintances he had asked to provide him with the folklore of their town or region (1971: 356–7).

However, as Katira'i maintains, the data in *Neyrangestan* partly come from Pahlavi and Avestan textual sources, literary texts such as *Aqayed al-Nesa ya Kūsum Naneh* by Aqa Jamal Khansari (1970), travel accounts, religious books and so forth. Some other data are Hedayat's own observations. Many of the beliefs and customs collected were old and were no longer common among the people, but it is impossible to assess the validity of the data because Hedayat does not mention in which city and region those customs and beliefs were popular. He does not explain the criteria by which he collected the data and why he excluded others, and his classification and the data collection are neither comprehensive nor complete.

Despite these shortcomings, *Neyrangestan* was one of the most influential works of its time and has its own methodological, theoretical and political significance. It is the first systematic study of folklore in Iran where an Iranian scholar used modern anthropological theories, methods and sources to examine a cultural issue, directly influenced by European anthropology. Although Hedayat did not evidently separate the different components of a systematic research report, the introduction to *Neyrangestan* consisted of a theoretical framework, research questions, a literature review and an argument for the significance of the research, and the other chapters contain data and analysis. For instance, he mentions previous works in Iranian folklore studies and states that, 'apart from a small collection of superstitions and fables that appear in one source, and whatever had been recorded by travellers, correctly or incorrectly, no attempts have been made to collect and record Iranian folk beliefs and customs' (1933b: 26).

In terms of methodology, Hedayat makes unprecedented use of a variety of textual and oral sources. Throughout the book, in his descriptions of superstitions and customs, he refers to Persian classical sources, and he also makes several comparisons that illustrate the usage of comparative method. Furthermore, in the Introduction, Hedayat quotes from Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871) and claims the evolutionary approach as his theoretical framework, as I will later explain in more detail.

Another significant point about *Neyrangestan* is that it reflects Hedayat's unorthodox religious attitude, and his view of Islam as a set of superstitions, an alien faith imposed upon Iran by an inferior culture, which was an idea popular among many dissident modernist-nationalist intellectuals such as Zabih Behruz (1890–1971), Ebrahim Pur-Davud (1886–1966) and Hossein Kazemzadeh Iranshahr (1884–1962). Lastly, *Neyrangestan* was Hedayat's attempt to resolve the ambivalence of the intellectuals toward the masses and their culture.

Theoretically, *Neyrangestan* approaches the life and folk beliefs of ordinary Iranians quite differently from the prevalent perspectives in the country, and poses

unprecedented questions: are Iranian folk beliefs scientifically true, valid and believable? And what are their significance and relevance? To answer these questions, Hedayat invokes the European evolutionary anthropological approach. As a first step, he takes folk beliefs as superstitions (*khorafat*): they are not only fallacious, but also harmful (though later he separates some of them out as true and authentic). He maintains that 'Iran is a country with a long history, where all peoples, whether civilized or ancient wild nations like Arabs, Jews, Mongols, and Assyrians, have lived and mixed together. Therefore, the study of the folk beliefs of this country could throw light on many undiscovered and mysterious philosophical and historical problems' (1933a: 21). Here he explains the scientific and scholarly significance of Iranian folklore studies, which was not mentioned in his previous work. 'By comparing Iranian superstitions with those of other countries', he maintains, 'We discover the origins of customs, mores, religions, legends and beliefs of other nations, because these kinds of thoughts created and developed in all religions and contributed to their survival. It is these superstitions which, at different periods, guide the folk of humanity' (*ibid.*).

Hedayat goes on to explain why human beings created superstitions. He argues that it is 'human nature to want to know the causes of events and objects such as lunar eclipses, blood, and earthquakes; but in the absence of scientific thought, man invokes metaphysical explanations and superstitions' (*ibid.*: 22). Quoting Hegel, he argues that 'some superstitions were handed down from our ape ancestors'. Quoting a 'French translation of E. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871)', he argues that 'superstitions are universal, and by comparing the beliefs of tribal and uncivilized societies with those of civilized societies we realize that many elements of primitive cultures can be seen among the high civilized nations, and all superstitions derive from the same origin' (*ibid.*: 22–3).

Hedayat devotes the second part of his Introduction to answering new questions: 'Have those odd, abnormal and sometimes ridiculous and awe-inspiring thoughts and beliefs, which are famous as superstitions, sprung from Iranian national thought? What is the relationship between them?' His answer is antithetical to his previous explanation:

Those superstitions, which are ugly, horrible and nasty, are not products of Iranian minds. Rather, they are the result of contact with foreign races; these superstitions have been forced upon Iranians through foreign and religious pressure.

(*Ibid.*: 23)

To illustrate this point, Hedayat distinguishes two types of beliefs. One type is native, created by Iranians themselves in the course of everyday life; they are the memories and legacy of the Indo-Iranian race. He maintains that, in earlier times, Zoroastrianism was opposed to superstitions and the Avesta resisted those superstitions imposed by the Turanians.³⁰ The other type is a set of alien beliefs and superstitions that came from non-Iranian nations such as Parthians, Greeks, Semites and in particular Arabs, Jews and Babylonians. He concludes that

although Iranians were less prone to superstitions, their thought has not been far from such ideas.

Regarding the classification (separating Iranian and non-Iranian) mentioned here, Hedayat elsewhere attempts to outline the tasks of Iranian folkloristics and their significance. He believed that alien people had polluted Iranian culture and had tried to destroy it or change it into non-Iranian (*ajnabi*) culture (ibid.: 28). Therefore, the first duty of Iranian folklore scholars is to distinguish and purify the alien cultural elements from those of the natives, and to attempt to eliminate them from the country. He believed that the best way to eliminate these superstitions was to record and publish them, revealing their weaknesses and decreasing their significance. 'Unless these superstitions are printed as such, foreigners will consider these absurd beliefs to be part of Iran's national beliefs and customs' (ibid.: 31). The other national duty of folkloristics is, Hedayat maintains, to preserve and revive customs that are not only good and acceptable, but also survivals of the glorious days of Iran. Thus, he encourages research on folk beliefs and customs that are purely Iranian, some of which date as far back as the migration of the Aryan race to the Iranian plateau (ibid.: 33).

Taraneh-haye Amiyaneh Hedayat had promised a second edition of *Owsaneh* in which he would publish a collection of Persian folksongs. However, he never published the second edition of *Owsaneh*, instead in 1939 he wrote an essay, '*Taraneh-ha-ye Amiyaneh*' (Folksongs), which is the development of *Owsaneh*. It was published in *Majaleh Musiqi* (Music Magazine) of which he was a founder and editor, and where some of his folkloristic studies, written before the fall of Reza Shah, were regularly published. *Taraneh-ha-ye Amiyaneh* is an excellent piece of research which, in comparison to *Owsaneh*, is more detailed in presenting definitions and ideas; it certainly reflects Hedayat's development as a folklorist. It consists of an introduction on the subject in general and a comparative discussion of the development of Persian and European folksongs. He discusses some of the oldest and most traditional of such Persian songs and political tales, and compares them with surprisingly similar folk songs and tales in European – including French, English and German – culture.

The underlying presuppositions of the research are nineteenth-century European nationalist evolutionary discourse, which, as already mentioned, assumed the unity of race and language family in the Indo-European languages, for example, the Aryan race and the Sanskrit language as the origin of civilization. In this article, Hedayat first posits folksongs as universal and the primary form of music and poetry (ibid.: 200). Then he argues that, 'according to the latest scientific evidence, there are some similarities between folk poems and songs throughout the world, which demonstrate a shared origin. This primitive form of art is very old, going back to the time when the Indo-European races started their migrations, and folksongs were disseminated and diffused from these people over the world, which accounts for the similarities that exist between the folksongs of different nations' (ibid.: 202). Thus, he presents diffusion as an explanation for the similarities, without discounting the 'identical manifestations of genius' (ibid.: 203).

The next part of the article is devoted to explaining the significance of folksongs. To do so, Hedayat appeals to a theoretical discussion on the peculiar features of folksong in comparison with art music. 'It is evident that folksongs belong to a nation and the masses but, despite this fact, they are a perfect form of art which embodies the general principles of art and corresponds with the artistic needs of a nation' (ibid.: 203). Then he classifies art into two forms: elite and mass arts. Simplicity, orality and compatibility with the masses' spiritual and material needs are the main features of folksongs that elite songs do not have (ibid.: 205). He explains that folksongs composed by uneducated individuals, as representatives of the spirit and the inner voice of a nation, have inspired the great composers of classical music. He reiterates the view that the composer and the place and date of origin of folksongs are unknown (ibid.).

Here again Hedayat clarifies the need to collect and record folksongs as a national duty. He explains that 'all civilized European countries have carefully collected their folksongs and narratives' (ibid.: 204) but 'in Iran we pay no attention to collecting folksongs' (ibid.: 206). He emphasizes that every effort should be made to collect examples of these art forms from the peasants and members of the populace who are the final preservers of these treasures. Hedayat points out that, with very few exceptions, such as Zhukovski's collection of folksongs and his own *Owsaneh*, no real effort has been made to collect Iranian folksongs, and he insists that unless a thorough scientific collection is undertaken, the remaining folksongs will soon be forgotten and disappear forever (ibid.: 207).

In the final section of the article, Hedayat incorporates some examples of 'children's songs', 'love songs', 'lullabies' and 'wedding songs' with a further discussion of folksongs. This section is outstanding among Hedayat's work as a piece of research. He analyses each example of Persian folksong and compares it with its counterpart in other societies. He discusses the relationships between epics, comedy, tragedy and folksongs with reference to the *Shahnameh* and other Persian classical literature. He also analyses the content of the folksongs, such as love, marriage, national festivals and children.

Folk narratives

Radhayrapetian holds that 'Hedayat did not study Iranian folk narratives much himself, though his contribution to this field of scholarship is considerable' (1990: 100) and explains how in 1939–42, when Hedayat was working at the *Edareh Musiqi* (Music Bureau), he asked people to send the folklore of their region to the Radio and announced that folk narratives would be broadcast 'under the name of the sender'. Once the narratives were received, they were narrated on the radio after Hedayat had studied, corrected and arranged them. Some of these narratives were printed in *Majalleh Musiqi* (Music Magazine) under the sender's name. Hedayat occasionally added some comments' (ibid.).

Of the narratives Hedayat collected, only a few had been published until 1999, when Jahangir Hedayat published 29 folk narratives for the first time in his collection of Hedayat's folklore studies. In these recently published works, neither

did Hedayat analyse or comment on the narratives nor did he discuss any methodological points. However, in the introduction to 'Matal-haye Farsi' (1999),³¹ which contains two short folk narratives 'Aqa Mushehi' (Little Master Mouse), and 'Shangul u Mangul' (The Story of the Wolf and the Three Little Goats Left Alone by their Mother), Hedayat briefly explains his views on the characteristics of Iranian folk narratives. He begins with a powerful statement about the world value and significance of Persian narratives. In his view, Persian narratives have literary, scientific, psychological, entertainment, historical and folklore value. 'Folk narratives are the most valuable and liveliest examples of Persian prose, and their subject matter, novelty, and variety make them eligible to be introduced to the world as compilations [on a par with those] presented by D. L. Lorimer, Arthur Christensen, and Henri Massé. Folk narratives have universal value because they link mankind to all creation through a magical power' (Hedayat 1999: 19, translated in Radhayrapetian 1990: 100). He explains some similarities in content and form between Persian and European narratives (also discussed in Hedayat 1944b). He believed all folk narratives to have a common background and roots. 'Mah Pishuni' (an Iranian folk narrative), for example, is also found in France, Germany and Ireland (1999: 236).

'*Folklore ya farhang-e tudeh*' Hedayat's folklore work culminated in the publication of two essays on the methodological and theoretical aspects of folkloristics in *Majalleh Sokhan* (1944). At the time, these articles were the first comprehensive introduction to folkloristics in Persian, and they became milestones in the field. The first '*Folklore ya farhang tudeh*' (Folklore or the Culture of the Masses), 1944b/1999: 233–43, discusses the definition, scope, history and significance of folkloristics in general and with some reference to Iran. His discussion of these issues was followed up and completed in the second essay, '*Tarh-e kolli baraye kavush-e yek mantaqeh*' (A General Plan for Studying Folklore of an Area, 1999: 243–75).

The first article begins, 'In 1885 Ambrose Morton coined the term 'Folk-lore', meaning ancient relics and literature of the masses...later this was accepted all over the countries of Europe' (1999: 232). Then, Hedayat refers to Saint Yves' definition of folklore as the study of the life of the masses in civilized countries. Folklore is important in civilized countries because there are two different cultures found there: elite culture and the culture of the masses. Folklore can therefore only be found in a society that consists of two such classes. He argues that primitive societies such as the savage tribes of Australia do not have folklore. Instead, *nezhadshenasi*³² (ethnology) studies these societies. Then he concludes, 'In brief, folklore is the familiarity with the spiritual education and upbringing of the majority versus the educated people among a civilized nation' (ibid.: 234).

As a next step, Hedayat begins to clarify the scope of the discipline. He explains that folklore is no longer limited to the study of folk narratives, songs and riddles, but rather that it includes all traditions learned orally such as 'folk knowledge', 'everyday life and custom' and 'oral history'. He emphasizes that folk literature and folk art are very important in that they have always been a source of the best

masterpieces of art in the world. 'Folklore is the artistic soul of nations and conveys the voices of the people.' Then he explains the patriotic and nationalist values of folklore. 'How could one claim to be a patriot without knowing one's country's language, folk songs, fables, beliefs, and in sum the material and non-material aspects of the life of one's people' (ibid.). He discusses how folklore has developed in the general process of human and cultural evolution (ibid.: 235-7).

In conclusion, he discusses the history of folklore in Iran, which he believes began with publication of his *Neyrangestan* in 1933. He then enumerates the contributions of Western scholars and the few relevant Iranians, taking studies on dialects into consideration as well. Here Hedayat criticizes government folklore activities, and the significance and sources of folkloristics in Iran (discussed earlier). His main emphasis is on *the significance of folklore in shaping a nation's culture* and the necessity for prompt collection. Regarding rapid social change and its repercussions on Iranian folk culture he writes:

Although in terms of folklore Iran is richer than many other countries, its treasures have not yet been studied, and if no urgent and serious action is taken to do such a study, the main part of its folklore will be lost, just as now, through poverty, compulsory seasonal migration of nomads and other rapid upheavals, many peasant and nomad customs and rites are forgotten or destroyed and very soon we will lose all of our national treasures.

(Ibid.: 241)

To show the significance and richness of Iranian folklore, he shows that many foreign scholars have studied it. However, he regrets that Iranians do not pay attention to their own culture. At the end, he introduces some of the foreign studies of Iranian folklore.

His second article, 'A general plan for studying the folklore of an area', is a detailed itemization of those aspects of life that should be considered in a folkloristic study. He classifies all elements into four categories: material life, spiritual life, religion and social life. Each category is divided into subcategories, each comprising several items. This fieldwork guide was later expanded and employed in the collection of regional folklore. This and the rest of the essays in the series constitute a fieldwork manual, providing information on such subjects as qualifications of a fieldworker and methods to be used for soliciting and choosing informants, directing interviews and recording data.

The most significant aspect of this article is Hedayat's positivistic approach. Although Hedayat has repeatedly divided Iranian folklore into two types, one authentic and good, the other foreign and bad, here he frequently emphasizes the importance of being *objective* and *impartial* as a folklorist. 'The foremost condition of studying folklore', he maintains, 'is being absolutely disinterested and impartial, because in folklore research there must be no racial, moral, religious or linguistic prejudice or fanaticism' (ibid.: 259). Elsewhere he writes, 'In describing the folklore of a village or a labour community of a city, the scholar must be

impartial and avoid his personal beliefs, and he must not consider the personal benefits and limitations of the materials. A folklorist must describe all the events like a camera' (ibid.: 264). He even states, 'Nationalist fanatics not only conceal the events that they take to be dishonourable but also, in order to make them fascinating, change them into fashionable things. Such people also are not able to study folklore' (ibid.: 261). Hedayat explains that a scientific approach is one of the prerequisites of being a folklorist and that collecting folklore is not the end of research. Folklorists must analyse the functions of folklore and contextualize it within its socio-political fabric (ibid.: 265).

Finally, he calls for a national and public movement for collecting and studying folklore. With regard to gathering and recording folklore, Hedayat insists that not only government institutes but also every educated individual should participate, and local newspapers and magazines should encourage their readers' participation as well. After all the collected documents are printed, then the folklore specialists can study, compare and classify the country's folklore.

Literary folkloristic writings

Hedayat was always a realist writer. Even in his most symbolic fictitious novel *Buf-e kur* (The Blind Owl, 1952), he 'depicts the darkness of Iranian society' (Eshaqpour 1994: 26). '*Talab-e amorzeshi*' (Asking for Absolution), published in *Seh qatreh khun* (1932) and *Alaviyeh Khanom* (1963), contain tangible accounts of ordinary people's lives. These works reflect, more or less, the real social world so that one can find a detailed description of customs, beliefs, folk language, superstitions, social structure, traditional institutions and such cultural patterns as an ethnographer might consider in an ethnographic account.

In addition, Hedayat's realist works are significant in the development of Iranian folklore because he employed colloquial expressions, folk beliefs, customs and folk narrative. Most of his short stories and novels give us an account of Iranian folklore in context, that is, the usage and function of folklore are made clear. Using colloquial language with a critical contextualized description of folklore, Hedayat succeeded in popularizing an ethnographic literary style among the next generation of Iranian writers. His critical attitude towards Iranian folk culture is best represented in *Asking for Absolution* and *Alaviyeh Khanom*. These works contain a distinct pessimism about the lives of ordinary people. Here again one can see the dualism in Hedayat's thought and his ambivalence towards ordinary people.

Hedayat was positive and clear about the negative side of people's religious lives and beliefs. Both *Asking for Absolution* and *Alaviyeh Khanom* are about the ritual of pilgrimage. In the former, a group goes to Imam Hossein's shrine in Karbala and in the latter to Imam Reza's in Mashhad, the favourite shrine of the Shi'a in Iran. In these stories, the masses are depicted as superstitious, bigoted and illiterate. In *Asking for absolution*, the pilgrims tell their life stories and reveal their secrets. These are the confessions of ordinary Iranian people who are

murderers, sinful, illiterate, superstitious and dirty. They are going to Imam Hossein to ask his forgiveness. As one says:

Oh my dear, dear Imam Hossein, save me. Save me on the day when they put me in the grave. Save me on the Day [of Judgment] which is fifty thousand years long. The Day that the eyes jump on top of the heads. What could I do, what could I do. Repentance, repentance, I'm truly sorry. Please forgive me.

(quoted in Katouzian 1991: 93)

After Hedayat

Following Hedayat, many individuals interested in folklore began to collect folk narratives, songs and proverbs. One way or another, they played a significant part in popularizing folklore among ordinary people. Two major figures were Kuhi Kermani and Amir Qoli Amini. Kuhi's major works were collections of folksongs called *Haftasad taraneh* (Seven Hundred Folksongs), 1939, *Chahardah afsaneh az afsanehaye rusta'i Iran* (Fourteen Tales from Iran's Rural Folktales), 1935 and *Panzdah afsaneh az afsanehaye rusta'i Iran* (Fifteen Tales from Iran's Rural Folktales), 1954. Kuhi did not explain his methodology and his works contain no theoretical discussions.

The other prominent figure of the 1940s was Amir Qoli Amini. He was born and lived in Esfahan, and published a daily newspaper there. As a journalist, he was interested in popular themes such as folklore. His major concerns were Persian proverbs and Esfahani folklore. His earliest folklore study was *Farhang 'avam ya tafsir-e amsal va estelahat zaban-e farsi* (Popular Culture or the Interpretation of Persian proverbs and idioms), 1944. His other works are *Folklor-e Iran: dastanhaye amsal* (Iranian Folklore: The Stories of Proverbs), 1954 and *Si afsaneh az afsanehaye mahalli Esfahan* (Thirty Folktales From Esfahan), 1964.

Amini saw folk narratives and proverbs as mainly literary rather than anthropological phenomena. He maintained that his 'primary goal of collecting Persian proverbs and those current among Esfahanis was to record them and find out the sources of the proverbs' (1954: 3). However, he was quite aware of the social and political significance of folklore. He argues that 'folklore is a mirror of a society's thoughts, customs, and beliefs. Because of this, the study of folklore will reveal the current characteristics of a nation, and it provides important historical background information'. He refers to folklore as the source of fine arts and sciences and as the primary tool for the creation of the best literary and artistic masterpieces (ibid.: 1-2).

Amini's nationalist approach and motivation is explained in the introductions to his works. For instance, in *Thirty folktales from Esfahan* he states that folklore and folk narratives 'are treasure houses of our ancestors' thoughts, beliefs and customs that have been formed in the minds of the populace and have been transmitted orally from generation to generation among the illiterate masses. These narratives also reveal people's reaction to their leaders and, as a whole, to the political and social conditions of each period' (1964: III).

It is notable that Amini's works were published with government financial support. In the introduction to *Popular Culture or the Interpretation of Persian Proverbs*, he states how, on the recommendation of the Minister of Education, he signed a contract with the Ministry to publish this collection and his future collections of folk narratives. He submitted his book in 1937, and it was finally published in 1944.

In the next chapter we will see how Hedayat's followers established a nationalist movement led by Anjavi-Shirazi, and played a very significant role in the discourse of anti-modernization, a discourse that sought to explain and identify an authentic Iranian culture, neither against modernity nor opposed to tradition, but a local modernized culture compatible with all aspects of Iranian society.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I posed some questions that I have tried to examine. Two of them are related to the evaluation of the discipline during 1925–41: how far did the newly established modern anthropology develop? What were its strengths and weaknesses? I shall conclude the chapter with an examination of these questions. To assess the state of anthropology in the period studied, the following five points might be considered:

- 1 The major problem of anthropology in the period in question was the complex tension between the forces of tradition and modernity, which remained unresolved, and which the nationalist-modernists failed to address openly. The major task of anthropological enterprises was to contribute to the Iranian identity debates that had intensified since the Constitutional Revolution. It was in this context that both intellectuals and government sought to reinforce European and also ancient Iranian cultures, in sharp contrast to Islamic culture.

As discussed earlier, Forughī and Hedayat believed foreign influences, namely Arab and Islamic cultures, had polluted authentic Iranian culture. The responsibility of folklore studies, in their view, was to reveal to Iranians the foreign elements in order to eliminate them from genuine Iranian culture, and to study ancient culture in order to familiarize ordinary people with their origins. As will be seen, this view continued to influence many Iranian scholars until the 1970s. At the core of this view were ambivalence and the complex, unresolved problem of intellectuals who wanted to mix modernity with ancient culture. Both Islamic and pre-Islamic cultures are traditional and non-modern, and neither could be treated as modern. If Islamic traditions are incompatible with modern needs, as the nationalist-modernist intellectuals believed, the same question could be posed about ancient Iranian culture, because it too is incompatible with European modernity. This complexity created several problems. How could folklore studies support both attitudes? It was not clear what the place of folklore was in the whole structure of nationalist-modernist thought. Therefore, it was not clear what to expect of folklore studies.

Moreover, by what criteria could one distinguish historical Iranian, pre-Islamic cultural elements from those of Islam? In the real world, because of the coexistence of Islamic and national cultural elements over a period of some 1,300 years, these elements had been mixed and intertwined. If the major task of anthropology was to untangle two intertwined and integrated parts of Iranian society, and to destroy one of them, it seemed anthropology in Iran would never develop because this was not an empirical and scientific project, but rather a matter substantially of politics and ideology, without academic potential.

- 2 There was another major problem confronting anthropology in Iran. It is a matter of fact that European culture, in relation to Iran, is foreign and that, since the beginning of the twentieth century, European modernity had threatened the very existence of traditional culture, whether Islamic or ancient Iranian. If anthropology was to contribute to the revitalization of Iranian identity, as the nationalist-modernists expected, it must take a critical position towards the Western culture that had effectively been threatening it. Hedayat's endeavours to criticize the shortcomings of the traditional culture of the masses is justifiable by his desire to enlighten his readers about other ways of life, often disturbing their cultural self-satisfaction, but Hedayat and his intellectual circle never addressed the consequences of the Europeanization and modernization of the society.

However, one of the main tasks for anthropologists is 'criticism at home' (Marcus and Fischer 1999: 138), and Iranian traditions and his proponents needed that self-critical outlook. As I shall discuss in the next chapter, Al-e Ahmad, Anjavi-Shirazi and Shariati established a new perspective towards Iranian traditions, criticizing the influencing of Iranian culture by Islamic, peasant and folk cultures.

- 3 The lack of scientific attention was another weakness of the discipline in the period studied. Tehran University was founded in 1933, but despite the fact that anthropology was receiving public attention, it was not on the curriculum. The establishment of the CIAntH in a non-academic institution, namely the Public Culture Organization in the Ministry of Education, effectively introduced modern anthropology into the country. What happened, indeed, was development of *a general familiarity with the discipline and its application in a political sense*. Most of the practitioners of anthropology were intellectuals who confined their anthropological studies to non-professional folklore collection. Therefore, despite the fact that Iranian anthropology had developed considerably, it remained non-professional. Non-Iranian researchers like Hass, Hanibal and Godard conducted most of the modern research projects during 1925–41.
- 4 Another weakness was the excessive politicization of the discipline. Because of this, immediately after Reza Shah's abdication in 1941, the CIAntH became inactive. Other anthropological activities decreased considerably, and for about two decades the government had no plan to support them. This dependence on government has continued almost until the present.

- 5 Finally, it should be noted that Reza Shah's policies had an indirect but very important effect on Iranian anthropology. 'In his program for unifying Iran and creating a modern, independent, secular, Persian-speaking country, he saw in the nomad tribes symbols of much that he was trying to replace: alien cultures and languages, allegiance to hereditary chiefs, a "primitive" way of life and a mobility that made them inaccessible to administration and the rule of law' (Tapper 1997: 283). The consequences of this attitude and policy on the shaping of modern Iranian anthropology were far reaching. It made studies of the nomadic tribes one of the most sensitive and salient branches of the discipline for more than four decades. As will be seen, during Mohammad Reza Shah's reign, because of the failure of his father Reza Shah's tribal policies, politicians realized that to solve tribal problems they had to expand tribal studies.

4 Anthropology and modernization

Iranian anthropology 1941–79

Introduction

With the Second World War, Reza Shah's despotic reign (1925–41) came to an end and he was succeeded by his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Mohammad Reza Shah's reign (1941–79) was characterized by a return to despotism, after two decades of power consolidation, and 'a fast-paced modernization process' (Boroujerdi 1996: 25). As Farsoun and Mashayekhi (1992: 6) point out, the new Shah's modernization strategy was based on an alliance of the state with foreign capital and domestic comprador bourgeoisies, accelerated capitalist economic development and, finally, the Westernization of culture. The policy was uneven and contradictory. Farsoun and Mashayekhi argue 'unevenness was evident in many areas of society. In the rural areas, the Shah's land and agrarian reform programs effectively undermined the traditional organization of agricultural production without substituting it with a coherent, modern and rational strategy' (ibid.: 7). Westernization of culture was pursued through a policy of cultural modernization begun by Reza Shah. The modernization policy mainly focused on cultural institutions such as education, mass media, leisure and reform of the legal system and family law in order to instil a new, secularized and Westernized order and world view.

The official Pahlavi ideology, as discussed in the previous chapter, was comprised of a selective combination of aspects of Western cultural values and ethos with a romantic view of ancient, pre-Islamic Persian civilization. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi continued his father's cultural policy of celebrating the ancient Persian Empire and civilization. In 1971 he held a set of extravagant celebrations called *Jashn-haye Do Hezar o Pansad Saleh* [Celebration of 2,500 years (of monarchy)]. Although they had little relevance to the concerns of society, these celebrations were intended to remind people of the desirability of the monarchy. The overall political and cultural state of Iranian society in the 1970s, however, showed that the Shah's policies of Westernization and secularization had the opposite effect of that intended; in the end, he failed to establish a secular culture and secular politics.

One of the reasons for this failure was the lack of attention to the democratization of society and the political system. The Shah, like his father, wanted to secularize and modernize society without modernizing the political system.

The regime's intelligence agency, known as SAVAK, silenced all dissenting voices. The regime did not allow any democratic process to develop. On the other hand, thanks to the increase in oil income and rapid growth in higher education and urbanization, the middle class and the intelligentsia expanded – as did the demand for political and social participation. By excluding these social groups from political participation, the state undermined the formation of the institutions of civil society, exacerbated the regime's crisis of legitimacy and, in particular, drove the middle class and intelligentsia towards creation of dissident social political movements and political cultures.

By the mid-1970s, one could identify four political discourses in Pahlavi Iran. The *official monarchist political ideology* claimed legitimacy based on 2,500 years of continuous monarchy. Countering that ideology, various dissident social groups sought alternative ideologies and established different political discourses. The first was *Islamism*, produced by the Islamicists and the clergy, who sought to defend their Islamic identity against Western culture. They presented the West as a 'cultural other' in opposition to contemporary Iranian identity and culture. The second was *liberal nationalism*, deriving its legitimacy from notions of constitutionalism and national independence; this discourse was mainly disseminated by the *Jebhe-ye Melli* (National Front), inspired by the leadership of Dr Mohammad Mosaddeq (1882–1967). These were intellectuals who could not 'easily forgive the Shah for ousting former Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1953, when the first experiment with a democratic, nationalist government had been abruptly terminated' (Boroujerdi 1996: 31). The third was *socialism*, based on Marxist ideology, supported by various Marxist groups, the main one being the Tudeh Party. Their discourse focused on economic justice for the deprived and on anti-imperialist struggle.

Monarchist modernist nationalism was the state ideology and, therefore, government cultural organizations tried to propagate and disseminate it. The anthropological reflection of this ideological discourse can be identified in the activities of a number of academic and research centres, including the Centre for Iranian Anthropology (CIAAnth), the Centre for Iranian Folklore (CIF), the Society for Ancient Iranian Culture and various Tehran University departments such as the Departments of Persian Language and Literature, History, Ancient Iranian Languages and the Department of Anthropology of the Institute for Social Studies and Research (ISSR) as well as many cultural magazines such as *Farhang Iran Zamin* (Iranian Culture), and *Ayandeh* (The Future).

An anthropological reflection of liberal nationalism can be seen in both state and private cultural activities. It is difficult, empirically, to separate liberal nationalism from monarchist nationalism because these ideologies have some shared bases. Both sought a non-religious and secular culture based on pure Iranian culture; therefore, liberal nationalist intellectuals sometimes compromised with the state and agreed to work in state institutions such as the ISSR. However, as shall be discussed later, the liberals had been involved in oppositional political activities and did not accept the Shah's totalitarian policies. Their ultimate goal was not to support monarchic culture and Westernized government policies, though they themselves were pro-modernist.

Adherents of the two other ideologies, namely Islamism and socialism, had ultimate goals and religious perspectives that were radically opposed to each other, but they shared strongly anti-monarchic and anti-Western views and attitudes towards the state. Both groups focused on the masses and their culture, and hence their cultural activities aimed to identify and revitalize native Iranian culture.

Each of the four ideologies, namely, monarchist modernist nationalism, Islamism, liberal nationalism and socialism created an anthropological tendency. The first was a *secular academic anthropology*, which was officially established to achieve two aims: to transfer modern European anthropological knowledge to Iran, and to help educate and provide the skilled manpower for the bureaucratic body of the government. This tendency was established and supported both by the government and the liberal nationalists.

The second tendency grounded itself in *nationalist folkloristics*, focusing on the collection and study of traditional Iranian culture. This tendency was promoted by government research centres as well as by liberal nationalists and socialists; the Islamicists contributed to it much less than the others. Each group of proponents had a different attitude towards folklore and a different political basis for their attention to it, but the objective of the anti-Westernists was to protect and preserve traditional folk culture from modernization and consequent cultural changes, and they took a critical approach towards government development programmes.

Third, there emerged an anthropological tendency to study rural and nomadic tribal communities. This tendency was of two types: (1) studies that were sponsored by the government with the aim of providing basic data and knowledge for implementing socio-economic development programmes and (2) studies that criticized and challenged the destructive social and cultural consequences of modernization programmes.

The fourth tendency included a wide range of anthropological attempts to study ancient Iranian culture, focusing on mythological, archaeological, folkloristic and ethnographic research. These studies, promoted mainly by government research centres and academic departments, met the nationalist priorities of the state.

Considering the differences and similarities between the four political ideologies, their proponents and the anthropological tendencies they promoted, one can categorize them according to their attitudes towards the Pahlavi government and its Westernizing modernization policy. Generally speaking, the nationalist-modernist groups backed the state, and the others opposed it. Accordingly, two broad kinds of discourse took shape: (1) pro-state, modernization (or Westernization) discourses and (2) oppositional anti-modernization (or anti-Westernization) discourses.

Accordingly, this chapter has two main sections. In the first the modernization discourses and their impact on Iranian academic anthropology, with particular reference to the Anthropology Department of Tehran University, Persian anthropological texts, the educational curriculum, and academic ethnographic research,

focusing on Nader Afshar Naderi's ethnographies, and the ISSR of Tehran University are examined. In this section, nationalist anthropological studies of Ancient Iranian Culture, mainly the studies of mythology and folklore by the CIAnth, and Zoroastrian and Pahlavi studies are also reviewed. It should be mentioned that because of their relative insignificance politically and ideologically, a group of historians that worked on the history of Iranian national folk culture has not been discussed. This group mainly focused on issues such as Iranian ancient clothes (Ziyapur 1964), ancient Iranian narratives (Yarshater 1958), ancient festivals (Kurosh-Deylamani 1958) and language (Zoka 1958). The second section deals with anti-modernization discourses, focusing on the critical Islamic discourse of Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati, and the secular nationalistic anti-modernization discourses of Samad Behrangi, Gholam Hossein Sa'edi, Abolqasem Anjavi-Shirazi and Sobhi Mohtadi.

Anthropology and modernization

As stated earlier, the most significant professional development of anthropology in Mohammad Reza Shah's period was the institutionalization of the discipline in academic as well as non-academic centres. Tehran University established a Department of Anthropology, the Ministry of Culture and Art expanded the CIAnth, and the National Radio and Television founded the CIF. I should add to this many non-government institutes and the 'spectacular growth of European anthropological studies of Iran' (Spooner 1987: 107).

I begin with academic anthropology, which developed and expanded dramatically in this period. My concern is to document that development and to explore why and how it happened. Was it a *natural* consequence of the development and change of Iranian education and society, as occurred in the West? Was it *implanted* by Westerners, as happened in India and other Middle Eastern countries? Was it *imported* by native, Western-trained academicians, as happened in South American countries? And after all, was it *relevant* to Iranian society or was it just an *intellectual luxury*, a sign of modernity?

I shall focus on four dimensions: (1) the Western origins of modern anthropology and their continuing impact on the discipline, (2) government as the policy maker in higher education, (3) academics as practitioners of the discipline and (4) social and political conditions as context.

Anthropology was imported into Iran from the West, as it was in South American countries (Ortiz 1982: 97). Initially, it was formed by a group of French anthropologists and French-educated Iranian sociologists. For the next 50 years, Iranian anthropology was under the influence of American and European social science discourses. The Westerners' impact and influence on Iranian anthropology has been mediated through the exchange of scholars, the use of American and European textbooks, the domination of Western theoretical interests such as structural functionalism and evolutionism, and more importantly through anthropological studies of Iranian rural and nomadic populations.

The period under discussion is marked by modernization, based on dependent capitalism. Two pressing issues appeared when modernization was initiated and intensified. First, there was a need to acquire enough knowledge of society to implement reform measures. Second, the reorganization of the educational system would bring about important changes, particularly at the university level. While general educational reform would bring literacy to the people, at a higher educational level, it would mean the development of skilled personnel who could carry out the changes to be implemented.

The introduction as an academic discipline of anthropology, which was a modern branch of knowledge, was part of the modernization process carried out under Mohammad Reza Shah. At the same time, the introduction was expected to facilitate the government implement its modernization plans.

As I have previously demonstrated, Reza Shah began to modernize Iran according to a Western model of development. In order to transfer modern knowledge to Iran, he first established modern educational institutions such as Tehran University, and then he began to dispatch large numbers of students abroad to learn academic disciplines. When Mohammad Reza Shah succeeded to the throne, the Western-educated elite accelerated the modernization of the country. Many of the Western-educated intelligentsia were practitioners of social sciences, and they gradually began to import social science practices and ideas from the West. In order to implement the Land Reform programme in the rural areas (from 1962) and also to restrain the movement of (sedentarization of) the nomadic population, the government urgently needed relevant practical information. Anthropological studies of those populations were supported in the hope of meeting those requirements.

The roles of academics in this process might be examined in light of their modernist, secularist, nationalist and technocratic nature and ideology. They wanted to establish and develop modern Western anthropology, and to apply it to the study of social and cultural problems. On the other hand, they intended to indigenize the discipline as well. 'Indigenization' of the discipline was one of the main preoccupations of Iranian social scientists. This feature stemmed from the nationalist ideology of figures such as Ehsan Naraqi and Gholamhossein Sediqi. Others began to disseminate a Marxist anthropology, the intellectual interest as well as political concern of a group of anthropologists such as Hossein Adibi and Ali Akbar Torabi. On the whole, religious concerns had no place among academic anthropologists. This stemmed from the secularist nature of modern Iranian academics more than the secularist nature of anthropology *per se*.

The final parameter is the social context of the discipline, that is, Iranian society. During the period in question, Iran was passing through a transitory stage from a relatively traditional to a modern Western-oriented society. The intellectuals belonged to two camps – those who favoured the traditional side of the society, and those who backed modernity. The government also had a contradictory policy: on the one hand, it supported urbanization, industrialization, modern education and bureaucratization, but on the other hand it did not support political development and civil society. As will be seen, although government devoted

a considerable budget to developing anthropological research and to institutionalizing the social sciences, it created several political constraints on the development of 'critical' and 'objective' academic research.

To elaborate this discussion, I will map out the trajectory of the discipline from 1958 to 1979. First, I will outline the genesis of the discipline, then I will trace the influence of Western elements and, finally, I shall analyse the indigenization of anthropology.

History of academic anthropology in Iran

Professor Wilhelm Hass, the German anthropologist discussed in Chapter 2, taught the first social science course in Iran during 1935–6 at the Tehran Teachers' Training College (TTC) (Daneshsaray Ali Tarbiyat Mo'allemin). The course, titled *Kār-e Elmol-Ejtema* (The Task of Science of Society), dealt with all social sciences including anthropology. Its purpose was to teach the application of social science in education.

In 1938, Dr Gholamhossein Sediqi, the first Iranian sociologist, received his doctorate from the Sorbonne University. After graduating, he returned to Iran and taught the sociology course at the TTC. Thus, an Iranian sociologist established the first chair of sociology in 1939. In 1942–3, this course was extended from 1 hour to 3 hours a week (Tavassoli 1976: 15).

In 1942, Yahya Mahdavi, Professor of Philosophy at Tehran University, published the first Persian sociology book *Jamehshenasi ya Elmol-ejtema: Moqaddamat va Osul* (Sociology or the Science of Society: Fundamentals and Principles). The book served as the only Persian language textbook available in social science for about 20 years, until Amirhossein Aryan-pour published his popular adaptation of Ogborn and Nimkoff's *Background To Sociology*, entitled *Zamineh Jame'eh-shenasi* (1970) (Enayat 1974: 7). As a leading Iranian sociologist and former Director of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Jamshid Behnam, mentioned, after Mahdavi's book 'social science was recognized in Iran as an independent field of knowledge from philosophy and humanities' (1997: 177). Mahdavi approached social science from the strict positivistic view that was dominant in European philosophy at the time and stressed *sharayeh ruh-e 'elmi* (the features of scientific spirit), relying on Durkheimian sociology. Mahdavi continued his mission to disseminate positivistic social science through translation of a range of French philosophical and epistemological books, and he succeeded in instilling positivism in Iranian social sciences.

In 1956, Sediqi founded the first sociology course at Tehran (Mohseni 1999: 13). A year later, in 1957, Sediqi, accompanied by Ehsan Naraq, Jamshid Behnam and Shapour Rasekh (the first group of French-trained Iranian sociologists) established the ISSR attached to the Faculty of Social Sciences of Tehran University. Sediqi had been Dr Mosadeq's Interior Minister and was a pro-nationalist intellectual with great charismatic power and influence. To support the Institute, Sediqi, as a great and outstanding nationalist political figure became honorary Head of the Department of Sociology and, at the same time, the first Director of the Institute. In 1968, the Faculty of Social Sciences took shape as an independent

school and began to offer distinct courses in anthropology, sociology, demography and cooperative studies. The Institute moved from the Faculty of Letters to the newly established Faculty of Social Sciences. It soon became the leading organization in Iran for teaching and research in the social sciences, including anthropology. The rapid development of the Institute was partly due to the fact that from the beginning it had adopted a deliberate policy of giving priority to applied, sponsored research connected with government development schemes and partly due to the development of Western social sciences and the interest of Western social scientists in studying the Middle East, including Iran.

The initial inspiration for the Institute was the French National Institution of Demographic Studies, established and headed by Alfred Sauvy, where Naraqı studied as a researcher for two years (Ayati 2000b: 202). As Naraqı stated, 'I was studying in French in the Institute. Dr Eqbal, the former president of Tehran University came there and I proposed to him to set up a social science centre in Tehran University. He accepted and later I wrote a proposal based on the French National Institution of Demographic Studies' (ibid.). However, it is important to note that the necessity for a social research institution had been felt before Naraqı's proposal, and Tehran University intended to set one up. According to Dr Mostafa Mesbahzadeh, law professor of Tehran University,

In 1956, I was planning a proposal for the formation of a social science research centre in the Faculty of Law. To do so, I travelled to some foreign countries to find out about modern research methods, teaching systems and organizational issues. Upon returning to Iran, I provided a proposal and gave it to Dr Eqbal, and he accepted it. But this time Eqbal during a trip to France met Naraqı and asked his opinion about the issue, and Naraqı gave his proposal to him. Then Naraqı's suggestion attracted more attention.

(Ibid.)

The Institute for Social Studies and Research (ISSR)

In October 1957, the ISSR was founded at the Faculty of Letters and Humanities of Tehran University. As Naraqı states, the aims of the Institute were to understand the changes overtaking traditional Iranian society as a result of modernization, Westernization and industrialization in order to control these changes and to orientate them in the desired direction. In Naraqı's words, the Institute responded to two sets of needs: first, the intellectual needs of a society going through significant changes and wishing to know its place in the world through comparing itself with other societies; second, practical needs involving the identification of applicable principles to guide government authorities in both the formulation and the implementation of new policies (Naraqı 1967: 108). To achieve these goals, the Institute's constitution allowed pursuit of four activities: (1) teaching, (2) research, (3) publication and documentation and (4) consultancy. It consisted of four departments: sociology, demography, anthropology and rural studies.

Rural and nomadic tribal anthropological studies were central to the Institute. In 1958, just a year after its establishment, the Institute formed a department for rural and tribal studies and dispatched many groups of students and researchers to rural areas. Naraqī became the Director of the Institute and Pierre Bessaiguet, a French anthropologist, headed the Department of Anthropology. The department's aims were to

- 1 collect anthropological data on Iranian rural and nomadic tribal communities;
- 2 apply these data to ameliorate the life conditions of the population studied;
- 3 use these data for assessing the impact of implementing development programmes;
- 4 establish anthropology as an academic discipline and develop new theories and concepts;
- 5 teach anthropology and
- 6 cooperate with international research centres.

(Naraqī 2000b: 277)

The Department had 3 foreign and 8 Iranian staff. They included Nader Afshar-Naderi, a French-educated anthropologist; Parviz Varjavand, a French-educated archaeological anthropologist and member of the National Front; Hossein Adibi, an American-educated sociologist; Pierre Bessaiguet, a Dutch anthropologist trained at the Cornelis Op't Land; Javad Safinezhad, an Iranian-educated human geographer and Esma'īl Ajami and Houshang Keshavarz, Iranian ethnographers. Keshavarz and Ajami carried out the first anthropological research in Iran under the supervision of Varjavand among the Bamedi tribe in 1967. The Institute published the results of this study in 1967 (Varjavand *et al.* 1967). The Institute's anthropological studies of nomad tribes, as Enayat stated, 'have opened up prospects for a systematic study of this important but neglected aspect of Iranian society' (1974: 187).

After its inception, the Institute began to offer bachelor's and master's degrees in social sciences. In 1958, 1959 and 1960, 400, 790 and 1,200 students respectively registered in the Institute for social sciences master's degrees (ISSR 1960). Many of the first group of students was political activists who were members of *Jebh-e Melli* (National Front) and *Hezb-e Tudeh* (Tudeh Party) who wanted to complete their social knowledge (J. Behnam 1997: 179). Alongside sociology courses, the students had to pass courses in anthropology. In the academic year 1965–6 three anthropology courses were offered (Shahshahani 1986: 76). Naraqī conducted an introductory anthropology course titled *mardomshenasi* in which he discussed three topics: the relation between anthropology and other social sciences; anthropological theories, research methods and ethnography and the application of anthropology in Iran.

Pierre Bessaiguet (1914–89),³³ a leading French economic anthropologist, taught ethnography and anthropological research methods. His lectures were translated into Persian by Ali-Mohammad Kardan, a Professor of Tehran University, published by the Institute, and became the first Persian anthropological

methodology coursebook. Bessaiguet also carried out several studies among Iranian nomads, notably the Shahsevan (1960, 1961c). His interpreter for this research was Nader Afshar-Naderi, who had a BSc in agricultural engineering from the American University in Beirut and an MA in philosophy from Tehran University. During the course of this work, Bessaiguet trained Afshar-Naderi in anthropology; later Afshar-Naderi went to Paris and graduated in anthropology from the Sorbonne to become the first Iranian professional anthropologist. Bessaiguet's other role, however, was to provide data to French companies in order to help them implement projects in Iran (Ayati 2000a: 395). For instance, in 1960, he did a study of the province of Gilan for Sogreah Cotha, a French irrigation company (Bessaiguet 1961b).

A. Anthonovsky,³⁴ from Yale University, taught cultural anthropology. His course covered: the analysis of culture, similarities and differences between cultures, the social institutions of different societies, acculturation and cultural contacts between cultures, cultural change and public education (Ayati 2000b: 213).

The Institute conducted research mainly in four different fields: demography, urban sociology, rural life and the nomad tribes. In all these fields, ethnography was the predominant research method used. The preference for ethnography over survey and quantitative methods was rooted in the experience of the Institute's researchers. As Naraqı states, 'They believed students might learn research methods through doing fieldwork among different people of rural, nomadic, and urban areas, and not merely by reading western textbooks and [taking part in] theoretical discussions' (2000a: 133). Furthermore, 'research results showed that [the use of] quantitative surveys and questionnaires might not be valid in Iran because many people were illiterate, and also because there was a big political gap between the people and the government; hence the people did not trust researchers enough to answer honestly the questions they asked' (ibid.: 149). As a result, the authorities of the Institute came to the conclusion that they must use anthropological and ethnographic methods, meaning participant observation (ibid.: 153).

The significance of anthropological research stemmed from two other important issues. First, the government urgently needed basic information on the rural and nomadic tribal populations. In particular, the government's policy of sedentarization of pastoral nomads needed much research. Second, as Shahshahani explained, 'pastoral nomadic tribes were considered to be the "primitive" people of Iran and thus fit as subjects of research for anthropology', providing an exceptional opportunity for advancing social science in the country (1986: 76). Because of this, almost all graduate theses were on topics related to rural and nomadic populations and were based on ethnographic methods.

In 1958, when the Faculty of Social Sciences was formed, the Department of Anthropology began to offer BA and MA degrees in anthropology. At that time, anthropology students needed to pass three groups of courses. One group was common social science courses such as introductory sociology, introductory economics and so on; the second group was common humanities courses such as Persian literature, English language; and the third group was anthropology

courses. The last consisted of introductory anthropology, cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, economic anthropology, political anthropology, anthropology of religion, irrigation systems, tribal anthropology and kinship anthropology. This curriculum was based on that of the Sorbonne Anthropology Department at that time (Ruholamini interview 2000).

Ruholamini, Professor of Anthropology at Tehran University said:

Although, since its inception, the Institute had an anthropology department and offered anthropological courses, the discipline was virtually unknown and only few people were familiar with it. Thus, there was a need for those teaching anthropology to introduce the discipline. Furthermore, many students and some research centres were studying rural and nomadic areas, and they urgently needed to know ethnographic research methods. Since foreigners supervised all the anthropological studies of the Institute, the Faculty came to the conclusion that it was necessary to train Iranian anthropologists.

The other significant point is that the national tradition of the country was breaking down under the wheels of modernization, industrialization and urbanization, and anthropology was a cultural necessity to record ethnic and national customs, beliefs, and folklore. Iran was accepting modern social and cultural elements at the expense of its own culture. We needed to explore some ways for adjusting Iranian traditional culture with modernity; otherwise, we would totally lose our identity.

At that time, there was little experience in teaching the discipline, and we had to borrow European curricula and textbooks. Accordingly, I began to write an introductory book based on French anthropological texts; it was intended to introduce basic anthropological concepts, history, theories, methods, different anthropological domains such as archaeology, linguistics, folklore, and a brief introduction to the main figures in anthropology, chiefly the classics. However, I did my best to use a language comprehensible to Iranians. For example, I used Persian poems where it was relevant, and I chose concepts that were relevant to Iranian society. The book begins with the idea that, before modern western anthropology, there existed a type of anthropological knowledge among Muslims and in Persian literature. However, anthropology is a new form of knowledge, and the first generation of Iranian anthropologists felt it to be their national task to transfer this new discipline from Europe to Iran. I believe that any society can constitute its own anthropological knowledge, but it does not mean we must disregard modern advances in anthropology in the west.

(Interview by author 2000)

The fall of the Institute

After 1970, the Iranian government began to establish a set of new research centres within the government apparatus outside the universities. This trend continued and accelerated after the 1979 Revolution, so that now most of the active

and effective research institutions are outside the universities. The government's decision to establish other social research centres was due to several issues. First, the bureaucratic body of the government had been augmented and it was felt that the ISSR was not capable of meeting all government needs. Second, the Institute was relatively intellectual oriented and it had had a more or less critical approach towards the modernization policy of the government since 1970. Because of this, the government was not happy with the Institute (Zahedi-Mazandarani 1996: 169). Furthermore, as the authorities of the Institute mentioned, many of its projects did not meet the policy-makers' expectations (Amani 2000; Naraqı 2000a: 31). So the government began to establish new centres, oriented towards applied research and government needs.

The first government centre for applied social research was established in 1968 by the Ministry of Cooperatives (*Tā'avon*) and Rural Affairs specifically to conduct rural studies. Organizationally more vigorous and financially better endowed than the ISSR, the Research Centre of the Ministry of Cooperatives attracted such prominent researchers as Afshar-Naderi, Khosrow Khosravi and Mahdi Amani, and carried out many research projects for the Ministry on the consequences of land reform as well as evaluations of the activities of cooperatives and agricultural companies in the rural areas. By 1979, the Centre had carried out 126 projects, including 26 on agricultural loans and the problems of cooperative units, 45 on the state of agricultural companies (*sherkat-haye zera'i*), and 10 on the consequences of the land reform programme.

In 1971, the Organization for Tribal and Rural Affairs established a research centre for studies of the nomad tribes. This was a centre for applied socio-economic research to meet government needs for implementing development programmes in the nomadic population. The research reports of this centre focused on administrative problems relating to sedentarization plans and development programmes, and mainly concerned matters of education, health care and nomadic economics.

An outstanding Research Centre of the Plan and Budget Organization (RCPBO) was established in the 1960s. This centre, the RCPBO, eventually replaced the ISSR, and most of the ISSR researchers, such as Firuz Toufiq, Shapour Rasekh, Baqer Parham, Farokh Aminzadeh and Ahmad Ashraf, became affiliated with it.

The establishment of new research centres within administrative bodies weakened academic centres such as the ISSR, Tabriz University's Institute of Social Research and the Institute of Social Research of Reza Shah University in Mazandaran Province. After 1970, the government reduced its financial support for the ISSR which consequently lost its central and unique role in social research, particularly in rural and nomadic studies, although it remained active until the advent of the Islamic Revolution of 1979; even after the Revolution, it was not closed.

The ISSR's fall and its replacement by non-academic research centres marked significant changes in Iranian social sciences. The move of Iranian social research from academic to administrative institutions brought about a dramatic shift in research methodology. Although the ISSR was a government institute and

worked according to a government agenda, its position within an academic structure endowed its researchers with a sense of independence and allowed some space for academic concerns. After moving out of academia and into the government's administrative structure, social researchers had to satisfy bureaucratic needs and requirements, and there was little or no scientific concern. One of the clearer consequences of that move was a major shift from qualitative to quantitative methods. Because government organizations usually, if not always, need mass statistical data for applied purposes, quantitative and statistical methods are considered better able to meet their needs than qualitative methods. Therefore, after 1971, with the expansion of government research centres, ethnography and qualitative methods gradually lost their significance.

However, during this period all Iranian social research centres suffered from significant weaknesses and shortcomings, which are described here particularly with reference to the ISSR, the leading centre.

(1) *Lack of freedom* There is a strong correlation between the development and advancement of social sciences and freedom in society: that is, the lesser the freedom, the lesser the development. The Shah's state was a totalitarian dictatorship and did not tolerate any criticism. Universities and research centres were not allowed to stray far from what the state accepted. The state controlled and restricted social science scholars in many ways. The authorities of the Institute and the Faculty of Social Sciences complained that, despite the fact that the government financially supported the Institute, actually 'the final reports of the Institute were rarely read and applied by the state, and mostly they were kept in the archives' (J. Behnam 1997: 182). They also maintained that there was no political freedom because, first, the Institute was not allowed to study political issues that would harm the state. Second, it was so difficult and risky to bring a critical approach to the issues studied that most reports were descriptive. For a long time the political elites were suspicious about the Institute; as Naraqı writes, 'We had to apply a simple language to persuade them and attract their trust to get the budget that we needed' (Naraqı 2000a: 135). 'Simple language', as most reports show, meant one that was uncritical and pleasing for the authorities and the state. This 'simple language' never turned into anything more sophisticated.

Regarding the lack of freedom and the government's point of view on anthropological research, Safinezhad states:

Once the Minister of Interior Affairs invited Dr Afshar-Naderi and me to his office to speak about tribal studies. His main message for us was that Iran is rapidly modernizing and progressing, and the state expects all ethnographers and scholars to contribute to the modernization plans. The Minister said, 'Our country must turn into a modernised industrial society. This is the final decision of His Majesty Mohammad Reza Shah. But there is a big barrier in our path to the Great Civilization (*tamaddon-e bozorg*, the Shah's slogan), and that is the nomad tribes (*Ashayer*). We in the ministry expect you to show us how the country can get rid of these populations. Therefore, your studies at the ISSR should lead scientifically to the conclusion that the nomad tribes

must change their life and abandon their primitive culture and social structure. You should know that the Shah is ashamed of the nomad tribes. He wonders why that kind of people is living in such a modern, developed and prosperous country as Iran’.

(Interview by author of Safinezhad
in Tehran 17 July 2000)

Safinezhad insisted that not only was there no real interest in the study of the nomad tribes, but also that there were many political barriers. One of the obstacles was a restriction on publishing research accounts. As he said, ‘In 1959, after a group of the Institute’s researchers and I prepared a comprehensive report about two cooperative agricultural organizations in Qasr-e Shirin (a city in western Iran) and Golpayegan (a city in central Iran), we were informed that the publication of those reports was banned’ (Safinezhad interview 2000).

Mahdi Amani, another outstanding scholar of the Institute, confirmed Safinezhad’s words on the political restrictions and maintained:

We researchers of the Institute knew in advance that, politically, we could not extend our analysis to any aspect that the scientific logic of research required. Therefore, sometimes, when the research problem under study was very basic and scientifically significant, we examined the issue in a way that was uncritical and even irrelevant to social science. Hence it is not surprising that most of the Institute’s research reports were descriptive.

(Amani 2000: 180)

(2) *Lack of a qualitative approach* As explained above, after 1970 ethnography and qualitative methods lost their significance in the social sciences in Iranian universities. This was due to two major factors. The first was the establishment of new research centres within government organizations. The second was the growing influence of the American social science paradigm and the decreasing influence of French social science. Most of the first generation of Iranian social scientists were French educated, and, as Wagner (2001) points out, the French social science tradition is more philosophical and quality oriented than American social science. After 1970, the second generation of Iranian social scientists entered the scene. This group was mainly American educated and tried to disseminate and introduce American empiricism and quantitative methods.

Hence, in the 1970s, when the American paradigm of social science replaced the French paradigm, one could easily demonstrate how less attention was paid to qualitative research methods; researchers were more interested in producing quantitative data for administrative applications. Jamshid Behnam, who was Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Tehran University at that time, argues that in the 1970s the ISSR’s research activities consisted mainly of surveys and data collection; teaching of and research using qualitative ideas and methods were forgotten. In his view, there existed a sort of anti-theory, anti-philosophy trend in the Faculty. He maintains, ‘I accept that the philosophical, theoretical and historical aspects of our

studies were poor. It was partly due to the penetration of American social science and partly due to the government's stress on collecting applied data, not deep theoretical analysis' (J. Behnam interview 2001).

(3) *Lack of basic research* The lack of attention to basic research was one of the worst weaknesses of the Institute. The main strength of the ISSR's research was an active concern with the real problems and concrete aspects of the social structure of modern Iran. But this strength also reveals the Institute's main weakness, which was its neglect of basic research and theoretical issues. The analytical quality of most of the Institute's reports was poor, and the contribution of the Institute to basic research in social sciences was negligible (Enayat 1974: 12; J. Behnam 1997: 182). In fact, social researchers could not usually follow their personal intellectual and academic concerns. Therefore, after more than two decades, the ISSR and other institutes left behind nothing but a mass of raw and useless statistical data.

(4) *Lack of a critical approach* Development-oriented research is based on an underlying assumption that development embodies an unlimited good. This is not always true. The task of the anthropologist is to approach every development effort in a critical manner and to weigh its potential benefits against its social costs on a balance. As Madan remarks, 'Every act of development is also an act of destruction. It can result in the over-dependence of local communities and minimize their self-sufficiency by creating new needs of pseudo-utility values' (1982: 14). Few ethnographic studies of the nomad tribes at the time clarified and focused on this devastating aspect of the government's policy of modernization and its so-called development programme because the government funded those studies in order to justify and implement its political and economic plan rather than to help the population studied. Tapper, arguing that the government had officially denied the very existence of the tribes and put them under strong economic and political pressures, maintained that 'by the mid-1970s the tribal political threat was held to have disappeared; tribal cultures were now "discovered", particularly by the Empress Farah, as respectable objects of academic and touristic interest' (1983: 29).

Amani says the authorities did not welcome accurate and critical scientific research. In fact, they expected the Institute's studies to confirm, not to criticize, the government's development projects, otherwise they did not fund the Institute's project, or never released the results (2000: 190). In the few cases where the Institute did offer a critical approach and assessment of government projects, they were blocked. For example, Amani tells how the Institute did a study to assess how petroleum projects would socially and economically affect the petroleum regions in Khuzestan. The project's results were critical, and the relevant authorities blocked them and did not allow the research results to become public (*ibid.*: 142). Amani says that, if the Institute wanted to criticize government programmes, the authorities were usually more inclined to contract independent researchers instead of the ISSR (*ibid.*: 144). He maintains that the Institute highlighted the harmful consequences of the land reform programme but the authorities paid no attention and became more and more indifferent to Institute research projects (*ibid.*: 193).

Anthropology and the West

Social sciences in the non-Western countries had passed through a rather different trajectory from those of the West. Whereas in Europe social science was rooted in political, industrial and scientific revolutions (Wagner 2001), in non-European countries it stemmed from 'colonialism', 'modernization' and occidentalization.

In India and in Asia in general, social sciences were implanted by the west, and they have grown in a transitional system of asymmetry and dependence. The condition in these countries did not meet Durkheim's stated conditions for the birth of sociology: the decline of traditionalism and the emergence of faith in reason, in what he called 'science'. Social sciences in those countries were implanted or imposed.

(Gareau 1991: 294)

However, unlike in India and Africa, countries such as Iran did not receive social sciences as a by-product of colonialism, though these disciplines, as their historical genesis and development show, were 'imported' into the country by Europe-educated academics.

Western anthropologists' attention to Asia was to some extent the consequence of developments in anthropology. The 1970s were the years when European and American anthropology was growing up, and Western anthropologists focused intensively on studying the Middle East. Having journeyed to Middle Eastern countries, Western anthropologists began to establish anthropological departments in these societies (Antoun *et al.* 1976: 137–87). As Antoun reported, by 1973, Egypt, Kuwait, Iraq and Lebanon had established anthropology chairs (*ibid.*: 173). In Egypt, for example, the French school of anthropology was and still is dominant. The French school's orientation was towards philosophy on the one hand and social problems on the other. Another feature of Egyptian anthropology is that it 'was marked from the beginning by intensive field research. Since the hypotheses were largely derived from the writings of French sociologists there was considerable continuity between the earlier sociological tradition and the new fieldwork-oriented tradition. Thus anthropological studies have never been simple ethnographic or descriptive accounts of the institutions or communities studied' (*ibid.*).

The mark of Western paradigms of social science on Iranian anthropology has been evident in several respects. As the above account of the history of the discipline shows, the French paradigm was manifestly dominant in the first stage of the formation of Iranian anthropology. The influence of French anthropology can be seen in several ways. First, virtually all the first-generation Iranian anthropologists graduated in France. Second, French anthropologists and sociologists such as Paul Vieille³⁵ (the first foreign anthropologist invited to the ISSR in 1958), Pierre Bessaignet,³⁶ Jean Berg and Henry Loftier were mentors of Iranian anthropologists. Iranian anthropologists were thus deeply and directly influenced by the

French social science paradigm. For instance, J. Behnam states, 'In the 1970s, the Institute's researchers became familiar with Georges Balandier, a leading French anthropologist, and his theory on the dynamic relation between traditional society and modern society. We researchers of the Institute tried to follow his theory and gave up the conflict theory that was dominant among us' (1997: 191).

Naraqi too, as Director of the Institute, explained that, although the ultimate goal of the Institute was to find a formula for establishing a native paradigm of social science, the Institute had no choice but to use European experience, so 'we invited a group of European researchers to Iran... We translated what they were teaching in Western universities' (2000a: 133).

French anthropologists had a great impact on Iranian folklore studies as well. In 1972, the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris sent a group of anthropologists to Iran based on a contract with the CIAnth. Christian Bromberger and Jean-Pierre Digard set up an ethnographic mapping project that is still the main anthropological activity of the Centre (Mirshokra'i interview 2000). As I shall elaborate in Chapter 6, the ethnographic mapping project has been revived in recent years and it has become the Centre's major project.

Many other foreign scholars came to the Institute and put their marks on its activities. These include Van Leer from Britain, Martin Court, economist from Oxford University and Ford Company consultant in Iran who taught principles of social and economic programmes, and Sardar Singh from India (Ayati 2000b: 213).

Western curriculum

The other area where the influence of Western anthropology is evident is in teaching the discipline. The language and concepts, as well as methods and theories, of Iranian anthropology have always been based on Western anthropological discourses. Iranian anthropologists have taught their students the analytical categories of Western anthropology, such as kinship systems, social organization and material culture, as well as general theoretical orientations such as evolutionism, structuralism, functionalism, diffusionism, culture and personality. Generally speaking, two Western schools dominated Iranian anthropology. Functionalism was followed in applied research, filled all the social science coursebooks, and is still the main theoretical approach in Iranian social sciences. Marxism was also influential until it was legally banned following the Islamic Revolution.

Two of the most influential anthropological coursebooks of the time were Marxist. Ali Akbar Torabi, Professor of Sociology at Tabriz University in 1960, wrote the first Persian introduction to anthropology, *Mabani Mardomshenasi* (Principles of Anthropology, 1970). Torabi never participated in Marxist political groups but tried to introduce Marxism as a scientific school rather than a political ideology.

The other Marxist anthropological text was *Zamīneh Ensanshenasi* (An Introduction to Anthropology, 1974) by Hossein Adibi, who was Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences in the last years before the 1979 Revolution, but was ousted from

university after the Revolution. The book was the most outstanding and advanced Persian anthropological text of the 1970s. It consists of nine chapters: chapter 1 discusses the history and development of anthropology from a thoroughly Western perspective, ignoring Iranian intellectual history. Based on the American anthropological school, Adibi discusses anthropology as the scientific study of culture and human beings, consisting of five major branches: physical anthropology, archaeology, cultural anthropology, linguistics and social anthropology. Chapter 2 is devoted to the examination of the origin of human beings and the universe. Adibi adopts an evolutionist approach without a critical evaluation, and confirms the biological evolution of human beings. Other chapters discuss Western anthropological concepts and schools such as acculturation, totemism, structuralism and functionalism. The last chapter discusses the origin of religion, based on Marxist literature, arguing that 'from a scientific standpoint religion is an infra-structural phenomenon created through the evolution of mode of production and economy' (Adibi 1974: 276).

Centre in periphery

Dependency theory provides another perspective on the impact of the West on anthropology in Iran – [what Galtung (1980) describes the role of native social scientists as 'the centre in periphery']. In this view, social science is a modern means of making underdeveloped countries (the peripheries) more dependent on developed countries (the centre). Galtung argues that 'it is incorrect to see the "clients" of the centre as a traditional bourgeoisie – they are often political elites trained in the centre and even intellectuals whose souls remain in the metropolitan university at which they got their degrees' (1980: 125).

The centre in the periphery is usually identified as the local elites in a relationship of dependent capitalism linked to the centre, and their interests are in a general sense those of the centre. Alatas (1974: 691) has explained this view in relation to colonialism. He argues that the total experience of colonialism in Asia formed what he called the 'captive mind'. It is possessed by university-trained Asian social scientists, educated locally or abroad, who have accepted uncritically the thought patterns of the West.

Social science practitioners, in this view, tend to become the most prestigious social scientists in the local country, their status stemming from the general esteem in which the centre is held and/or from the fact that they have attended a developed central university. 'The local needs that require satisfaction from the centre are those of the elites and not those of the masses. In fact, the centre in the periphery enjoys a standard of living and a pattern of consumption very much like that in the centre. The communication of the clients tends to be with the centre, neither with fellow national groups nor with national groups in other peripheral countries... They tend to be cut off from their fellow nationalists or other political activists. Thus, for example Indian social scientists did not play a large role in the decolonization movement, and in Iran a large number of practitioners of social sciences had been politically inactive' (Gareau 1991: 62–3).

In another chapter Gareau argues that social scientists in the periphery 'have mainly played their roles as "technobureaucrats," who produce "technical" information for government or business. They could regard what they have learned as being scientific truth, or they might subscribe to interpretive sociology or to its counterpart in other disciplines' (ibid.: 304).

In the 1950s, two sets of assumptions related to 'secularization' and 'modernization' in the West were commonly accepted by Iranian academic social scientists, though many intellectuals outside the universities did not subscribe to these ideas. Therefore, the general result of most Iranian social research confirmed the dominant trends of urbanization, industrialization, secularization and Westernization without a critical assessment of government policies (Azad-Armaki 1999: 30). However, this is said to be a general feature of Third World social science. In this regard Ritzer (1998) argues that modern social science in underdeveloped countries has been a language for transferring modern Western thought and a medium for establishing the idea of the universality of Western civilization in non-Western societies. As we shall see, despite the strong anti-Western ideology of the Revolution, anthropology in Iran is still peripheral.

The impact of Western anthropological studies

The last perspective for assessing the impact of Western thought on Iranian anthropology is through Western anthropological studies of Iran. The first consideration here is that in their studies of Iran, Western anthropologists generally did not intend to respond to the needs of Iranian society and culture or to Iranian intellectual discourses. Spooner points this out in his review of anthropological studies of Iran: 'The major purpose of most anthropologists working in Iran is to contribute not so much to Iranian studies as to a largely philosophical discourse concerning human experience and human nature in general' (1987: 112).

However, these studies had a direct impact on Iranian anthropological researchers in several respects. First, until the 1950s, when Europeans began to study Iranian nomad tribes, no Iranian scholar had paid attention to them (Safinezhad 1997; Ayati 2000a: 402). In the first national census (1335/1956) the nomad tribes were totally excluded and ignored. By then, however, there had been some unmethodical and unsystematic historical and geographical studies, such as the Tudeh Party's studies in the 1940s, or Taqi Bahrami's *Da'eratolma'aref Falahati-ye Farhang Rusta'i* (Encyclopaedia of Iranian Peasant Culture) published in 1936 (Zahedi-Mazandarani 1996: 158). Also, some tribesmen had begun to write about their cultures and traditions. The most popular and significant of this group of studies was Mohammad Bahmanbeigi's work *'Orf va Adat dar Ashayer-e Fars* (Custom and Habits among the Tribes of Fars, 1945).³⁷

It was a modern European intellectual concern to focus on tribes as a subject, and when Iranians became familiar with modern anthropology they followed Western anthropologists and began to look at the nomad tribes as an independent subject of study. The first Iranian anthropological study of a nomad tribe was done by a group of young ethnographers including Aziz Rakhsh-Khorshid,

Houshang Keshavarz, Hasanali Golesorkhi, Mostafa Rahimi and Parviz Varjavand in 1965, among the Bamedî, a small tribe of the Bakhtiari.³⁸ Rakhsh-Khorshid has explained why the Bamedî were chosen for their study: 'Just because many years ago Cooper made a film, *Grass*, of this tribe and published an account of his trip to the Bamedî,³⁹ we decided to focus on this population, because we wanted, as the first experience, just to visit a tribal group and at that time there was no other measure for us to consider' (1992: 52).

Safinezhad explained that until 1966 there was no separate department of tribal studies in the ISSR and the Anthropology Department's task was limited to rural studies.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, foreign anthropologists were doing urban fieldwork under the auspices of the Institute. In that year, Afshar-Naderi established an independent department for tribal studies, and the Plan and Budget Organization financed a grand project entitled 'The Future of the Kohkiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Tribes', which furnished the group with facilities for tribal studies. Safinezhad states 'Throughout 1966 and 1967 several Iranian ethnographers went to different tribal groups and, by the end of 1967, nine reports were published. We made films and took photos and collected a large number of historical and cultural documents' (Interview 2000).

The second area of impact of Western anthropological studies on anthropology in Iran is in methodology and theory. Generally speaking, it is difficult methodologically to classify Iranian anthropological studies as having a distinct character because Iranians have never practically tried to apply non-European discourses, perspectives, methods, styles and theories to their studies, despite their intention to indigenize the discipline. As we shall see in the next section, Iranians have so far failed, in a sense, to establish an indigenous anthropology.

The ethnographic mapping and study of the material culture of different areas of Iran has been the main anthropological project of the CIAAnth since 1963. This project, as Spooner explains, was begun by CNRS researchers Bromberger and Digard, and stemmed from the 'theoretical concerns with "culture areas" and "material culture" that once were a dominant anthropological discourse in the west' (Spooner 1987: 109). A review of the magazine *Honar va Mardom* (Art and People), the most popular and significant anthropological magazine of its time, published from 1963 to 1979,⁴¹ shows that most of its anthropological articles were concerned with culture area studies and material culture. Of course, as I have argued throughout this study, this concern with material culture had a nationalist significance as well.

From a theoretical perspective, many underlying hypotheses and propositions in Iranian anthropological research stemmed from Western anthropological and historical studies of Iran. Two most significant instances are Lambton's *Landlord and Peasant in Persia* (1953) and Barth's *Nomads of South Persia* (1961). In fact, the latter laid the foundation for studying Iranian nomadic tribes, and the former for studying rural areas.

A Persian translation of Lambton's book was published in 1960, just seven years after its English publication, at a time when Iranian tribal studies were just beginning. As an Iranian scholar rightly maintains, 'The Persian publication of

Landlord and Peasants in Persia brought a great change in Iranian administrative and academic perspectives towards rural populations' (Zahedi-Mazandarani 1996: 159). For a long time the language and concepts of the book have been dominant in Iranian rural studies, and only recently have its underlying theoretical assumptions been criticized by Iranians (Farhadi 2000: 172). One of Lambton's major ideas was her notion of an individualistic and non-cooperative attitude as a feature of the Iranian peasantry (Lambton 1960: 684). In his outstanding study *Farhang Yârigari dar Iran: Daramadi bar Mardomshenasi va Jame'ehshenasi Ta'avon* (The Culture of Cooperation In Iran: An Introduction to the Anthropology and Sociology of Cooperatives, 1994a), Farhadi has demonstrated that this idea is empirically unfounded, but for a long time Iranian scholars accepted it.

Barth's monograph was translated in 1964, just two years after its original English publication. The book offers a simple holistic model for studying nomadic groups. Barth analyses the social organization of the Basseri and includes a detailed account of the ecology, economy, kinship, political structure and religion of the tribe. These topics became those of a typical monograph written by Iranian ethnographers. At the same time, as Susan Wright, a British anthropologist who worked in another Iranian tribe, observes, 'Barth's ethnography of the Basseri tribe of the Khamseh confederation in South-west Iran put Iranian tribal studies on the anthropological map' (Street 1990: 284).

Barth's focus on the relation between nomadic social organization and ecology was the underlying theoretical proposition of Afshar-Naderi and his students in the 1970s. Wright comments that the dominant discourse, particularly as inscribed by Barth, was passed on not only to European anthropologists but also to local Iranian researchers: now anyone in Iran would suppose a tribe to be 'a big family developed from a common ancestor' (ibid.: 250). Almost all Iranian anthropological literature on Iranian tribes is based on segmentary theory. Perhaps Safinezhad's *Ashayer Markazi Iran* (Nomads of Central Iranian, 1989) is the best example of this. The organizing idea of the book is the social organization and kinship system of the nomads studied. It should be noted, however, that the idea that all nomadic tribal communities have the same social organization and therefore, by and large, the same socio-political functions, is a matter of controversy.

As a last word on the impact of Western anthropologists on anthropology in Iran I would note the fact that Persian anthropological literature on Iranian nomadic tribes includes very little material about folk knowledge, folk music, folklore, language, or art and cultural values. One reason for this gap is that these topics have not been the focus of European anthropological studies.

Indigenization

There emerged in the 1970s, an academic movement to indigenize the social sciences in non-Western countries. This movement was generally motivated by nationalist stimuli and developed in the context of the modernization process. Generally speaking, indigenization was a reaction against the notion that social

science paradigms generated in one region necessarily have validity everywhere (Roy 1977: 21). It is said that the usual and 'ultimate' meaning of indigenization is a reference to the creation of local paradigms of social science. The most successful example of this is Latin American dependency theory (Gareau 1991: 296).

It might, however, be considered that indigenization has had different meanings and is dependent on the social and historical situation of countries. For instance, in Indian social science, indigenization has turned to macro-models and to a historical context, both of which facilitate the highlighting of national differences. Endogenous elements have been added to the discipline as well (Madan 1982). In African countries, on the other hand, the term 'indigenization' can be used to signify local control or administration of social science research, or the substitution of local languages for the Western ones used for teaching the disciplines (Gareau 1991: 296).

The idea of indigenous anthropology in non-Western countries emerged in the postwar context of the contrast between Western and non-Western anthropology (Ortiz 1982: 97). There was vigorous criticism of the discipline, and it was said that anthropology had grown up as a discipline for studying the colonials, segregated from sociology that was for the societies of the colonizers (Pieris 1969). In this view, anthropology was not so much the study of man as the science of primitive man. It was a study in which the colonialist viewed the colonials as object. The general view is that during the colonial era, anthropology followed an evolutionary paradigm, with European societies at the top of the ladder of human development, and the rest of humankind located down the cultural scale (Asad 1973). In this view indigenous anthropology implied a 'set of theories based on non-western precepts and assumptions in the same sense that modern anthropology is based on and has supported western beliefs and values' (Jones 1970: 251).

In Iran, since the 1970s, indigenization has been one of the greatest ambitions of some academics, who have attempted to establish a discipline compatible with Iranian culture and society. Both Sediqi and Naraghi (Naraqı), the pioneers of social science in Iran, truly believed in an Iranian social science. Naragı explained that the main objective of the ISSR was to establish an indigenous social science. He believed that 'the methods of western social sciences (with their particular set of philosophical and ethical baggage) could not be merely "applied" but had to be "adapted" to conditions of social research in Iran' (Boroujerdi 1996: 137). As such, Naragı hoped that the ISSR would lay the foundations for a more indigenous social research in Iran. The strategy that the Institute chose to achieve this goal was to get deeply involved with the practical problems of society, such as research on the land reform programme, the nomad tribes, new social problems in urban areas such as drug dealing, crime and so on. Naragı explained this view as: 'What is expected of him [the social scientist] more than to create original works, is to help comprehend and bring about the processes of rapid change and coordinated development... In other words, his responsibility [is] to give practical propositions, making social change easier... He must show solutions and must participate in preparation of the social politics of the country' (Naraqı and Ayati 1969, quoted by Shahshahani 1986: 78).

In 1969, after 10 years' extensive presence of foreign anthropologists in Iran, Naraqı came to a realization that their studies had not been useful for Iranian society. He strongly criticized Western anthropology:

The western anthropologist usually pays attention to the virtually unchangeable form of social structure, and he is less inclined to study in order to change and ameliorate the social conditions of the groups studied. His objective is to explore constant structures, and turn them into western anthropological concepts and theories. He investigates the behaviour and interactions of a community, and then infers what the culture of the community studied is. Isn't the culture then only a construction of his mind?
(2000a: 274)

In his view, a native anthropologist has a different responsibility. 'The native anthropologist looks at society from his ideological point of view...and his ultimate goal is to ameliorate and change the community studied. We believe anthropology must be at the service of amelioration of human beings' (*ibid.*: 275).

Regarding the anthropological research of the ISSR, Naraqı stated, 'The specific aim of our research studies is assessing the changes happening in Iranian nomadic populations and evaluating the success of the government's policies in nomadic tribal areas' (*ibid.*: 277). Naraqı also criticized Iranian academics educated in Western universities for not being committed to Iranian national culture, and for their view that Western knowledge and technology necessarily undermine and trivialize Iranian national culture (*ibid.*: 307).

A major figure in Iranian anthropology has been Nader Afshar-Naderi. He was of tribal origins and he had a great ambition to represent himself as a tribal intellectual. He devoted his lifetime to improving the social conditions of the nomadic tribes. He wholeheartedly believed that anthropologists should use their profession for the future welfare of people and in particular tribes people. In Afshar-Naderi's view, indigenization meant applying anthropology for the benefit of the people studied. As he explained:

Contrary to what many western anthropologists may believe, no distinction is made by the native (the subject of anthropological research) between anthropologist as researcher and the society or group he represents. This holds true for both those he studies and the governments which allow him to conduct his research. Areas which can be described as favourable field settings for anthropologists have suffered destructive and ruinous consequences brought about by the above-mentioned groups [the superpowers and western countries] creating negative perceptions of outsiders among the indigenous population.
(1982: 243)

Carrying out such anthropology might be at the service of development planning. According to this approach, Afshar-Naderi, who directed the ISSR's Department

of Anthropology, managed the Institute's rural and tribal studies so that they directly addressed the concerns of government programmes. Afshar-Naderi, like Naraghi, insisted that the most important issue in anthropology is its 'social responsibility to solve the problems of the people studied' (ibid.). His main academic slogan was that 'anthropology, as a science, begins with its application', and he rejected the idea of science for science's sake as the ultimate goal of any discipline (Ashuri 1984: 324).

Traditional Persian ethnology

One of the practical strategies of the ISSR for indigenizing the discipline was the establishment of the Office for Persian Monographs (*Daftar Monografi-haye Farsi*). The Office was part of the Department of Anthropology, and was initially directed by Jalal Al-e Ahmad. Al-e Ahmad was an outstanding novelist and social critic as well as a self-taught ethnographer familiar with classical Persian literature. His contribution to the indigenization of Iranian anthropology was significant in several respects. With his unique style of ethnographic writing, Al-e Ahmad established a traditional method of ethnography based on Persian classical travel writing, in particular Naser Khosrow's *Safarnameh*, the oldest account of travel in Persian prose. Al-e Ahmad succeeded in attracting some of the highly talented literati, such as Samad Behrangi and Gholam Hossein Saedi, to study folklore and rural issues. Both these figures will be fully examined later in this chapter.

Al-e Ahmad and his colleagues left the Institute after just three years. The main reason was the political and cultural conflict between two different approaches to ethnography. Al-e Ahmad accused the Institute of being Western oriented and aiming to serve Westerners' aspirations and objectives (Naraqi 2000a: 14). On the other hand, according to Naraqi, 'The Institute's researchers criticised Al-e Ahmad for not being committed to scientific methods of research' (ibid.: 306). In fact, there was a wide gap between the Institute-trained researchers' positivism and Al-e Ahmad's humanism. In addition, Al-e Ahmad and the others had different political objectives. Whereas Al-e Ahmad intended to represent and revitalize Iranian rural culture against the Westernization policies of the state, other Institute researchers sought to help pave the way for modernizing Iran.

Social themes of Persian literature

One attempt to indigenize social sciences in Iran was Sediqiof's establishment of a course called *Ejtema'iyat dar adabiyat Farsi* (Social Themes in Persian Literature). *Ejtema'iyat dar adabiyat* was, and remains, a social approach to literature that differs from 'sociology of literature'. Its ultimate aim is to explore the reflection of social and cultural issues in Persian literature, not to explain the social structure or conditions that produced literature. In other words, it tries to identify social thoughts and cultural themes in Persian literature with especial emphasis on the classics. *Ejtema'iyat* stemmed ideologically from a nationalist respect for language as the

basis of nationality. Akin to this approach in social science is Lewis Coser's (1972) *Sociology through Literature*.⁴² Coser excerpted several English classical literary texts containing and representing such social science concepts as culture, social class, social group, social value, social conflict and control, power and the like.

Initially, Dr Sediqi put *Ejtema'iyat dar adabiyat* forward in order to combine modern social science with Iranian national culture and Persian intellectual traditions. Over a period of time, it became a discourse and a line of research in Iranian scholarship, mainly reflected in literary scholarship and in anthropological studies. In the 1970s and 1980s, *Ejtema'iyat* was one of the dominant discourses in literary scholarship, and a large number of doctoral theses and books were produced that explored the reflection of social issues in literary texts (Kousari 1999: 369). In the social sciences, however, only anthropologists have taken the trend seriously. Mahmud Ruholamini, one of the most prominent figures in Iranian anthropology, followed Sediqi's approach and has published extensively on *Ejtema'iyat dar adabiyat Farsi* (1996b). Ruholamini explains how this approach emerged and developed:

In 1969 Dr Sediqi suggested *Ejtema'iyat dar adabiyat Farsi* as an academic course for all students of social sciences. His suggestion was accepted as a two-unit academic course that all students of social science had to pass. Dr Sediqi explained the aim of *Ejtema'iyat dar adabiyat Farsi* as twofold: first, to familiarize students with the intellectual history of Persian culture and literature. He believed that, due to the expansion and penetration of western knowledge, young Iranians of the new generation are losing their familiarity with Iranian national culture. In addition, through familiarity with Persian literature, students will become more interested in Iranian national culture. This, in turn, may help social science students to get a deeper historical and cultural insight into Iranian society, an insight that is inevitably part of any anthropological analysis. Secondly, Dr Sediqi truly believed Persian literature is not just poetry and fiction but a treasury of social thought and ideas relevant to the social sciences. He believed that there existed a pre-modern social science in Persian literature. Therefore, there was a hope through *Ejtema'iyat* to provide a basis for a native social science. It is notable that, because of its cultural nature, from the beginning *Ejtema'iyat* was identified as an anthropology course and it became compulsory for all students of social sciences to pass it.

(Interview 2000)

As already mentioned, *Ejtema'iyat* stemmed from the dominant nationalist perspective in Iran. Apart from nationalist intentions of Dr Sediqi, a glance at the topics studied in the course, which are reflected in Ruholamini's works, confirms this. Ruholamini's *Nemud-haye Ejtema'i va Farhangi dar Adabiyat Farsi* (Social and Cultural Themes in Persian Literature, 1996) is so far the best example of *Ejtema'iyat* studies. In this book the author focuses on Persian nationalist literature and texts that have nationalist significance. A major trend in this nationalist

scholarship was devoted to examination of Pahlavi literature from the pre-Islamic period. In this trend, an attempt was made to reconstruct the social and cultural aspects of Iranian life in pre-Islamic times. As already mentioned, nationalists sought to reconstruct a mythological Iranian history, relying on analysis of the *Shahnameh* and the Pahlavi texts. Ruholamini in his book has evidently followed that nationalist ideology, though he has never been a political activist and member of political group. Two chapters of *Nemudha* are concerned with *Derakht-e Assorik* (The Assyrian Tree), a poetic Pahlavi myth dating from an unknown pre-Islamic time. Another chapter is about *Arda Viraf Nameh*, a Zoroastrian religious text from the fourth century. Two other chapters are devoted to analysis of the *Shahnameh* which is always seen as the foundation of Persian nationalism.

In lieu of its nationalist orientation, after the Revolution, the *Ejtema'iyat* course lost its academic position. The present social science curriculum includes a two-hour unit on *Ejtema'iyat*, but it has yet to regain its pre-revolutionary standing. Ruholamini explains how 'in recent years only anthropology students have had to pass it and other social science students study a course called "sociology of literature"' (Interview 2000).

Overall, *Ejtema'iyat* has so far brought nothing to Iranian social science and has failed to accomplish its aim of introducing a sense of native social science. Several factors have been responsible for this failure. First, examination of Persian classical literature has no practical relevance to the kind of contemporary social problems that the government may fund and sponsor. Also, it is irrelevant to present intellectual discourses. None of the Islamist and anti-Islamist ideologies find *Ejtema'iyat* to be in line with their political and intellectual concerns. Even in literary scholarship, *Ejtema'iyat* is no longer as significant as it was. Thus, few scholars have been inclined to spend their time on such issues. Second, *Ejtema'iyat* is an interdisciplinary field of study combining the different fields of Persian literature, Iranian history and modern social science. On the other hand, most practitioners of the social sciences have been familiar only with social sciences, not with history and literature. Therefore, *Ejtema'iyat* could not succeed in the Iranian social sciences. However, it is notable that in recent years many eminent Persian literati (Khorramshahi 1994; Shafiye-Kadkani 1994; Meskub 1995) have focused on Persian literature from a social point of view. This trend is different from *Ejtema'iyat* because it stems from the sociology of literature and the recent sociological turn in literary criticism.

An assessment of indigenization

Although Iranian social scientists tried to mark their disciplines with local characteristics, they have not been as successful as has been the case in other types of indigenization. There are several reasons for this failure. First, not all Iranian social scientists have favoured the idea of indigenization; most have opposed it. For instance, Jamshid Behnam speaks of the impossibility of an Iranian social science, and insists, 'An Iranian sociology and/or Third World social science is merely a vague illusion.' In his view, we can only synthesize Western social science

with our conditions, though recognition of Iranian idiosyncrasies (*momayezat*) and national culture is necessary (J. Behnam 1997: 191). Another reason is that the general trend of society and the education system in particular, has been oriented toward Western culture; in this context, indigenization was just an ideological slogan for political significance.

Moreover, the limited focus of anthropological research in Iran is of importance in this regard. Academic anthropology in Iran was narrowly defined as the area of anthropology relevant to studies whose ultimate aim is to change or direct the economic and social behaviour of nomadic and rural populations. Many areas of Iranian culture were ignored. For example, research on disappearing local knowledge was totally abandoned, and academicians rarely recorded the originality of Iranian culture. Urban populations and social problems caused by industrialization and urbanization in cities were not regarded as a proper focus for anthropology, although in sociology they were the main focus of research. National characteristics of Iranians also had no place in Iranian anthropology. And even today Iranian anthropology has not yet paid attention to the relation between culture and personality. A group was formed to study such issues, but it was discontinued with the 1979 Revolution, as reported by Michael Fischer, who was in Iran at that time and who was a member of the group:⁴³

The Culture and Personality Circle was a small group of Persian and American intellectuals in Tehran in the 1970s whose core members were two anthropologists (Mahdi Soraiya and Mary Catherine Bateson), a psychoanalyst (Hassan Safavi), and a business school professor (Barkev Kassrjian). Various others, including myself, participated for shorter or longer periods. The purpose of the circle was to explore the sociolinguistic structuring of Persian behaviour and attitudes.

(Fischer 1980: 140)

Monarchic nationalism

Besides developing the research and teaching anthropology in academic institutions, the government supported folklore studies in non-academic government and private organizations as part of its attempt to reinforce monarchic nationalism. In the 1960s and 1970s, many private and government institutions began to collect and study folklore and mythology. The Society for Ancient Iranian Culture (Anjoman Farhang Iran Bastan) and the Mahmud Afshar Institute for Iranian Studies (Bonyad Motale'at Iranshenasi Doktor Mahmud Afshar) were two non-governmental institutions that published many nationalist anthropological writings. The Society for Ancient Iranian Culture published a quarterly called *Farhang Iran Bastan* (Ancient Iranian Culture), and the other institute also published two important journals, namely *Farhang Iran-Zamin* and *Ayandeh*, which continue today. Meanwhile, in academic institutions, the nationalist trend of folklore studies was flourishing. A group of nationalist literati and historians, such as Zabihollah Safa, Ehsan Yarshater, Iraj Afshar and Mohammed-Jafar Mahjub, established

a scholarly trend of nationalist studies of Iranian mythology, folklore and national culture in university institutions, which led to many graduate student theses and academic publications. However, it was the task of the CIAAnth and the CIF (attached to the National Radio and Television Organization) to implement the government policy in folklore studies. In the following section I review the activities of these centres.

***The Centre for Iranian Anthropology (CIAAnth):
a new phase***

In previous chapters I discussed the formation of CIAAnth, and explained how and why it was established and developed. In 1941, with the abdication of Reza Shah, the Centre was suspended, and remained politically inactive until 1958. It was not closed down, however, and produced and published some anthropological material that might be considered in the history of Iranian anthropology. One of its most important activities was the publication from 1956 of *Majalleh Mardomshenasi* (Magazine of Anthropology), the first Iranian anthropological periodical. Ali Hanibal⁴⁴ and Nosrat Tajrobehkar were the executive manager and editor. Neither of them had training or experience in anthropology, but both published a series of anthropological articles in the magazine and elsewhere. The magazine had a very short lifetime and only nine issues appeared: the first issue came out in November 1956 and the last in the summer of 1959. The magazine's articles represented an Iranian concept of anthropology, according to which it is a branch of humanities relating to history and literature rather than social sciences. The complete run of the magazine *Mardomshenasi* comprises 16 articles classifiable in three fields: Persian literature, Iranian history and folklore. Eminent literary figures and historians of the time, such as Ebrahim Pour-Davoud, Mohammad Mo'in, Reza-zadeh Shafaq and Yahya Zoka, were among the contributors to the magazine, which only goes to show the significance as well as scholarly and political orientation of the magazine.

The articles exhibited the ideological and political orientation of the magazine. Secularization was the dominant policy of the Pahlavi government as well as the dominant discourse among modernist intellectuals. In the 1940s and 1950s, campaigning against superstitious customs and beliefs was one of the preoccupations of Iranian intellectuals. The government and modernist intellectuals believed Iranian folklore and folk culture to be irrational and anti-modern, and thought that they stemmed from Islam and religion. As discussed in earlier chapters, this notion of folklore and tradition was first introduced in the Constitutional era by Talebof Tabrizi, Akhondzadeh and Malkom Khan, then developed and extended by Hedayat, who introduced it into the intellectual scene. These intellectuals saw Iranian traditions and folk culture as obstacles in the way of development and modernization. Mohsen Moqaddam's article in volume 2 of the journal, 'Mabani E'teqadat-e 'Ammeh Dar Iran' (The Foundations of Iranian Folk Beliefs), represents this secular and anti-religious discourse on folklore and folk culture. Moqaddam argues that since Iranian folklore and beliefs are highly exotic,

irrational and non-utilitarian they could attract the attention of scholars. He asks, 'What is the foundation of these strange and bizarre ancient beliefs?' His answer is: 'These beliefs are a set of superstitions and false notions, created by religions over time.' He cites the ceremony of throwing stones at *Hajar al-aswad* during the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca as an example of such irrational and exotic customs. In his belief, most Muslim religious rituals are incompatible with our modern times and should be eliminated. Also, he believes other non-religious superstitions stem from religion and Islamic culture (1958: 152–9).

In 1958, with the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Art, the CIAnth was reborn with a new name, Edareh Farhang-e 'Ammeh (Bureau for Folklore Studies),⁴⁵ and began a new period of activities. The Pahlavi government felt that it was necessary for the modernization of the country to include culture in the government planning system. Culture was both the instrument and the goal from the government's standpoint. It was an instrument for implementing economic programmes as well as internalizing political ideology. In the Articles of Association of the Ministry the main objective of the Ministry is described as 'To provide the ground for development and progress of culture and art; and identification of ancient Iranian civilization and heritage' (Sattari 2000: 5).

From then on, most cultural institutions like the CIAnth came under the auspices of the Ministry. It was clear that the task of the Ministry of Culture and Art was to apply modern cultural activities to support the monarchic culture and to control any cultural activities and direct them to certain political orientations. It was a slogan of the Ministry that 'The army protects the territorial boundaries, and in the same vein, the Ministry of Culture and Art protects the cultural boundaries of the country' (Sattari interview 2000). This slogan symbolizes the dominant military approach towards culture. Sattari, a leading Iranian mythologist and folklorist, who held an important administrative position in the Ministry, states that the climax of anthropological activity in the Shah's time was the Great Celebration of 2,500 years of Monarchy in Iran, and the Annual Festival of Culture and Art (*Jashn-e Saliانه Farhang va Honar*), where many folkloric performances were displayed; every year many folklore materials were collected and published for exhibiting in those festivals. As Sattari maintains,

The ultimate goal of those festivals was not to promote folklore, but to dismiss it, because in the Festivals the cultural elements were commonly introduced as strange, exotic, irrational and anti-modern. Having presented traditional and folk culture as irrational and strange, the state hoped to justify its westernizing policy that was destroying local and native cultures.

(Interview 2000)

The Centre's most political task was research on nationalist themes, and it was relatively successful in accomplishing this. Mahmud Khaliqi, Director of the Centre in the 1960s, announced that the most outstanding product of the Centre in the 1960s was to carry out a project on the folkloristic aspects of the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi, which, as discussed above, had been the cultural focus of the nationalist

discourse in Iran since the second half of the nineteenth century. The results of this project were archived in thousands of files, and several books were published on the basis of the research (Khaliqi 1975: 14).

The Centre in the 1970s

The final stage of development of the Centre occurred in the early 1970s. In 1968 the Centre received a budget for expansion, and a new project for the study of folklore got underway. It was the second time that the government had massively expanded the Centre. It was replaced by an extended organization equipped with more human and financial resources, under the title *Markaz Melli Tahqiqat Mardomshenasi va Farhang Ammeh* (National Centre for Research on Anthropology and Popular Culture). The Centre was given a new task and definition. Its goals, as outlined by Mahmud Khaliqi, were as follows:

- 1 To conduct organized research in ethnology, ethnography, cultural and physical anthropology and folklore throughout the country; that is to say, social, economic and cultural surveys of the rural, urban and nomadic tribal areas. The research will include kinship, folklore, folk literature, beliefs, customs, folk music and dance, dialects, local clothing, housing, food etc.
- 2 To identify the impact of socio-economic changes and development of the country on the way of life of Iranians and to predict the possible future.
- 3 Effective cooperation with the organizations conducting research in fields related to the general goals of the Centre, particularly university research organizations.
- 4 To maintain contact with the country's museums of ethnology, and guide and support them scientifically.
- 5 Effective cooperation with foreign organizations and researchers conducting research on Iran's ethnology.
- 6 Publication of research results in the form of reports, articles, books, magazines, film, slides and so on for public use.

(Ibid.: 15–16)

The Centre comprised five separate research departments (rural, tribal, urban, historical and physical anthropology), and three administrative offices. The largest research project in the 1970s was collecting sets of ethnographic data from various rural and tribal areas. These collections, the first national research experience of the Centre, were undertaken by research teams, each comprising four members, sent to different parts of the country. The focus of research was the rural life, folklore and dialect. Once a study was completed, in order to familiarize the local people with their local culture, the Centre set up an exhibition in one of the towns of the region studied. In those exhibitions, the folkloric and cultural materials collected were displayed. Between 1968 and 1974, 384 villages were studied (ibid.: 17).

The research outcomes of the Centre during this period included 96 essays, written on the basis of the research conducted in the villages, nomadic tribes and

towns, and published in the Centre's monthly journal, *Honar va Mardom* (Art and People); 23 books, 3 of which were collections of folk narratives; 33 unpublished books and monographs; and 5 exhibitions, including 1, which was displayed in Paris in 1971.

The Centre's archives also house folklore data extracted from the classical sources of Persian literature and history; dialect studies; collections of folk narratives and proverbs and slides, pictures, tapes and films on folklore (ibid.: 18–20). Among the Centre's attempts at popularizing an interest in folklore was its sponsorship of the First Festival of Folklore, held in Esfahan in October 1977.

Honar va Mardom was the most significant anthropological magazine of the country before the 1979 Revolution, when it ceased publication. It was mainly devoted to publishing the Centre's research results. For instance, by 1974, according to Khaliqi's report, the Centre had published 96 articles in *Honar va Mardom* (ibid.: 18). One of the Centre's major goals was to propagate monarchic culture. This is best reflected in its publications. All but 4 of the 23 monographs and books published by the Centre were concerned with the Shah and monarchy. The following are titles of monographs published by the Centre in the 1970s.

- 1 Kings and monarchy in Iranian attitudes according to the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi.⁴⁶
- 2 *Velayetahdi* (Crown princesship) in ancient Iran.
- 3 *Shah va Sepah* (King and army).
- 4 *Shah va Mardom* (King and people).
- 5 Coronation ritual in ancient Iran.
- 6 *Ayin Shahriyari dar Iran* (Royal customs in Iran).
- 7 *Alasht: Zādgahe Alahazrat Reza Shah Kabir* (Alasht: birthplace of His Majesty Reza Shah the Great).⁴⁷
- 8 Ancient Iranian culture and customs.⁴⁸

Despite the official domination of monarchic ideology over the Centre, not all of its researchers favoured and followed the state's ideological aims. Mohammad Mirshokra'i, current head of the Centre, states that, 'Most researchers of the Centre were just interested in doing research and studying Iranian culture, and they had no political intention of supporting the Shah's state. However, in order to get its budget the Centre had to extend its loyalty to the Shah' (Interview 2000). He explains that:

We researchers of the Centre were well aware of the devastating repercussions of the modernization policy on Iranian culture and society. We often criticized those policies, but there was no possibility of openly expressing our opinion. Some of the Centre's staff were zealous and true nationalists with strong anti-modernization sentiments, which pulled them into anthropology and folklore studies. For them, working on Iranian national culture was a matter of faith, not politics at all. One example of this group was Dr Sadeq Kiya, who studied and published extensively on Iranian folk culture. He saw

the study of national culture as a sacred duty. After all, we knew that what was spreading throughout the country was not an authentic culture compatible with Iranian local environment, history, spirit, and overall native culture. Modernization, at least in its Pahlavi model, was not capable of creating a modern Iran. Therefore, we chose folklore studies and anthropology, not to support state development plans and programmes, but to criticize them by preserving what the state was destroying and demolishing. If the Centre's publications were uncritical and politically oriented, it is because they were selective; much material remained unpublished.

(Ibid.)

Sattari, too, confirms that publications of the Centre were censored. He maintains that the Centre collected a large amount of valuable materials on Iranian folklore and traditional culture from all parts of the country, Persian and non-Persian, but the state did not allow the publication of non-Persian folklore materials. He states:

From the perspective of the state's cultural policy, Iranian culture was torn between Persian and non-Persian, and the cultural organizations centred their focus on the former and marginalized the rest. This was the state policy of cultural homogenization. However, not all researchers who worked in the Ministry accepted it. In the Ministry of Culture and Art we respected all Baluch, Kurd, Turk and Arab cultures in Iran. Many researchers focused their attempts on the study of those cultures. In the Centre of Folklore Studies many ethnographers did study Baluchestan and Kurdistan without considering the state's priorities and interest in studying other issues.

(Ibid.)

Anthropology and anti-modernization

After 1941, the cultural repercussions of Pahlavi modernization policies became clear. On the one hand, the influence and effect of religious and traditional values, beliefs and world view on the younger generations had considerably declined, and on the other hand, social problems like poverty, inequality, delinquency and social deviancy such as prostitution, crime and drug dealing increased rapidly. Thus, the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah is commonly known and characterized as a period of 'strangulation', 'loneliness', 'darkness', 'fatigue' and 'nothingness' (Bill 1972: 74). Most intellectuals saw this situation as the effect of Westernization and the marginalization of authentic Iranian culture. This critical attitude towards modernization and Westernization led intellectuals to 'look for local answers to their predicaments' (Mirsepassi 2000: 76). They adopted a different, critical, anti-modernization stance. Islamicists, led by Ali Shariati and Jalal Al-e Ahmad, established one very influential discourse. Others, such as leftist groups, romanticized rural life, or even embraced the pre-Islamic cultural heritage but in a different interpretation from the ideological reading of the state.

However, all were seeking a native and authentic culture and identity different from the Westernized model favoured by the state's mass media and development plans. Nonetheless, it is important to note that none of these intellectuals was against modernity as such; rather, their movement 'was an attempt to reconcile with modernity in the fabric of the "Iranian" and "Islamic" context' (ibid.: 78). For instance, Shariati and Al-e Ahmad were defining an Islamic modernity that was not welcomed by traditionalist Shiite Ulama.

Anti-modernization discourses in anthropology were shaped into three different trends: (1) an Islamic anthropological discourse focusing on the ethnographic study of the Hajj and study of the negative cultural and social effects of modernization in the rural and urban areas from an Islamic view (2) a liberal nationalist discourse focusing on oral tradition and folklore and (3) a leftist and Marxist trend focusing on folklore and rural studies.

Islamic anthropology

The Islamist discourse on social science, which became the mainstream after the Revolution of 1979, began in the 1960s, when a group of modernist Islamic intellectuals challenged the modernization and secularization policies of the state. From the viewpoint of religious intellectuals, the Shah's policy of Westernization had ruined the spirit of Islamic culture and faith in Iran. Furthermore, in their view, the Islamic clerical establishment was in part responsible for the weakness of both contemporary Islam and the Muslim community. Religious intellectuals accused the clerics not only of being unable to strengthen Islam to resist secular culture and to meet modern needs and requirements, but also of being agents themselves of the diversion of Islam from its true revolutionary and original ideology through misinterpreting the Quran, Hadith, Islamic knowledge and Islam, generally. They believed, that through 'returning to the Islamic self' (*Bazgash* *be khishtan*) and reinterpreting Islamic cultural sources, Muslims could establish a modern, developed religious civilization.

In doing so, the religious intellectuals found themselves in a perplexing situation. On the one hand, they had to address the younger generation, educated in a secular system and no longer caring for traditional thought and religion and, therefore, they inevitably needed to apply social science discourse and knowledge. On the other hand, conventional modern social science discourse was secular in nature and antithetical to their aims. They even criticized educated people for being in the service of Islam's enemies and alienated from their own Iranian and Islamic culture and identity. To tackle these problems, religious intellectuals first questioned the nature of the predominantly secular social sciences, and then sought to establish their own Islamic version of sociology and anthropology. This was a manifest challenge to the Pahlavi modernization discourse as well as other Western secular discourses. Therefore, the Islamicists' strategy of challenging modernization had two dimensions: (1) to criticize the vicious effects of the West and the modernization policy of the state, focusing on the *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxication) discourse established by Al-e Ahmad and his ethnographic

studies of rural areas and (2) to attempt to reinterpret Islam to create a revolutionary political ideology – the main figure in the latter being Dr Ali Shariati (1933–77).

Shariati's Islamic anthropology

In Shariati's view, all intellectuals must be self-conscious and committed to their indigenous culture. Social sciences should not be neutral at all because social scientists have a very significant cultural and political task. From this perspective, Shariati defines who is an engaged Islamic anthropologist:

A conscious anthropologist (ensanshenas agah) of today is the one whose outlook neither is limited by narrowly framed conventional and sectarian views, nor is preoccupied by provincialism and historical fanaticism; and is not involved in vocational, educational, and hereditary constraints. He is neither satisfied by being a mere observer of temporary political happenings and unstable superficialities nor is he content with simple and superficial assessments of everyday life events and visible relationships. He never feels happy to advocate simple resolutions. Rather, to care for man he looks at the under-layer of this age. He is well aware of what happens to human beings. He is capable enough to explore the colonization of nations, capitalism, class exploitation... and disregard for human rights. However, all these are external human catastrophes: political, economic, legal, and military. Yet the most fearful calamity is the internal human tragedy that is happening in the hearts of people... It is 'alienation' of the human spirit: humanity becoming inhuman. This is what scares a conscious and committed anthropologist of our time. He understands the severity of 'alienation'. He has seen 'humanity' sacrificed whenever 'humanitarian rights' are disrespected. He is the one who recognises the evil-doers and idol-makers who can't always be seen.

(1999: 219–20)

Not only did Shariati focus most of his efforts on clarifying a revolutionary political Islam, his scholarly endeavours, too, were aimed at establishing ideological knowledge committed to Islam in various fields such as sociology, history, anthropology and literary criticism. In Shariati's view, all social sciences, in particular sociology and anthropology, are political and ideological in nature because, as Davies later argued:

The only thing that is neutral about anthropology is the word itself. It is there as a bland general description ready to be appended to specific definitions and content arising from the world view of the anthropologist and embodied in the theories utilized. The proliferation of double-barrelled anthropologies is a consequence: functionalist anthropology, structuralist anthropology, Marxist anthropology, and now Islamic anthropology.

(1988: 11)

The ethnography of the Hajj

Apart from his well-known contributions on Islamic sociology and his theoretical discussion in Islamic anthropology, Shariati also carried out an ethnographic study of concern in this enquiry. *An Analysis of the Hajj* (1961/99), known as *Hajj* was the most outstanding Islamic Persian ethnographic account so far, and attracted thousands of readers. The first edition of *Hajj* ran to over 60,000 copies (Somayyah and Yaser 1977: 2), and the latest edition is the eleventh, reprinted in 11,000 copies in 1999 in Tehran. This monograph is the fruit of Shariati's historical and ethnographic study of the Hajj. Shariati was professionally expert in the history of Islam and the sociology of religion. Given his far-reaching familiarity with history and Islamic texts, to complete his studies, he visited Mecca and Medina four years in succession (1999: 24). Unlike Al-e Ahmad's *Lost in the Crowd*, Shariati's *Hajj* is not a travel account and report of the pilgrimage to Mecca *per se*, but is rather the outcome of a research project, as he himself maintained (*ibid.*: 5).

Shariati explained that his study would be published in three separate monographs (*ibid.*: 22). The first, called *Twenty-Three Years in Twenty-Three Days*,⁴⁹ is a geographical history of the Prophet Mohammad's life, based on Shariati's observations in Mecca, Medina and other places in Saudi Arabia. His aim was to draw a lively picture of the environmental, social and tribal situation of early Islam so that 'one may be able vividly to envisage the history of Islam as it happened' (*ibid.*: 23).

The second volume, *Mei'ad ba Ebrahim* (Pact with Ebrahim, 1998), is 'an anthropology of *Towhid* (Oneness of God) and *Sherk* (polytheism), and an outline of the configuration of the Hajj and its philosophy' (*ibid.*: 26). It is a series of lectures he gave in Mecca in 1969 and 1970. These lectures are mainly historical and sociological, not based on Shariati's direct ethnographic observations.

The third volume, *An Analysis of the Hajj*, the book under examination, contains Shariati's main analysis of the Hajj as well as his rich ethnographic observations. As he has himself explained, the book is not 'a jurisprudential treatise on the rites of the Hajj (*resaleh feqhi manasek hajj*)... [or] a philosophical treatise on the Hajj... [rather it is] a personal experience and understanding of the Hajj based on my three performances of the pilgrimage and one tour of Mecca' (*ibid.*: 27).

Shariati's objective in writing *Hajj* is to challenge and criticize the established traditional reading of Islam and in particular the pilgrimage of the Hajj. The book consists of three main parts, including an introduction, an account of the *Hajj* 'Umreh or small Hajj and an account of the Greater Hajj, with chapters for each part of the rites (*manasek*) involved. For Shariati, the Hajj is a type of cultural ritual, and in order to get an in-depth understanding of it we must interpret all the movements that we do in conducting the Hajj. 'The Hajj is a set of moves which have a particular order associated with time and place' (*ibid.*: 27); 'its meanings are not fixed, it is rather multidimensional and everyone is allowed his own perception, so that there are as many definitions of the Hajj as there are pilgrims' (*ibid.*: 29). The Hajj is 'a symbolic language (*zaban-e ramzi*) consisting of

movements instead of words' (ibid.: 30); and each generation reads it according to its own condition (ibid.: 31).

Shariati considers the Hajj to be a drama, explaining that 'its performance is a simultaneous drama of all Islam, and a drama of creation: Allah is the director, the language of the drama is symbolic acts, and Adam, Ebrahim, Hajar, and Satan are the main characters; the pilgrim is an actor; the scenes are Masjed al-Haram, the Haram area, Masa, Arafat, Mashar and Medina. Important symbols are Ka'beh, Safa, Marweh, day, night, shrines, *sunnat*, idols, and the ritual of sacrifice; and the clothing and make-up are Ehram, Halq, and Taqsir' (ibid.: 32–3). The theatrical metaphor used by Shariati is a methodological strategy to read (in fact, produce) the unwritten scenario of the Hajj. This conception of the Hajj is manifestly critical of the essentialist perspective of Shi'ite clerics and jurists. Whereas the clergy give a unitary meaning to the Hajj, Shariati stresses the Hajj to be a unique experience for everyone: its meaning is experiential and therefore it rests upon the identity of the pilgrim. So no longer do the clerics have the monopoly on interpreting the Hajj (ibid.: 19).

Furthermore, Shariati's critical approach towards Western capitalism is evident in *Hajj*. As he himself states, the ritual of the Hajj is a form of ideology opposed to a capitalist ideology of modernism, and it is thus a power of transcendence over aimless everyday life: 'The Hajj is a dramatic process through which the vitality of everyday life is conquered by the transcendence of the eternal' (ibid.: 12).

Shariati's ethnographic presentation of the Hajj is significant for its understanding of contemporary Shi'ism, in that to interpret the Hajj's symbols he shifts interpretation of the Hajj from a focus on what conventional Shi'ite jurisprudence and social reality represents and maintains, to a focus on what the symbols mean and communicate within the context of a new intellectual, reformist, modernist and revolutionary political Shi'ism. Likewise, Shariati's interpretation of the Hajj is a critical anthropological reading of Islam, in opposition to both 'official' and 'popular' Islam. For instance, his understanding of Hajar, the wife of the Prophet Ebrahim, is a new, modernist, intellectual conception of woman that was not acceptable to the majority of Muslims – neither the common Muslim nor the cleric – at the time that he espoused it. Shariati draws a portrait of woman superior to man, for Allah praises not only her beauty but also her great soul. Throughout the monograph, he explains that Islam defines itself not only by its norms, but also by its acts – that is, Muslims define Islam in its various forms without even being conscious of doing so.

For Shariati, Islam in general, and the Hajj as a main part of Islam, in particular, have been distorted by contemporary politics, whether by Muslims themselves or by foreign forces; therefore, they should be reinterpreted. In order to determine their real meanings, which transcend the conscious intentions of pilgrims, one must decode the symbolic language of the pilgrimage according to a new reading of the Quran, the history of Islam and the present state of Muslims within the dominant oppressive world order.

Shariati's concept of religion and ritual is similar to Geertz's perspective (1973). Geertz describes religion as a cultural system, that is, a system of symbols that influences people's feelings and motivations by formulating a coherent conception of the general order of existence. The symbols of religious belief and the symbolic activities of religious ritual constitute a system of values that acts both as 'a model of the way things actually are', and 'a model for how they should be' (Bell 1997: 66). Shariati presents the ritual as a coherent system of symbols in which the meaning of any one symbol depends on the logic of its relation to other symbols and its relevance to the whole definition of the Hajj. Because of this, Shariati emphasizes that our notion and definition of the Hajj must be changed (Shariati 1999: 4). To uncover the invisible and unconscious meaning and structures of the symbols, Shariati decodes relations between all acts of the Hajj through mixing interpretation of the Quran with the history of Islam within the context of the contemporary Muslim community.

Jalal Al-e Ahmad and rural culture

Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–69) was one of the earliest and most prominent of contemporary Iranian ethnographers. Surprisingly, although his writings have often been analysed, his ethnographic work has rarely been examined from an anthropological point of view, and even his ethnographic writings are almost forgotten.⁵⁰ Here, as a brief introduction to Al-e Ahmad's ethnographic work, I outline his anthropological work.

Al-e Ahmad published several ethnographic accounts. His book *Owrazan* (1954) brought him into the community of Iranian anthropology and earned him a good reputation as an ethnographer. In 1964, he was invited to attend the seventh International Congress of Anthropology, held in Moscow, as the representative of Iranian anthropology. He published a report on the Congress (1982a) and wrote a travel account called *Safar-e Rus* (Journey to Russia, 1990) that was published after his death. In 1958 he began to cooperate with the ISSR in the study of rural and nomadic areas. Several ethnographic monographs by him or written under his supervision were published in those years. He himself wrote three monographs in the 1950s, including *Owrazan* (1954), *Tat Neshin-haye Boluk Zahra* (1958b) and *Jazire-ye Kharg: Dorre yatim-e Khalij* (1960). His most famous monograph, *Gharbzadegi* (Plagued by the West),⁵¹ which was a development of his earlier ethnographic studies, was published in 1962. Al-e Ahmad also published several short ethnographic reports in the form of articles, such as 'A'ine Fasl (Seasonal Custom)' (1978), a fascinating account of a reconciliation custom among a tribal community in Khuzestan; 'Mehregan dar Mashhad Ardehal (Mehregan Festival in Mashhad Ardehal)' (1982c); 'Safari be shahr-e badgir-ha (A Journey to the City of Wind-Catchers)' (1982b); and 'Gozari be hashiyeh kavir (A Trip Around the Salt Desert)' (1978c).

Al-e Ahmad also wrote fiction, but in a realist style; most of his novels, in particular *Modir-e Madreseh* (The School Principal, 1958) and *Nefrin Zamin* (Curse of the Earth, 1964), have ethnographic value. Anthropology is essential to Al-e Ahmad's thought and writing. First, in his view, 'everyone who writes deals inevitably with

“culture” (1978d: 1). By culture he meant what anthropologists commonly mean, as I will show below. Second, Al-e Ahmad’s ultimate intellectual goal was to resist Westernization through ethnographic representation of rural and traditional culture. More importantly, Al-e Ahmad was aware of the significance of anthropological knowledge, and believed that ‘in the present world anthropology is more necessary for us than food’ (1982a: 177).

It is noteworthy that Al-e Ahmad’s anthropology, like his style of writing, is uniquely *personal*. I would say that Al-e Ahmad practised anthropology in a uniquely personal mode, in Pocock’s words, as a ‘kind of consciousness of life, a way of looking at the world, and a way of living’ (1998: 1).

As Simin Daneshvar, a prominent Persian novelist and Al-e Ahmad’s wife, and many of his close friends, maintain, Al-e Ahmad always considered himself as the observer, recorder and narrator of everything he experienced and was involved in (1999: 26). Nothing was unimportant, mundane or ignorable in his view. He always carried with himself a pen and notebook, and tirelessly took notes about what was happening and going on in Iran and also in his personal everyday life (Dehbashi 1999). He did not specifically focus on rural, tribal and urban areas; rather his focus was culture, wherever it is, or, as he put it, ‘culture in general’ (*farhang dar majmu’*) (1978d: 1).

‘Culture’ for Al-e Ahmad meant identity and Iranian culture. Contrary to Western anthropologists, whose intellectual motivation is ‘a desire to enlighten their readers about other ways of life’ (Marcus and Fischer 1999: 111), Al-e Ahmad’s anthropological desire was to inform Iranians about their own way of life. He totally occupied himself with the search for a national identity in the face of, or as alternative to, Western culture.

Another feature of Al-e Ahmad’s personal anthropology is that his ethnographic accounts are not compatible with modern ethnographic writing; rather they are more like traditional and classical Persian ethnography. Because of this, he writes that he ‘can claim no authority in dialectology or anthropology or economics’ (1954: 2). *Owrazan*, *Tat Neshinha* and *Kharg*, Al-e Ahmad’s most significant ethnographies, are not systematic. His monographs are collections of information about different aspects of the communities studied, ranging from history, geography and economics to folklore, language, customs and so forth. His language is also rhetorical and full of allegories and tropes. He is happy to judge whenever it seems required, and to condemn anything that he finds unacceptable. He is determined to be frank in his anti-modernization stance and not to produce an objective work. This feature stems partly from the fact that Al-e Ahmad was self-taught, and, more importantly, from his critical approach towards modern social sciences in general and anthropology in particular. Because of this, he could not continue his cooperation with the ISSR. After a short period he resigned from the Institute, stating that his aim in such an endeavour was not ‘objective science’ but self-realization for Iranian people. Later, he wrote:

I left the Institute [ISSR] because I saw that they want to make a commodity of those monographs for giving to westerners, which therefore must be inevitably written according to western criteria. But I wasn’t cut out for this

sort of thing; because my intention in writing ethnography was to achieve a self-realization and a new evaluation of the native environment according to our own measures.

(1999b: 20)

Al-e Ahmad's project of personal anthropology was part of his project of anti-Westernization and revitalization of Iranian traditional ethnography. In his view, modern 'anthropology is an outcome of industrial changes of the west' (1982a: 177) and thus, it is a 'western manufactured product', raw materials for which 'have been taken from this side of the world, i.e. from the developing countries... from the islands of Oceania', Asia and Africa (ibid.). Its goal was 'to exploit Iran's economic resources' (ibid.: 61). In his view, anthropology was a 'parasitic outgrowth of imperialism' (1982b: 72) and sought to construct from the East a cultural otherness for the West based on an evolutionist perspective:

They tried first to turn us into raw material, as they did the natives in Africa, and afterwards bring us to their laboratories. It was because of this that, among the many encyclopaedias produced in the West, the Encyclopaedia of Islam is the most important... In any event – in the age we live in – I, the Asian remnant of that Islamic totality, shall be accepted by the civilised(!) nations of the West and the makers of machines to the same extent as the African and Australian survivors of primitive culture or savagery if I, like them, agree to be satisfied with life as a museum exhibit, satisfied with being only a thing, an object suitable for investigation in a museum or laboratory – and nothing more... Today the issue is not the oil of Khuzestan or chromate ore of Kerman... it is rather that I, the Asian,... must preserve even my literature, my music, my religion and everything else I possess exactly as if they were freshly unearthed antiques, so that these civilised gentleman can come, dig [them up], take them away, and place them in museum and say, 'Yes, here we have another primitive culture.'

(1982: 9–10)

Gharbzadegi This famous work, first published in 1962, set out a strong anti-Western and nativist discourse, and most intellectuals embraced it. There is no need to discuss *Gharbzadegi* in detail, because it has already been widely discussed (e.g. Wells 1982; Boroujerdi 1996; Mirsepassi 2000). My concern here is to explore the ethnographic dimensions of the monograph.

Al-e Ahmad's main political accusation against the Pahlavi state is that it allowed Western culture to penetrate society and to ruin and displace Iranian traditions and Islamic values. He calls this penetration *Gharbzadegi*: 'I am speaking of a disease: an accident from without, spreading in an environment rendered susceptible to it. Let us seek a diagnosis for this complaint and its cause – and if possible, its cure... I speak of being afflicted with "Westoxication" the way I would speak of being afflicted with cholera' (1962: 3). He then defined that cultural cholera as 'the aggregate of events in the life, culture, civilization, and

mode of thought of a people having no supporting tradition, no historical community, and no gradient of transformation' (ibid.: 27).

Based on Marcus and Fischer's concept of ethnography – 'to represent the embedding of richly described local cultural worlds in larger impersonal systems of political economy' (1999: 77) – *Gharbzadegi* can be treated as an ethnographic account. Al-e Ahmad's major attempt is to demonstrate how we Iranians have become sheer consumers of Western technology, or as he calls it *mashin* (the machine), and *mashin* is our colonial link to the world economic system:

We are not talking about the abolition of machines or their rejection; e.g., what supporters of utopian societies in the beginning of the nineteenth century fancied. Never! The world is caught up in the machine of historical determinism. Our discussion, rather, is on the way we deal with machines and technology. The point is that we of the developing nations... are not makers of machines. But forced by economics, politics, and the global confrontation between poverty and wealth, we must be polite and servile consumers of the products of western industry... The basic point of this book is that we have not been able to preserve our 'cultural-historical' personality in the face of machine and its unavoidable onslaught. Rather we have been crushed by events.

(1982: 6–7)

Gharbzadegi was a dominant discourse in Iranian intellectual life in the 1960s and 1970s; it explained the intellectuals' concept of and encounter with the West (Ashuri 1998: 134). Marxists were anti-capitalist and against 'cultural imperialism'; anti-Western nationalists sought 'cultural authenticity' (*esalat farhangi*) and religious groups campaigned against the 'cultural corruption' caused by the West (ibid.). Al-e Ahmad's major contribution was, first, to popularize the term *Gharbzadegi*, and second, to give a vivid, influential and powerful description of the personality of a Westernized individual. From this view, *Gharbzadegi* can be exemplary of an ethnographic and literary text that describes what Raymond Williams in *Marxism and Literature* (1977) and *Politics and Letters* (1981) calls 'structure of feeling'. By 'structure of feeling' Williams means 'dominant and emergent trends in global systems of political economy are completely registered in language, emotions, and the imagination' (Marcus and Fischer 1986/99: 78). The first paragraph of *Gharbzadegi* is rather a psychology of a Westernized personality that does not know who is he and what he seeks in this world except to be a 'good consumer' of Western industrial products. Al-e Ahmad gives a historical background of Iranian Westernization. Throughout the book, especially in the first chapter, Al-e Ahmad attempts to describe how machines, capitalism and consumerism culturally alienate and Westoxicate (*gharbzadeh kardan*) Iranian society, culture and people so as to act, think and feel in a certain way which directly contradicts their own authentic and traditional cultural patterns.

Many critics of *Gharbzadegi* did not grasp its ethnographic nature, and criticized it from a viewpoint incompatible and inconsistent with its aims. Wells lists these criticisms in his thesis on Al-e Ahmad: *Gharbzadegi* is historically inaccurate, theoretically weak and derivative; the political view behind the book is a simplistic adaptation of the Marxist–Leninist analysis of imperialism, and the definition of terms adds confusion to that analysis; the suggested remedies are a repetition in general terms of the views developed (Wells 1982: 71–5), and finally, ‘It is not clear in *Gharbzadegi*, what he means by culture’ (ibid.: 90).

As Al-e Ahmad himself explains, he intended to produce neither a historical account nor a philosophical and sociological study as such (1982a: 84); rather the book *Gharbzadegi* is just ‘an understanding of contemporary history of Iran contextualizing (*zaminehyabi*) a certain cultural situation’ (ibid.). This sort of understanding and contextualization is an ethnographic endeavour as such; and can be comprehended in the light of Al-e Ahmad’s ethnographic experiences. Hence, the originality of *Gharbzadegi* lies not in its historical and sociological analysis, nor in its proposed solutions, but in its simple observation of what was happening, in its ability to provide a clear and informative context for cultural changes in Iran as they affected the feelings and thought of people. Moreover, Al-e Ahmad’s concept of culture may be inferred from his description of different aspects of Iranian life and from his pathological and critical view of contemporary Iranian society. Al-e Ahmad’s ethnographic approach enables him effectively to describe and portray, rather than to explain, the faults and weaknesses of contemporary Iranian society and the Westernization policies applied to or imposed upon it. *Gharbzadegi* is the development of Al-e Ahmad’s ethnographic approach found in his earlier ethnographic writings *Owrazan*, *Tat Neshin-haye Boluk-e Zahra* and *Jazire-ye Kharg*.

Owrazan Published in 1954 this is a monograph describing a village situated on the borders of Mazandaran to the northwest of Tehran in an area called Taleqan. It is the first ethnographic study of a village in Iran (Zahedi-Mazandarani 1996); hence, it was an innovation at the time. It was also Al-e Ahmad’s first major ethnography, the subject being the village where his ancestors had been living. The book portrays various aspects of a typical Iranian village. Chapter 1 describes geography, traditional agriculture, local economy and transport. Chapter 2 covers history and religious customs; chapter 3, irrigation practices and chapter 4, death and funeral ceremonies. Food and clothes are discussed in chapters 5 and 6 and marriage and kinship in chapter 7. The social organization and morphology of the village are described in chapter 8 and folklore and language in chapter 9.

At the beginning of the monograph, Al-e Ahmad explains that his aim in writing is not just to introduce *Owrazan* but to bring rural areas to the attention of the state, scholars and the public too:

Although our villages form the core of our social organization as well as the foundation of our civilization, they are taken into account neither in our present policies nor in our educational schemes. No village attracts the curiosity

of our scholars or the interest of our government authorities or any sympathy on the part of our politicians. The few Orientalists and dialectologists who have visited some of our villages have published nothing concerning the way of life and customs of the people in those villages. The present account has been compiled with regard to such a minor subject as a village situated in North Persia.⁵²

He describes the vivid landscape of an Iranian village, which constitutes the core and basic structure of the Iranian social system. It is not just a simple written reminiscence of the author's homeland, but also a portrait of a typical Iranian village:

Owrazan is one of several thousand Persian villages where ploughing is done in a primitive way, and the villagers often fight over the water supply and are deprived of public baths and a sufficient supply of sugar for their tea. The ensuing notes have been taken almost at random during my six visits to the village and stay of not less than 12 months there. They form, therefore, neither a travel book nor a study of dialectology or folklore.

(1954: 5–6)

Al-e Ahmad has made no attempt to analyse his data from *Owrazan* theoretically, though it is significant for its vivid representation of the social and cultural structure and organization of an Iranian village.

Tat Neshin-haye Boluk-e Zahra Published in 1958 this book is similar to *Owrazan* and concerns the villages of Ebrahimabad and Sagazabad in Boluk-e Zahra, to the northwest of Tehran near Qazvin. The language of the peasants was Tati, a dialect of the old Azari language (hence the title of the book). Again, his connection with the area was through his family (1958b: 34). From the age of 6 or 7 he made regular trips from Tehran, at first with his father and subsequently on his own, spending most of his school holidays in Sagazabad. The book is based on diaries he kept of his visits, supplemented by a journey he carried out in the summer of 1955 accompanied by his brother Shams (*ibid.*: 15).

As with *Owrazan*, the book deals with the way of life, customs, folklore and language of the area, displaying nostalgia for rural culture, which he now sees as under threat. He regrets the disruption caused to rural society by the introduction of machines (*ibid.*: 35). He observes how machines are incompatible with aspects of traditional rural life:

A strange thing in Bo'in, as in Ebrahimabad, they wear peaked caps, shirts with collars and creased trousers, well, there too they have a mechanised mill... Inevitably the smoke and noise of machines cannot be tolerated with the customary felt hat of the villagers. You must have a hat with a brim so that the smoke doesn't get in your eyes and you can pull the brim down over your ears.

(*Ibid.*: 36)

Al-e Ahmad's aims in *Owrazan* and *Tat Neshinha* must be understood in line with his theory of Westoxication. As we saw, he believed that the machine would damage the traditional and established base of Iranian society, that is, rural civilization. He writes:

The attempt which was made in these two (*Owrazan* and *Tat Neshinha*) was intended to give a hurried sketch of the constructions of two or three small economic and cultural units, that is two or three villages of this land in the face of the onslaught of machines and machine civilization.

(1962: 11)

Al-e Ahmad shows how Ebrahimabad and Sagazabad are culturally different. Whereas the former is more urbanized and the people's behaviour was under the influence of modern urban culture, the latter was more traditionalist. For example, the former smoke cigarettes and wear city clothes but the latter smoke water-pipes and wear very old traditional peasant dress.

(Ibid.: 30)

As the earliest monographs about Iranian villages written and published by an Iranian ethnographer and academic social researcher, *Owrazan* and *Tat Neshinha* received great attention. Jamshid Behnam reviewed the latter in 1959 and wished others would attempt to provide this kind of ethnographic account (1999: 226). Ehsan Yarshater, too, reviewed the book (1999). However, both of them criticized the book on methodological grounds.

Jazireye Kharg It is, however, with the publication of *Jazireye Kharg* that the full strength of Al-e Ahmad's ethnographic approach to the problems of modernization can be seen. In the early summer of 1958, he visited Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf to carry out a brief study along the lines of *Owrazan* and *Tat Neshinha* on behalf of the NIOC, which was about to construct an oil terminal on the island. The fundamental problem he sees in Kharg is what he had argued in the other books: the invasion of machines and Western culture:

With the compulsory acceptance of such development, must our personality, existence and local culture be ignored and wholly submit to that which machines and their experts, who are both strangers to us and our customs and our mode of living, dictate?

(1960: 14)

Al-e Ahmad clearly explains his aim in writing the Kharg ethnography: 'They had brought bulldozers to clear everything away, and I wanted to rescue something from the middle of this' (quoted in Wells 1982: 130).⁵³ This point is also emphasized in the 'As an Introduction' to the book which says that the 'attempt in this pamphlet is to show the disappearance of economic and cultural unity of this land in the face of such an unavoidable fact' (1960: 11).

Lost in the crowd (English translation, 1985) Al-e Ahmad had a life full of varied experiences. He travelled around the world and visited most parts of Iran. These experiences are reflected in several travel accounts that he left behind. Furthermore, diary and autobiography were Al-e Ahmad's most favoured ethnographic method; many of his literary and scholarly works are based on autobiography. He wrote several travel books and many of his articles, short stories and novels are based on travel. *Safar-e Rus* (Journey to Russia), *Safar-e Farang* (Journey to The West), *Safar be Velayat-e Esra'il* (Journey to Israel) and *Khasi dar Miqat* (Lost in the Crowd) are his travel books, all based on usually brief visits.

As Daneshvar states, *Lost in the Crowd* is Al-e Ahmad's best travel account (1999b: 498). Published in 1964, it was the second outstanding Persian-language ethnography of the Hajj within Islamic anthropology. Contrary to Persian accounts of the Hajj of the nineteenth century and before, which describe what the writers observed on their way to Mecca but rarely mention their inner experiences,⁵⁴ Al-e Ahmad's account is a kind of autobiographical novel which explains his life, thought, feelings and direct experience of the Hajj. It opens by describing what motivated the author, as a sometime secular leftist, to undertake the pilgrimage. First, he openly reveals his lack of religious faith and his doubt about undertaking Islamic duties. 'I remember praying this morning in the pilgrim's assembly area . . . after who knows how many years. I probably quit praying during my first year at the university . . . This was the beginning of infidelity' (1985: 5).

His confessional style calls attention to his development and fate. As we saw, Al-e Ahmad explicitly calls himself a secular Muslim, who goes on the Hajj reluctantly, and sets out looking over his own shoulder as he learns, he says, a new vocabulary. He struggles to find an intellectual equivalence for his Islam.

Like Al-e Ahmad's other writings, *Lost in the Crowd* displays his view of *Gharbzadegi*. Al-e Ahmad's pilgrimage to Mecca, and his account of it must be located in the context of the Muslim intellectual atmosphere of the time. In the sixties and seventies, pilgrimage to Mecca became an intellectual fashion among both secular and religious people. In Shariati's view, for example, the Hajj was a means by which Muslims can experience and exercise their true Islamic identity and return to their authentic Islam (*bazgasht be khishtan eslami*). This was a general trend throughout the Islamic world. For example, in a study of Malay pilgrimage to Mecca, McDonnell argues that 'the importance of Islam and of the *hajj* as a symbol of "Muslimness" was growing as a sign of Malay power and Malay cultural identity' (1990: 122).

However, Muslim intellectuals such as Al-e Ahmad saw the Hajj not as a return to Islam but rather as a response to the cultural threat posed by Westernization. In spite of this, not only religious intellectuals but also Marxists and secularists went on the Hajj. In a review of several South Asian accounts of the Hajj, Metcalf explains how a Pakistani pilgrim named Abdullah Malik, in his *Testimony of the Heart: A Communist's Hajj Diary* (1970), 'struggles to find an intellectual equivalence for his Communism and Islam' (1990: 91).

The political context of the sixties drew Al-e Ahmad to the Hajj. Because of this, his account of the Hajj inspired some secular intellectuals, such as Javad Mojabi (1973) and Shokuh Mirzadegi (1977), to conduct the Hajj and write accounts. Mojabi, an eminent literary critic and writer, wrote *Ay qoum-e be Hajj rafteh* (1973). Both of them were influenced by Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* approach, and their accounts are full of descriptions of the influence of the West in the cities of Medina and Mecca. They especially focus on how Western consumer culture occupied the minds of the Arabs, and interpreted this as the result of Western cultural influences. This line of argument was one of Al-e Ahmad's major thoughts in *Gharbzadegi*.

Liberal nationalism

As discussed earlier, one of the political ideologies of the time in question was liberal nationalism, whose adherents included Dr Mosaddeq's followers and other secular nationalist intellectuals. In anthropology, liberal nationalism was mainly reflected in folklore studies. Here I will describe the state of folklore studies and the political context and implications of those studies.

Iranian folklorists warmly embraced Shariati's and Al-e Ahmad's calls for authenticity, and the campaign against Westernization and the attempt to revitalize an 'authentic Iranian culture' became an ideological justification for them. The most prominent figure in this folklore movement was Abolqasem Anjavi-Shirazi (1921–93). Anjavi collected folkloric materials extensively. He truly believed that Orientalists and Westerners had plundered the traditional heritage of Iran (1972: 50) and that 'the revitalization of folklore could help Iranians to cure the cultural disease of Iran, which resulted from modernization and westernization' (1992: 80). All Anjavi's folkloristic activities were based in the CIF.

Anjavi-Shirazi and folklore⁵⁵

In November 1961, Iranian national radio began to broadcast a monthly 30-minute programme called '*Rang-ha va Ahang-ha*' (Colours and Sounds), which contained folkloric materials. Seyyed Abolqasem Anjavi-Shirazi was the director, writer and scholar behind the programme. Having been extraordinarily well received by audiences, in December 1962 the programme was turned into a weekly programme with a new title, '*Ehsas va Andیشه*' (Feeling and Thought). From 1965 until the Revolution, it was broadcast under the title of '*Farhang Mardom*' (Popular Culture), and after the Revolution of 1979, it was extended into a weekly three-hour programme.

With these huge audiences, the National Radio Organization established a bureau of folklore for collecting folkloristic materials. Subsequently, the bureau became the CIF, a research centre equipped with a special museum, a library and the richest folklore archive in Iran. Over 4,000 people from all parts of the country, including Baluch, Turk, Turkman, Kurd and other Iranian minorities, contributed to the Centre and took part in the folklore movement

(Anjavi 1992: 21; Vakilian interview 2000). However, as Anjavi writes, 'At the beginning, two groups of people opposed the programmes: pro-western intellectuals who believed their folklore and Iranian traditional culture in general to be in opposition to civilization and modern progress; and naïve people who did not know what folklore is' (1974: 17–18). He added that not only some intellectuals but also the social context of the country was not ready to accept folklore as a valuable part of Iranian culture: 'When the Farhang Mardom programme began broadcasting [in 1965], the social circumstances were quite different from now [1974]. In those days, most citizens thought that folklore is superstition, and that the spreading of folklore results in the underdevelopment of the country' (ibid.: 19). He argued that this attitude is a reflection of the colonial policy of Western superpowers to exploit Iran because those countries want 'a gap between national culture and the people in order to pave the way for colonizers' (ibid.).

Through its radio programme, the Centre followed a very strong nationalist and anti-Western path, though it never overtly criticized Pahlavi state policies. To understand the political nature of the Centre, we need to know more about Anjavi-Shirazi, its Director. Born and raised in a religious family from Shiraz, Anjavi was a student of Master Jalaloddin Homa'i, one of the most prominent scholars of Persian classical literature. In his early youth, he became a member of the well-known circle of modernist literati led by Sadeq Hedayat. The first half of Anjavi's life was spent in political activities directed against the Pahlavi regime. At one time, he published a weekly political magazine called *Atashbar* (1947). After the 1953 coup d'état against Dr Mohammad Mosaddeq, he was arrested and exiled to Kharg Island. After return from exile he began a new scholarly life focusing on literature and folklore. He first published some works on Persian classical literature such as an edition of Hafez (1967) and a collection of well-known Persian poems, *Safineh ghazal* (1984). Later, he changed his focus and centred his entire work on folklore studies, which appeared mainly in the CIF.

Anjavi never abandoned his political activities but pursued them through folklore studies. Through the Centre, Anjavi pursued his nationalist goal that was mainly to awaken Iranians to the cultural repercussions of Westernization. He explained his decision to embark upon folklore,

Generally, present industrial modernity and its outcomes such as sedentarization of nomads, close communication between villages and cities, and mass media compel people consciously or unconsciously to abandon their historical and local folk culture... Therefore, we intended to impede this trend through any possible means. We wanted people to retain their spiritual relationship with their ancient customs and beliefs... and to be proud of being Iranian.

(1992: 20)

Anjavi explains that the majority of people are under the influence of 'Tehrani culture' because it is deemed the symbol of modernity, but actually people are

losing their authentic culture. 'Radio was the best medium to communicate to ordinary people around the country. God knows how much we tried in our radio programme to enlighten people and to eliminate illusions and baseless thoughts about Tehrani culture from the minds of people' (ibid.: 19).

Anjavi sees folklore not just as oral tradition but as encompassing the whole culture of a society. His plan to study Iranian folklore was based upon Hedayat's thought and work. In his Introduction to *Qesseha-ye Irani* (Iranian Fables, 1975) Anjavi introduces his long-term project. He explains that folklore encompasses all material, spiritual and social aspects of life (1975: 12) and devotes a separate section to addressing Iranian mothers in a lucid and persuasive passage:

Here I am speaking with educated mothers living in the great cities . . . In this age when nations' communications are close and they easily affect each other, in this age when superpowers are, with numerous colonial aims, changing our culture and identity into their own culture, if our children are not familiar with their national upbringing and customs, if they grow up without their own humane national culture, their personalities will take on the colour of an alien culture.

(Ibid.: 19)

In *Jashnha va Mo'taqadat Zemestan* (Winter Celebrations and Beliefs, 1976), Anjavi directly accused the Iranian state of ignoring Iranian national culture and customs, and writes: 'Alas, most of our customs, festivals and national folkloric beliefs have been destroyed, and it is not clear what attempts had been made to destroy them . . . But it has been the way of our politicians throughout history that when they find ideas, customs or anything else that opposes their ideas, they try to eliminate them' (ibid.: 11).

A glance at the topics that Anjavi and the Centre studied is enough to demonstrate their nationalist orientation. A major research focus was Ferdowsi and his masterpiece *Shahnameh* – the nationalist implications of which were discussed in Chapter 2 earlier. A two-volume monograph *Shahnameh va Mardom* (Shahnameh and the People) (1974) represents just a small part of the Centre's collection concerning Ferdowsi and the *Shahnameh*. Other subjects of research were Nowruz, Iranian national customs, Persian legends and proverbs – all topics that the liberal nationalists saw as the foundations of Iranian identity. Although they did not stress Islam and religion as such, they did not reject Shi'ism as part of Iranian identity, and indeed religious beliefs and values are included and respected in all the Centre's publications. This was contrary to the apparently secular policy of the state, and also to Hedayat's attitudes to Islam and religion; as explained in earlier chapters, the secular nationalist intellectuals of the first decades of the twentieth century saw religion and religious belief as *khorafat* (superstitions).

Parallel to Anjavi, two other outstanding liberal nationalists, Abolqasem Faqiri and Fazlollah Sobhi-Mohtadi, focused on Persian folklore. Though they were not politically as important or influential as Anjavi, they contributed greatly to the development of folklore and to the anti-Westernization movement of the time.

Sobhi-Mohtadi, in particular, was important for his pioneering role as the first folklorist to appear on radio, and for his extensive popularization of folklore. 'A teacher and storyteller, Sobhi Mohtadi started broadcasting on the Tehran radio in 1938 and continued his storytelling for several years, despite the opposition of radio officials and occasional cancellations' (Radhayrapetian 1990: 108). Sobhi was mainly interested in telling stories to children, and his collected materials were sent to him by his audiences from around the country. He published collections of folktales, such as *Afsaneh-ha* (1946) and *Afsaneha-ye bastani Iran va Majar* (Ancient Folktales from Iran and Hungary).

However, Sobhi's most significant contribution was his popularization of folklore among the masses. Unlike Hedayat and Anjavi, Sobhi did not try to give political significance to the study of folklore. As he explains in the preface to the first volume of *Afsaneha-ye bastani Iran va Majax*, the importance of Persian folklore is in its function as literature and as the foundation of language. He also regretted not paying enough attention to Persian tales from a literary point of view. However, he was aware of the nationalist value of folklore and argued that narratives are the 'roots of Iran's ancient culture'. He encouraged his readers to preserve the culture of their country (ibid.: 110).

Many local writers and scholars began to gather folklore. Most of them knew nothing about the scientific aspects of folklore but only its nationalist significance. Sadeq Homayuni and Abolqasem Faqiri were the most outstanding provincial folklorists of the time. Both of them studied and collected the folklore of Shiraz. Because of Pasargadae and the ruins of Darius's palace near Shiraz, the city was and still is the favourite city of Iranian nationalists. Mohammad Reza Shah staged his Celebration of 2,500 years of monarchy in Shiraz, and the annual celebrations of Jashn-haye Honar va Mardom were held there. All this gave very strong nationalist sentiments to the local people and the government. Homayuni published a few very important collections of folklore, including *Ta'ziyeh dar Iran* (The Passion Play in Iran), *Farhang-e mardom-e Sarvestan* (The Culture of the People of Sarvestan) and *Taraneha-ye mahalli Fars* (Local Folksongs of Fars).

Faqiri, too, was important in Iranian folklore studies, mainly because of his efforts to popularize folklore among the masses. He was a teacher and he produced a folklore programme on Shiraz radio. Before he began his radio programme, he published *Taranehaye Mahalli Shiraz* (Folksongs of Shiraz, 1963) and *Qessehaye Mardom Fars* (Folk Narratives of Fars, 1970).

Socialism

One of the dominant oppositional political discourses of the period studied was Marxism and socialism. Socialists were interested in anthropological knowledge and produced some valuable ethnographic literature. The major link between the socialists and anthropology was their nationalist and populist policies. These sought to establish a socialist state based on the masses (*tudeh*); hence the largest socialist group called itself Hezb-e Tudeh. *Tudeh* and *khalq* (people) were the keywords and emblems of the Left and Marxist ideology in Iran. Mashayekhi,

reviewing the socialist groups in Iran, explains the significance of *khalq*: ‘Strongly influenced by a populist-nationalistic perspective rooted in the Third-Worldist ideology of the 1960s, young radical Iranian intellectuals increasingly identified themselves with the “anti-imperialism” project, defining the central political question as liberation of the nation (from imperialist domination) by the Khalq. They called their utopia the People’s Republic’ (1992: 91).

The socialist concept of *khalq*, as the deprived and oppressed masses, was very much in line with the Islamic term *mostaza‘fin*.

Whereas the religious sector of the intelligentsia held that the only way to serve God is to serve his creatures, the secular populace extolled the Khalq as the force of historical transformation. While the secular populist saw the rule of the oppressed as a matter of historical necessity, the Muslim populists perceived of it as a matter of Islamic duty and moral obligation.

(Dorraj 1992: 120)

Khalq ideology required its adherents to use and represent the language and culture of the masses. Generally, in the 1960s and 1970s, Marxist and socialist ideology was very influential among the literati, and socialist literature increasingly flourished. Some of the most prominent figures such as Samad Behrangi, Ahmad Shamlu, Gholam Hossein Sa‘edi and Mahmud Dowlatabadi imbued their works with Marxist ideology. For example, in his well-known novel, *Kalidar*, Dowlatabadi depicts ‘life and class struggle in Northeast Iran: the peasants, urban petite bourgeoisie, and intellectuals – Muslim or not – unite in the fight against landlords and capitalists and the oppressive forces that support them’ (Talattof 2000: 74). Among socialist scholars, only the literati focused on folklore studies. Behrangi, Shamlu and Sa‘edi focused on folklore. The themes of this literature revolved around equality, justice and freedom.

Samad Behrangi and Azari folklore

Samad Behrangi (1939–68) was a writer, folklorist and ethnographer from Tabriz. As a social critic and political activist, Behrangi believed, ‘One should continually question his environment, oppose injustice, struggle against tyranny, and work actively to change the ills of society’ (Hoogland and Hegland 1976: xiv). Behrangi was the most popular Leftist writer among both Azarbayjani and Persian people. Socially and philosophically, he campaigned for social justice while politically he supported Leftist guerrilla groups. As Boroujerdi states, he was deeply ‘influenced by the Russian literary tradition of social realism, the guerrilla warfare of American revolutionaries, and the Cultural Revolution that was occurring in China at the time’ (1996: 46).

However, what characterizes Behrangi most is his commitment to his native culture, namely that of Azarbayjan, or more precisely Azarbayjani peasant culture. Most of Behrangi’s folkloric and literary works stemmed from his own

personal ethnographic experiences among the rural population. Behrangi was 'a wandering peasant from "Khosraw Shah" and "Mamaqan" and "Dehkhareqan"' (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 136), and spent all his short life among the villagers. This experience allowed him to observe how local Azarbayjani culture was in danger of vanishing. In his time, the central government did not allow the use of Azari Turkish language and custom in schools and other official places. As discussed in the previous chapter, cultural unification and Persianization was a fundamental premise of Pahlavi policy. All non-Persian cultures of the country, including Turkish, were suppressed and marginalized. Behrangi tried to respond to and oppose this cultural unification policy by focusing on his native folk culture and by expressing extreme pro-Turkish sentiments. Gholam Hossein Sa'edi, a close friend of Behrangi, explains:

He loved his mother tongue [Azari Turkish, the language spoken in Azarbayjan] more than one could imagine and was extremely skilful in reading and writing it. He wrote and published.

He was not afraid of problems. He was only surprised that he didn't have the right to publish in his mother tongue. He was determined to collect Azarbayjani folklore, and visited all the little villages and isolated towns. Through his collections, he showed what strength there could be in a language.

At the same time he prepared a book of poems from this folklore but, once again, publication was prevented. He decided to collect Azarbayjani folk tales, and with the cooperation of his closest friend, Behruz Dehqani, he fulfilled this ambition, then translated two volumes of the tales into Persian and published them.

(1976: xviii–xix)

Despite his very short life, Behrangi became one of the most influential Iranian folklorists and, more importantly, spokesman for Azarbayjani rural culture and 'the village language of Azarbayjan, this wakeful conscience of an exiled culture' (Al-e Ahmad 2000: 36). Although he left us a host of ethnographic and folkloristic accounts, most commentators consider Behrangi mainly a writer of children stories. His folkloric and ethnographic works have not so far been examined, so I will try to introduce this aspect of Behrangi's writing with regard to his political thought.

Behrangi believed the way to a deep understanding of a society lay through participant observation and direct experience. As he writes: 'There are several ways to become familiar with society and find answers to its questions. One way is to visit villages and towns, and associate with different kinds of people' (1976: 78). His contributions to Iranian folklore and ethnographic studies can be divided into three categories: (1) collections of Azarbayjani folklore and translations of them into Persian; (2) critical ethnographic discussions of folklore and rural cultural issues, in particular, educational problems and (3) literary works focusing on Azarbayjani folk culture with respect to folk language.

(1) *Collections and translations of Azarbayjani folklore* Most of Behrangi's folklore collection is published in the two-volume *Afsane-haye Azarbayjan* (Folktales of Azarbayjan, 1963). Almost all the tales and legends in the book reflect socialist ideology, a desire for social justice and equality, and his aim of stimulating peasants and workers to rebel against capitalism, the bourgeoisie and the Shah as the symbol of oppression and tyranny as well as Western imperialism. Through the tales, Behrangi portrays the economic deprivation suffered by the rural poor, destroying common middle-class myths and misconception about villagers. Not only *Afsane-haye Azarbayjan* but all Behrangi's other stories portray the situations of oppressed classes, especially peasants and rural workers. His characters are the victims of their social conditions. The class traits of all his characters comply with Marxist models of class society and historical materialism. He represents the elite and the bourgeoisie, peasants, proletariat and intellectuals according to classical definitions.

(2) *Behrangi's critical ethnographic studies* These focus on the educational problems of rural schools and the Iranian education system, and most of them are published in two books. The first, *Kandukav dar Masa'el Tarbiyati-ye Iran* (Investigation into the Educational Problems of Iran, 1963), is a collection of ethnographic accounts of educational problems in Azerbaijan's rural areas in the 1960s. As far as I am aware, it is the only published ethnography of the Iranian education system, apart from Al-e Ahmad's *The School Principal*. The book consists of several narratives based on Behrangi's observations of the schools where he had taught as well as of the bureaucratic problems of the education system of Iran in general. In 'Bazrasi-ye farhangi va anva' va aqşam-e an' (educational inspection and its different types), for example, Behrangi vividly criticizes school inspectors for not being committed to doing their official professional duties – inspecting the state of the schools and the quality of education – honestly.

The second book, *Majmu'eh-ye Maqalat* (Collected Essays), consists of Behrangi's various historical discussions of Azarbayjani folklore and legends. This collection of essays is not ethnographic; rather it reflects Behrangi's political and ideological concerns about folklore.

(3) *Behrangi's literary works focusing on folk culture* His field of specialization was children's literature. He published many short stories, which are a reflection of Behrangi's own life, spent among ordinary people and peasants. In the Introduction to their translation of five of Behrangi's short stories, Hoogland and Hegland have described the influence of ethnographic experience and socialist ideology on his literary writings:

His style is reflective of the everyday speech of the common people: simple sentences and colloquial vocabulary... As a writer, he attempted to inform city dwellers about peasants... 'One Peach – A Thousand Peaches' tells of two peasant boys who try to secretly grow their own peach tree in the walled orchard of a wealthy landlord. During the course of the story the reader learns about the poverty of villagers and the inequalities of land tenure. 'The Little Sugar Beet Vendor', which also has a village setting, deals with a very

poor but proud family which refuses to sacrifice its honour for the sake of monetary rewards. '24 Restless Hours' presents a glimpse into the lives of migrants trying to eke out a living in urban Tehran.

(1976: xii–xiii)

Many of Behrangi's short stories drew from Azarbayjani folklore. 'Kachal-e Kaftar-baz' (The Bald Pigeon Keeper), a creative restatement of the Azarbayjani folk fable 'Adi and Budi', and 'Kor Oghlu va Kachal Hamzeh' are examples.

Despite Behrangi's important contribution to the development of Iranian folklore studies and his considerable role in popularizing folklore among many Iranian intellectuals (Darvishiyan 2000), his folkloristic studies suffer from many methodological weaknesses, resulting from either his ideological biases and ideas or his lack of professional training in anthropology and folklore. One weakness is that the place, time, informants and methods of collecting the legends and folk materials are not clear. He just says that the stories are Turkish legends from Azarbayjan Province, but Iranian Azarbayjan is a vast area, and some of the legends are common among all Iranians. A second weakness is related to the translation of the legends. Because of the political restrictions, Behrangi was not allowed to publish Turkish texts, and he had to translate them into Persian. He does not explain how far he has changed and manipulated the original in the translation process. Given Behrangi's own talent as a story writer, it is quite possible that he has made changes according to his own style and mode. A comparison of the folk legends collected and narrated by Behrangi and the stories he himself created shows that there is no clear difference between them. A third problem is that he has openly coloured the legends with his socialist ideas. For example, the legends of 'Gol-e Khandan' (The Laughing Flower), 'Parandeh Abi' (The Blue Bird) and 'Gorg va Rubah' (Wolf and Fox) are full of Marxist dogma about the significance of work in shaping human life and nature, the conflict between ruler and ruled, and the need to struggle against kings and landlords. It is not too much to say Behrangi coloured and stylized the fables according to his Marxist concerns.

Gholam Hossein Sa'edi: culture of poverty

Gholam Hossein Sa'edi (1935–85) was a qualified psychiatrist and a well-known writer. He began to study and write about cultural themes in the 1950s; by the 1970s, he was one of the more important and influential socialist intellectuals. He published extensively on different aspects of contemporary Iranian culture and society, including at least 19 plays, 1 novel, 8 short story collections and 3 ethnographic monographs. Regarding Sa'edi's descriptive and ethnographic approach one can classify his literary writings as ethnographic accounts rather than just fictional ones.

Sa'edi was Al-e Ahmad's colleague at the ISSR in the Office for Persian Monographs. Like Behrangi, he was from Azarbayjan, and his first two published monographs are based on field studies in that province. In 1963, the ISSR

published *Ilkhchi*, a study of an Azarbayjani village. In 1965, *Khiyav ya Meshkin Shahr*, an account of a market town and the local Shahsevan nomads, appeared. *Ahle Hava* (People of the Wind, 1966), based on fieldwork on the Persian Gulf coast, is a psychoanalytical study of a spirit possession cult.

In his folkloric and literary works Sa'edi depicts rural people and the poor. This was one of the focuses of Socialist and Committed Literature (*adabeyat mote'ahhed*) of the pre-revolutionary era (Sepanlu 1988: 18). Sa'edi's ethnographies evoke Oscar Lewis's classic Mexican study *Five families* (1959); all of them represent the 'culture of poverty' among rural communities. It is said that Sa'edi symbolized the 'anti-Western tendency' in Iran (Talattof 2000: 81) since he believed poverty to be the result of inequality and capitalism, and, hence, that the critical present situation of poverty in Iran was the result of the Westernization and modernization policies of the Pahlavi state.

Sa'edi's writings did a great deal to popularize ethnography, and they are probably the best examples of literary ethnography in Iran. Although he occasionally makes assertions about various personalities and their motives, he makes no attempt at analysis; whatever commentary there is has to do mostly with the culture of poverty.

Ahmad Shamlu and the folklore of Tehran

Ahmad Shamlu (1925–96) was one of the most brilliant contemporary modern Persian poets as well as being a folklorist. Before the publication of *Ketab-e Kucheh*, his greatest folklore study, he first showed an anthropological bent in his use of Persian folkloric language and cultural themes in his poems. The fifth section of *Hava-ye Tazeh* (Fresh Air, 1957) included several folkloric poems such as 'Pariha' (Fairies), and 'Sargozasht' (Fate). The sixth section of *Bagh-e A'ineh* (Mirror Garden, 1960) includes one of Shamlu's most famous poems 'Qesseh Dokhtaran Naneh Darya' (The Fable of Naneh-Darya's Daughters), which is versed according to a folksong rhythm.

Shamlu's most significant contribution to Iranian anthropology is *Ketab-e Kucheh*, a thirty-nine volume encyclopaedia of Persian folklore. The project first emerged in the monthly literary magazine *Ketab-e Hafteh*, which Shamlu edited. The first issue of *Ketab-e Hafteh* came out in September 1961 with a section on folklore called 'Ketab-e Kucheh', written by Shamlu. It included riddles, fables, folk poetry and lullabies from different parts of Iran, and a special part for the Tehran vernacular dialect of Persian. Fifteen issues of *Ketab-e Hafteh* were published containing folklore materials. The book '*Ketab-e Kucheh*' encouraged many to join the folklore studies movement of the 1960s (Mojabi 1998: 31). After the magazine *Ketab-e Hafteh* was banned, Shamlu went on to publish his folklore studies in other magazines such as *Khusheh* (1967), and *Ketab-e Jom'eh* (1979). In 1978, Shamlu published the first volume of *Ketab-e Kucheh*. By 1998, 10 volumes had been published and 19 volumes were in press (*ibid.*: 73). The encyclopaedia is arranged alphabetically and consists of folk beliefs, customs, rituals, religious rules, games, folksongs, curses, proverbs and so forth.

Shamlu did not clarify his aims, methods or theoretical framework in *Ketab-e Kucheh* except for a few words in the introduction to the first volume: 'I began to collect colloquial terms and idioms at age 12...today I don't remember what propelled me into folklore' (Shamlu 1978: 6; also in Mojabi 1998: 33).

In order to understand the political and ideological significance of *Ketab-e Kucheh* one must take into account Shamlu's own political and ideological concerns. He should be considered a member of the Iranian folklorist literati along with Hedayat, Jamalzadeh and Nima Yushij, those who, as we saw in previous chapters, employed folklore as a modern literary device to achieve political reform. Ideologically, Shamlu was secular, modernist and socialist. In literature, he followed Nima Yushij, the founder of modern Persian poetry, and he himself became a leading iconoclastic poet. In the late 1940s, he was an active member of the Tudeh Party and contributed extensively to Leftist periodicals such as *Nameh Mardom*, *Payam Now*, *Mahnameh Mardom* and *Kabutar Solh*, which addressed the masses and aimed to popularize Persian literature (Mojabi 1998: 17). After the fall of Mosaddeq, Shamlu ceased active involvement in any political party and with ideologies such as Stalinism and Marxism. However, as one of his close friends maintains, 'he never abandoned socialism' (ibid.: 57).

Furthermore, *Ketab-e Kucheh* has a clear political significance. The book represents a secular portrait of contemporary Iranian folk culture. Contrary to all other existing Persian folkloric encyclopaedias, such as *Amsal va Hakam* by Dehkhoda, and *Farhang Farsi Amiyaneh* by Abol-Hasan Najafi (2000), which limit themselves to acceptable, normative Persian folklore, Shamlu did not exclude cultural taboos such as obscene words and phrases, sexual expressions and irrereligious or anti-religious themes. Because of this, between 1980 and 1995 the state did not allow this work to be published.

Professional folklorists

Folklore was one of the favourite genres of cultural studies and publications in Iran in the 1960s and 1970s. We could say that the Iranian folklore movement reached its heyday at that time. Because of this, almost all popular, intellectual and academic periodicals and newspapers of the time warmly welcomed folklore and were full of folklore materials and studies. According to the most comprehensive bibliography of Persian anthropological articles, *Fehrest Maqalat Mardomshenasi* (1977), before 1969, 3,108 anthropological articles were published in Iranian papers and journals. About 90 per cent of these articles are about Iranian folk culture and folklore. The list of journals covered shows that a wide range, from the most religious to the most secular and socialist, were interested in anthropological and folklore topics. For example, most of the Islamic journals of the time such as *Ayin Eslam*, *Peyke Eslam*, *Jahan Akhlaq*, *Ma'aref Eslami*, *Maktabe Tashayof* and *Maktabe Eslam* are included. Today articles about folklore are rarely found in religious periodicals in Iran.

Folklore was part of all literary and popular magazines, including nationalist magazines such as *Ayandeh*, *Anjoman Farhang Iran Bastan*, *Iranshahr*, *Sharq*, *Honar va Mardom*

and *Farhang Iran Zamin*. The most prestigious literary periodicals of the time, such as *Armaghan*, *Sokhan*, *Ferdowsi*, *Khusheh*, *Nashriyeh Daneshkadeh Adabiyat Daneshgah Tehran* and *Farhang va Zendegi*, all carried folklore articles. None of these periodicals was ideologically or politically neutral. Some were socialist or Marxist, such as *Khusheh*, some monarchist, such as *Farhang Iran Zamin* and some Islamicist.

In the 1960s, however, there developed a group of folklorists who did have a more professional approach towards folklore and anthropological studies. Strictly speaking, they were not socialist, Islamicist or nationalist in a political sense, though their studies were not opposed to the nationalism or monarchism of the state and received much support from government organizations and press. They mainly focused on such issues as everyday life, local traditional music, folk poetry, local dialects and the history of Iranian folklore. Most of their folklore and anthropological studies were published in the form of essays and articles in the magazine and periodicals mentioned earlier, but they tended to be more systematic and academic than the other contributors.

Ali Bolukbashi,⁵⁶ one of the officers of the CIAAnth in the 1970s, was among the most active professional folklorists. Having studied social anthropology in Oxford, he was the first professional Iranian folklorist to get a PhD in anthropology. Bolukbashi was born in Tehran, and the folklore of Tehran was one of his main concerns. He published a series of articles about Tehrani folk life in the monthly magazine *Honar va Mardom*. He was the editor of the magazine *Mardomshenasi va Farhang Ammeh*, published by CIAAnth in the 1970s. He also published a textbook for secondary schools, *Farhange Ammeh* (Folklore, 1977). In recent years Bolukbashi has published two important books on Iranian folklore. One is about Iranian coffeehouses (1996) and the other is about the *Ta'ziyeh* (Passion Play, 1997).

Professional folklorists focused mainly on folk customs, language and art in different parts of Iran. Some, such as Katira'i (1979, 1999) and Bolukbashi (1961a,b), studied Tehrani folk culture. Others, such as Sadeq Homayuni (1992, 1998), focused on the folklore of Shiraz. Ebrahim Shakurzadeh (1959, 1967), Sadeq Kiya (1955), Manuchehr Sotudeh (1954) and Mohamad Ja'far Mahjub (1962) were the most eminent Iranian professional folklorists in the period under discussion.

This group did much systematic and academic work, they pursued the nationalist agenda. A brief look at the topics they studied shows that they mainly focused on the folk culture of Tehran, Shiraz and Mashhad. All these cities have always been important from the Iranian nationalist view. Shiraz was the capital of the ancient Persian Empire, while Tehran is the present capital of Iran and the Pahlavi regime saw its culture and language as the standard for Iranian national culture in all respects. Mashhad is the capital of Khorasan, the largest province of Iran and the location of the shrine of Imam Reza, which is a part of Iranian religio-national identity; the city has been politically important in pre- and post-revolutionary times. Both Pahlavi Shahs bore the name Reza, and despite their obvious disagreement with Islamic politics, they claimed that they were followers of the Imam. It is known among the people that Mohammad Reza Shah believed he had been *Kamar-basteh* by Imam Reza, that is, that Imam Reza had always supported him.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been the politics of ethnographic representation during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941–79). Throughout the second Pahlavi period various political discourses – monarchic nationalist, liberal nationalist, socialist and Islamist – emerged and each one produced its own ethnographic writings. I have classified these discourses into two major categories: those supporting and those opposing modernization.

In the pro-modernization discourse, we have examined the genesis and development of academic anthropology, liberal nationalist folklore studies and nationalist monarchic ethnographic writings. The institutionalization of anthropology in academic and research centres was the major development in the discipline. This growth was not only ‘due to the politically “innocuous” character of most of their findings’ (Enayat 1974: 5) but also because the state found anthropology useful in pursuing its secularization, modernization and Westernization policies. Government recognition of the necessity of social science research for the formulation and execution of its modernization policies was the most important factor in the growth of Iranian anthropology at this time.

Furthermore, in order to invent new national symbols based on Iranian ancient culture, the state’s monarchic nationalist policy required the application of anthropological knowledge to revitalize pre-Islamic Iranian culture. This was an additional political motivation for the state to fund anthropological research. To accomplish this aim, the CIAAnth was much expanded and a large number of new research centres established. As we will see in the next chapter, the over-politicization of the discipline made it vulnerable in the face of political changes.

The second part of this chapter focused on anti-modernization. None of the trained anthropologists contributed to this discourse, having agreed to be part of the state bureaucratic system and to take advantage of its financial and political power. Even those who attempted to indigenize the discipline accepted the Western framework and values. But time witnessed the emergence of a new generation of activist folklorists and anthropologists, mainly among the literati.

The main characteristic of this group was anti-Western sentiments and thoughts. In his periodization of modern Iranian literature, Sepanlu, a leading Iranian writer, believes that what distinguishes the 1960s from other periods is the decade’s ‘alertness regarding Westoxication, transcending the inferiority complex toward the West’s intellectual exports, and gaining an Eastern, Asian, Islamic, Iranian identity’ (Mashayekhi 1992: 96). The literati found anthropology and folklore a form of cultural representation suitable for their political goals.

The repercussion of this political application on the discipline was to reinforce the literary trend in the Iranian anthropological tradition that was established by Jamalzadeh and Hedayat in the first decades of the twentieth century. This trend was ideological, political and subjective in nature. Moreover, because none of the scholars of this group had academic experience or familiarity with anthropology, their studies suffered from many fundamental methodological flaws. Believing anthropology to be a Western discipline, intellectual anthropologists generally did

not care to produce texts acceptable to academicians and according to academic criteria. On the contrary, they addressed the masses and, therefore, their major benchmark was popularity and influence among ordinary people.

I should emphasize that, despite the massive growth of anthropological enterprises in the period under discussion, the discipline did not find a firm academic base. Most anthropological research activities were done within administrative and non-academic contexts such as the Ministry of Culture and Art or under the supervision of the Plan and Budget Organization. As we saw, only Tehran University had a Department of Anthropology, while the University of Mazandaran offered anthropology courses. There were very few theoretical and methodological texts in anthropology available in Persian. Also, there were very few trained professional ethnographers. As we saw, the most eminent figures were literati and intellectuals such as Al-e Ahmad and Sa'edi. Therefore, anthropology suffered from a lack of disciplinary academic development.

Furthermore, nationalism and socialism provided a broad context and fertile ground for the growth of anthropological enterprises. However, following the Islamic Revolution of 1978–9, anthropological enterprises were banned in the first years of the Islamic Republic. Because disciplinary development had not been genuine or academically established, following a political shift in the country, the discipline lost its significance.

Yet, as we shall see, in the 1980s the discipline found a new political context, based on a new ideological conflict and challenge. As I shall argue, the Islamicists came to use anthropology against their rivals and to challenge both secular and nationalist ideologies. On the other hand, secular intellectuals came to produce anthropological literature to express their own view of Iranian culture.

5 Anthropology and Islamism

Iranian anthropology in the 1980s

Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6 I examine Iranian anthropology after the 1979 Revolution. The present chapter focuses on the first decade, namely 1979–89. Following the Revolution, all anthropological activities ceased until the end of the Iran–Iraq war (1980–8), when the state adopted a new nationalist policy.

With the advent of the newly established Islamic government, the revolutionaries began to challenge the core ideological nature of all the social and human sciences, in particular anthropology. From their ideological point of view, social science disciplines were secular, Western, nationalist and colonialist in nature, all features contrary to the ideals of the Revolution. Accordingly, in the so-called *Enqelab Farhangi* (Cultural Revolution) the universities were closed and the human sciences were put under ideological pressure. The government began to oust academic staff; many faculty members of the Department of Anthropology of Tehran University and the Institute for Social Studies and Research (ISSR) lost their positions. Other anthropological activities decreased and for about a decade the discipline was treated as illegitimate. Yet, because there was a need to revitalize Shi'ite culture and identity, the revolutionaries began to produce some kinds of ethnographic texts.

In this chapter, I provide a comprehensive account of the theoretical and ideological conflicts between anthropology and the forces of the Revolution. In the first section I discuss the fall of anthropology in the early years; then I analyse three major conflicts between anthropology and the ideology of the Revolution: Islamic versus pre-Islamic identities; secularism versus religion; and the culture of anthropology versus the political culture of Islam.

In analysing these conflicts I examine a new ethnographic text, *Farhang-e Jebheh* (Culture of the War Front). When discussing the ideological conflicts between established Western anthropology and the political culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I examine anthropology as a science of culture that has its own culture, which is not always compatible with all political systems. I shall demonstrate that the culture of anthropology contrasted and conflicted theoretically and ideologically with the ideology of the Revolution in its early years. More recently, however, these conflicts were resolved, and the discipline has found a new political basis and importance, as I shall show in Chapter 6.

A Revolution against anthropology

The Islamic Revolution (1979) brought great change to the whole structure of Iranian universities,⁵⁷ to the intellectual atmosphere, to research activities, to individual academic disciplines and in particular to anthropology. From the outset, the Islamic revolutionaries were hostile toward the humanities and the social science disciplines.⁵⁸ These disciplines were said to have come from the West and to contain ideas inconsistent with the Islamic world view and Sharia rules, and might lead students away from Islam (Soroush 1987: 190–2).

Furthermore, at the beginning of the Revolution there were harsh political clashes between the Islamicists and the secularists, mainly Marxist political groups; the universities became the battleground for these clashes. To stifle dissident groups, in 1981 the government closed down the universities. Most of the eminent academic staff of the Department of Anthropology of Tehran University were dismissed, including Mahdi Soraiya,⁵⁹ Hossein Adibi,⁶⁰ Parviz Varjavand (Professor of Archaeological Anthropology), Zafardokht Ardalani, Houshang Pourkarim and Ehsan Naraghi. In addition, the government banned the presence of non-Iranian anthropologists in the Faculty.

When the universities reopened in 1983, the social sciences were restructured and reactivated, but anthropology had lost its academic position. There remained only five anthropological courses that social science students could take as options. In 1987 three of these courses (physical anthropology, anthropology of Iran and anthropology of kinship) were dropped, and only two (a compulsory course in general anthropology and an option in cultural anthropology) remained. However, the Department of Anthropology of Tehran University did not accept the new programme and tried to persuade the Council for Cultural Revolution (CCR) to change it (Ruholamini interview 2000).

Following these events, anthropological research suffered a further sharp decline from the already low levels to which it had dropped just after the Revolution. The Department of Anthropology of the ISSR became inactive. Javad Safinezhad, who was Head of the Department until 1999, told me: ‘After the Revolution the [new] director⁶¹ of the Faculty told me, “Anthropological studies of nomads and rural areas are no longer important and have lost their relevance to the country. Therefore, you as the head of department should only try to manage the existing research materials.” Then, he himself [the director] damaged a large number of the department’s research reports and documents.’ Safinezhad maintained that: ‘In fact, since the Revolution, the department has been in decline, since the only project the department has carried out is the bibliography of Iranian tribal studies, which includes Persian sources about Iranian nomadic tribes’ (Interview 2000).

Folklore studies also declined drastically. As already mentioned, in the 1970s, folklore studies by the Centre for Folklore (CIF) of the National Radio and Television Organization flourished but, after the Revolution, the CIF became inactive and in 1999 it closed down (Vakilian interview 2000). The Centre for Iranian Anthropology (CIAnt) was reorganized in 1971 and remained active

throughout the 1970s, but after the Revolution it was closed for three years (Mirshokra'i interview 2000). According to an official report, archaeology also lost its position and until 1996 no archaeological excavation was carried out (Mossavi 1999: 74). The Society for Ancient Iranian Culture (*Anjoman Farhang Iran Bastan*), which had been a very vigorous research centre,⁶² was also closed.

An ideological explanation

The decline of anthropology after the Revolution can be attributed to various factors, academic, political and social. Some authors emphasize the academic factors. They point to a range of shortcomings, including the absence of educational facilities such as a professional society, the lack of experienced and trained anthropologists, the lack of resources, unawareness of the latest theoretical developments (Amanollahi-Baharvand 1996: 38–48), the theoretical immaturity of anthropology (Kousari 1998: 137–50), the restriction of research problems, the lack of relationships between Iranian anthropologists and those in other Third World countries, the absence of government support (Farhadi 1994a: 85), the ambiguity of theoretical concepts in Iranian anthropology, the lack of practical uses for anthropology (Maqsoudi 1998: 151–60), the general epistemological crisis of legitimacy in anthropology (Tehrani *et al.* 1987; Mahdi and Lahsaizadeh 1996; Azad-Armaki 1999) and the theoretical inability of anthropology to deal with Iranian socio-cultural questions (Azad-Armaki 1999: 123). These issues have been discussed as the major problems of anthropology in Iran in recent decades.

Some explain the crisis of Iranian anthropology through a micro-sociological analysis. For instance, Ruholamini believes it to be due to the internal conflicts between different departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Tehran University.⁶³ He states:

After the Revolution there was no anthropologist among the Faculty heads, who were sociologists, economists, lawyers and so on. With few exceptions, none of those people had a positive attitude towards anthropology, and none supported it.

(Interview 2000)

Others have emphasized factors such as the political sensitivity of social science and the lack of freedom of speech (Shahshahani 1986; Mahdi and Lahsaizadeh 1996: 40–7). Shahshahani argues that, since the Revolution, various religious and theoretical criticisms have been levelled at anthropology. The aim of these criticisms was to establish an Islamic anthropology – a moral anthropology – with a very specific concept of human beings and their duties. Hence, descriptive and analytical studies should have an Islamic basis. She has also argued that anthropology in Third World countries, including Iran, has to define its aims in relation to government principles and policies. Therefore, there have always been certain

political restrictions for anthropology. Shahshahani writes:

Third World governments are generally repressive and do not want the public to be aware and informed. Anthropology by nature discloses the everyday life of people outside large cities; it is reasonable to assume that the task of anthropology is often inimical to those third world governments. (1986: 81)

Another possible explanation is to attribute the eclipse of anthropological activities to the critical social conditions caused by the Revolution and the Iran–Iraq war (1980–8). Although these events affected the general state of society, they cannot explain the crisis of anthropology alone; why did they not affect other social science disciplines, too? For instance, according to an official report, between 1993 and 1998, there were 4,670 BA and 145 MA students registered in sociology (Mahdi and Lahsaizadeh 1996: 23), and many new research centres, sociological and cultural studies journals were established (*ibid.*: 48–62).

Nevertheless, each of these explanations has some merit, in that each demonstrates the existence of a critical state, though none of them takes full account of the role of socio-political and cultural change in society since the Revolution. In my opinion, to explain the crisis, one needs to study the nature of anthropological concepts and discourses and their relevance to recent socio-political changes, in particular how they conflicted with the discourse of the Islamic Revolution. I argue that this conflict limited the expansion of anthropology, but has meanwhile, in one way or another, provided a new basis for Iranian anthropology and extended its horizons. To demonstrate this, I shall examine the following sites of conflict between anthropology and the Revolution:

- 1 The revolutionary discourse was, at its inception, non-nationalist, even anti-nationalist, in that it sought to revitalize and invigorate the Shi'ite identity of Iran as an alternative to the nationalist pre-Islamic identity promoted by the Pahlavi regime. Here we shall examine the role of anthropology in the conflict between Islamic and nationalist identities.
- 2 With the 'traditionalist' orientation of the Revolution, the notion of tradition and its elements have become strongly politicized, and the core concepts of Iranian anthropology have become a sensitive political domain. Over the last two decades, as most intellectuals, elites, students and youth have increasingly adopted a critical attitude towards the revolutionaries, so religious traditions, seen as markers of loyalty to the ideology of the Revolution, have become a less attractive topic for study. Anthropology, as the study of tradition, lost its social legitimacy and popularity. Here, we shall examine the role of anthropology in the conflict between tradition and modernity.

Anthropology in the conflict between Islamic and national identity

As shown earlier, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as an alternative ideology to Islam, intellectuals disseminated a romantic nationalism,

which was used by the Pahlavi dynasty as a source of their political legitimacy. The Islamic Revolution was, in a sense, a reaction to that nationalism. However, the Revolution was intrinsically anti-nationalist not only because nationalism was the political ideology of the Pahlavis, but also because of the many philosophical challenges it posed to Islam.⁶⁴

Mehrzad Boroujerdi, an Iranian political scientist has vividly summarized the conflict between Islamic identity and national identity:

The Revolution of 1979 brought cultural concerns to the forefront of deliberations among scholars of Iranian studies. Significantly, these deliberations have produced a chasm between proponents of two contesting views of Iranian national identity. Protagonists of the politically triumphant view have offered Shi'i Islam as the main pillar of Iranians' collective identity. Meanwhile, an increasing number of Iranian secularists countered the Islamists' revisionist emphasis on religion with a conception of identity grounded in Iranians' ethno-linguistic heritage. . . . These intellectuals have anchored their conception of identity on the matrices of language, selective historiography, and a Persian-centred nationalism that ignores ethnic minorities.

(1998: 43)

Before the Revolution, Ali Shariati criticized nationalism and addressed the conflict between Shi'ism and nationalism from an Islamic and religious point of view. The Safavid dynasty (1500s–1700s) adopted Shi'ism as the official religion of Iran and blended nationalism with Shi'ism in the establishment of the Safavid state. In Shariati's view, nationalist ideas polluted Shi'ism; Islam does not need to be justified by love of land and history.

This was the background to the anti-nationalist policy of the Revolution. In the 1980s, any notion of nationalism was seen as contrary to Islam and the Revolution. This is best reflected in Reza Davari's book *Nasionalizm va Enqelab-e Eslami* (Nationalism and the Islamic Revolution), 1980, which also represents the official attitude towards the social sciences. The author, a renowned Islamic philosopher, has since 1980 been a key member of the Supreme CCR (*Shura-ye 'Ali-ye Enqelab Farhangi*),⁶⁵ and is now President of the Islamic Republic's Academy of Sciences (*Farhangestan 'Olum*). Davari states that the purpose of his study is to approach nationalism from a Revolutionary and Islamic perspective, with the ultimate goal of addressing the problem of the humanities after the Revolution. In the Introduction, he argues that, for a profound insight into the ideological nature of contemporary humanities, we must study nationalism because it is one of the basic ideologies of the humanities. He insists that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, different from the traditional and conventional concept of *hobb-e vatan* (patriotism) prescribed by Islam.

Nationalism is a European ideology based on a particular notion and definition of *mellat* (nation). In the Persian language until the twentieth century, *mellat* meant *din* (religion) and then it acquired quite a different

meaning. Before [about a hundred and twenty years ago] *mellat* in Persian and Islamic texts meant *din* (religion); for instance, *melal va nehal*, which is a type of book that discusses philosophical and theological issues, means 'religions and philosophies'; but now . . . we see that the new meaning of *mellat* is against religion.

(1980: 24)

He adds, '*Mellat* means a group of people or a community of the population who consciously or unconsciously tend to create their own rules and regulations, and want to be independent of any other power and sovereignty including those caused by God' (ibid.: 36). He explains that this alteration of the meaning of *mellat* is not merely a semantic shift, rather it indicates a fundamental change in our world view of man and society. He argues that nationalism is based on this new conception of *mellat*, and in fact the ultimate goal of nationalism is to replace the power of God by the power of the people; therefore, it is against Islam. To illustrate his view, Davari contrasts Islam with nationalism, liberalism and democracy. He argues that liberalism, democracy and nationalism stem from *maktab-e esalat-e bashar* (humanism), which means 'man must obey himself, not God or the divine'. Accordingly, democracy and liberalism are intertwined with nationalism (ibid.: 45). He concludes that these modern ideologies are opposed to any form of religious state such as the Islamic Republic (ibid.: 34–7).

Davari discusses nationalism in its various forms, and argues that in Iran it was a blind imitation of European Orientalism. 'It was a form of *melligara'i farhangi* (cultural nationalism) that atheist Iranian intellectuals and scholars, not the masses, believed in and tried to spread throughout the country' (ibid.: 56). He argues that nationalism was a cultural phenomenon; a group of intellectuals wanted to divert Iranians from their Islamic identity and replace it with secular and liberal values and beliefs. An important point of Davari's thesis is that he takes nationalism as a branch of humanities and social sciences which, he maintains, 'has been a predominant trend in Iranian academia'. He criticizes scholars for corrupting their objectivity with an ideological commitment to nationalism (ibid.: 210). He advises researchers to discontinue research into ancient Iranian culture and customs from a nationalist point of view, because 'nationalism is a trap for scientific objectivity' (ibid.) and 'these types of research are no longer valid or useful for the nation, and Iranians have never paid serious attention to the results of such projects' (ibid.: 213).

Davari's view epitomizes the official attitude and policy towards nationalism and the social sciences in the 1980s. What is relevant to our discussion is that this issue strongly affected anthropological activities. As I argued in previous chapters, nationalism was the main source of legitimacy, motivation and inspiration of folklorists, archaeologists and ethnographers. One effect of the anti-nationalist policy was to de-legitimize anthropological and folklore studies and to discourage anthropological research. The government not only refused to fund any research project on ancient Iranian culture but also closed down anthropological institutions. However, as will be seen in the next section, after 1988 the

government modified its attitude, and nationalism came to be accepted under a new guise.

The culture of the war front

One of the most important ethnographic representations of the conflict between the two approaches – Iranian culture and the anti-nationalist ideology of the Revolution – is a series of books concerning the Iran–Iraq war called *Farhang-e Jebheh* (The Culture of the War Front). The books are a set of ethnographic accounts of the battlefields of the war between Iran and Iraq (1980–8), published in the form of anthropological monographs. The general aim of the monographs is to represent the cultural aspects of the war, focusing on the spoken, written and behavioural culture of the combatants, particularly the voluntary militia groups called *Basiji*.⁶⁶ By 2003, 30 volumes of these monographs had been issued and it was said that 15 more volumes would soon come out (Fahimi interview 2001). According to the authors, the project is the first comprehensive ethnographic account based on first-hand observations of the cultural aspects of a long-term military international conflict. The project is the work of a team, none of whose members is a trained ethnographer, but all of whom are fully aware of the anthropological aspects and value of their work. Mahdi Fahimi, the initiator and editor of the project, is a writer and journalist. Most other members of the group, comprising more than 20 individuals, are experts in literature, history or sociology. Many of them had direct lived experience of the war as combatants.

Each volume has an introduction discussing theoretical and methodological issues. A review of the introductions shows that, apart from their political and ideological aims, which will be discussed, they also wanted to contribute to Iranian anthropology. Let us briefly review some of the monographs. In the first volume, which is devoted to *Estelihat va Ta'birat* (Idioms and Expressions), the culture of the war front is defined as 'a set of thoughts, beliefs, desires, concerns, relations, conventions and habits that were prevalent and common on the battlefields, sanctioned by no official rules but accepted and believed in by most of the combatants' (Fahimi *et al.* 1995: 1). That culture was the common knowledge (*ma'aref ammeh*) or common sense and public culture of the war front. It comprises most of the behaviours, attitudes, morals, aptitudes and tastes of the combatants during the war.

This culture resulted from the early confrontation of Muslims and dissidents in the early centuries of Islam, in particular the Imam Hossein movement⁶⁷ epitomized in the imposed Iran–Iraq war.⁶⁸ This culture was mainly a spoken culture transferred orally between combatants; it was a tool for adapting to the inconveniences and hazards of the war. It is also a perfect mirror reflecting attitudes that the government propagated during the war.

(Ibid.: 2)

The author classifies the component parts of the culture of the war front into 3 main categories and 25 subcategories.

- 1 *Oral culture*: idioms and expressions; slogans and mottoes; jokes; folk literature; memories and observations; aphorisms; names and addresses; prayers; and repartee.
- 2 *Written culture*: correspondence; diaries and descriptive accounts; articles and literary writings; moral admonitory writings; martyrs' wills; and inscriptions on combatants' clothes, rocks, walls, trenches and forts.
- 3 *Behavioural culture*: customs; divine intervention; dreams; leisure time; games and entertainment; arts; extraordinary phenomena; revelations and spiritual contemplations.

(Fahimi 1995: 14–15)

Each monograph consists of three main sections. First, an introduction consisting of a general preface, which explains the scope and significance of the whole body of Culture of the War Front, together with a specific introduction describing the methodology, theoretical framework and a literature review. The second section consists of the body of ethnographic data and narrative. The third section is the analysis and interpretation of data presented.

For instance, in *Idioms and Expressions* (1995), the general preamble explains the definition, scope, method and significance of the project. The second part of the introduction defines idioms and expressions and then classifies military idioms into two broad categories: army terminology and cultural idioms; each has various sub-categories, for example, cultural idioms include folk idioms, local idioms and the language of the warriors' supporters. Then the usage of the idioms is discussed; the arrangement of the monograph and the methods of data collection are explained and finally we have a literature review. The idioms are alphabetically arranged; each idiom is defined with its cultural connotations and practical usages rather than simple linguistic and literal meanings. For example, *damad-e khoda* (God's bridegroom), meaning martyr (*shahid*), is a metaphor. God promises in the Quran (verses 72 and 58 of Al-rahman) that everyone killed for the sake of God will go to heaven and marry an angel; thus, martyrs are bridegrooms of God (ibid.: 80). Or *Zul jenah*, meaning a Toyota (the common vehicle in the war), is a figurative usage of the name of Imam Hossein's horse in the sacred war with Yazid.

The data collected in the ethnographies are based on three methods: direct and participant observation; textual analysis focusing on autobiographies, martyrs' wills, correspondence and other texts written by combatants; and interviews with 150,000 combatants, mainly Basijis. The project began in 1986 before the war ended and continued after the war in the form of interviews with survivors.

What shaped the Culture of the War Front and what objectives do its authors pursue? What issues stimulated them to embark on this project? To explore these questions I held interviews with two authors and major figures of the project: Mahdi Fahimi and Ali-Reza Kamari. Here I quote Fahimi's words at length, because so far there is no English account of the objectives, methodology and anthropological aspects of the monographs.⁶⁹

When I asked Fahimi how and why he embarked on the project, he responded:

Drawing on my anthropological interests and some experiences and familiarity with folklore studies that I have had since my youth, in 1981, in the throes of war, I toyed with the idea of doing this project. I assumed that the war front is a community that would be considered as a miniature model or microcosm of Iranian society and culture, because at the war front one could observe different groups of people from all social groups and classes: the poor, the rich, the youth, the middle-aged and even the elderly, and all other social groups either military or unmilitary. Also, there were different groups from all regions: rural, urban and nomadic. Thus, it was reasonable to suppose that the war front embodies a genuine and unprecedented culture, an amalgam of all Iranian subcultures and ethnicities, shaped in the everyday life of the warriors, a culture that was quite different from that of each of the groups comprising it. Accordingly, I thought the battlefields were an exceptional ethnographic situation in which to observe Iranian culture as a whole.

(Interview 2001)

Although women did play very important roles in the war, providing food and material for the warriors, working in military hospitals and nursing wounded soldiers, and many women of the provinces of Khuzestan, Kurdistan and other war regions were killed and or wounded, the monographs mention nothing about women and their roles. This may be attributed to the nature of the monographs, which mainly depict events that happened in the war zones, the garrisons and military groups and communities.

The other point is related to the notion of war. Fahimi argued that war is usually conceived only as a political and military phenomenon.⁷⁰

This notion of war is common not only in western societies, but also in Iran, despite people's awareness of the dominant human and religious elements in the Iran–Iraq war. We thought this notion resulted from the lack of an anthropological point of view. It is reasonable to accept that anthropologists could not study a war culture ethnographically, because the battlefield is a very hazardous situation and we should not expect anthropologists to act like heroes. However, although we do not praise war, we believe it to be a socio-cultural event, and like other events it has very devastating aspects, but in the meantime it creates a constructive cultural life. This is true of the Iran–Iraq war in a particular sense. Iranians called the war *Sacred Defence* (*defa'e moqaddas*), which indicates the dominance of cultural and religious over political and military dimensions. At the war fronts, an ideal religious community and culture took shape that could give us a tangible example of the Shiite worldview and lifestyle. That exemplar of the Islamic lifestyle may rarely happen again, but its ethnographic representation will prove for subsequent generations that the creation of that kind of culture is possible. We thought that through this

ethnographic study we could demonstrate the religious, human, and cultural aspects of the war.

The other point that stimulated us to embark on this project was the idea that war is a temporary phenomenon and after war, the ideal utopian religious and mystical community that had taken shape would disappear. Thus, we knew that it was an exceptional opportunity to portray a vivid picture of Shiite Islamic culture. I knew that after the war the warriors would be scattered around the country and that all the cultural heritage of the war would be forgotten, like other traditional and folkloristic materials that are eventually forgotten because of the modernization of the country. The point is that the culture of the war was a very mystical (*erfani*) and symbolic culture that is not congenial to global and modern culture; we realized that after the war the government, people and even the *Basijis* would no longer follow that way of life and worldview.

(Interview 2000)

In this passage, the ideological aspect of the project is clear. The Culture of the War Front represents exactly what Fahimi says, namely *a vivid picture of Shi'ite Islamic culture*, according to Ayatollah Khomeini's reading. With this strong ideological aim, the monographs are a set of religious and political rather than scholarly ethnographic writings. As I shall show, their portrayal of the warriors and of the battlefields is entirely positive, as if a group of angels or perfect men were fighting with the devil.

I asked Fahimi to what extent the monographs could be regarded as academic anthropology; how academically valid are the data collected. He pointed out that, as the editors of the monographs state, in conducting their research they were attentive to the methods of anthropology. 'We tried in the first place to collect data from the field through direct observation, and or through interviews with combatants who had been in the war for a long time and had experience of the war front.' Likewise, he argued that they followed an insider viewpoint, and in describing the cultural elements studied they did not impose their own presuppositions and prejudices, but took the categories precisely from the reality of the war; they are based on what soldiers and *basijis* used on the battlefield. Before embarking on the project, he had been in different parts of the war zone in the western, eastern and southern areas, and had observed what was happening on the battlefield as a participant. In this pilot study, he consulted 'many people, including anthropologists and combatants.'

Fahimi defined the nature of the project as follows: 'Strictly speaking, our research is not analytical; rather it is an exploratory study in that we tried to describe what we had observed truly and honestly, and to report what other combatants observed.' On their methods of data collection, Fahimi and Kamari stated: 'To enhance the validity of our data we used a number of devices. For example, before holding an interview, we tried to reconstruct the battlefield by showing many documentary movies, so that they could vividly remember the war conditions. Also, for our interviews, we selected combatants who had served in the war for a long time.'

I asked what theoretical approach they had had in mind in conducting the project.

The underlying theoretical proposition of the research is an identification and reconstruction of Islamic Iranian identity. At the war front, we observed that Shiite culture, which is the national and religious identity of Iranians, was plainly epitomized in the battlefields. The war was one of the very few examples where one could see a national cohesion devoid of any ethnic and local elements. During that period we observed the presence of our culture and society in its entirety, which would never happen again.

We had never had a situation where all cultural and social characteristics of our society, consisting of all ethnicities, regions, and groups were present and mixed together in one community, except for the battlefields of war. Our efforts were directed towards presenting that entirety, and how they mixed and embedded in a unified culture, namely the culture of the fronts. The main character and cornerstone of that culture was Islam and Imam Khomeini. *We had a holistic view: to represent Islamic Iranian identity, not an atomistic view of a part of a culture.* Most recent anthropological research in Iran suffers from a lack of this holism, and studies of nomads or folklore do not give us any idea about Iranian society and culture as a whole; they do not allow us to identify and characterize Iranian culture and personality. However, this holistic view didn't come from our presuppositions about Iranian society; rather it was part of the culture of the war and the circumstances that prevailed there. Imam Khomeini was the leader and commander of the war, and a considerable part of that holism was due to his mystical teaching and his charismatic influence on the combatants. We firmly believe that 'anthropologists know everything about one thing, and one thing about everything', which means that we don't present all the war as it happened but only one part, namely the cultural identity of combatants, while we don't centre on one thing such as a certain type of social relationship among a group of soldiers in a garrison, but all the oral, written and behavioural values, norms, and beliefs of the combatants. We don't claim that our ethnographic accounts are a pure, realistic documentary narrative like what a photo mirrors, but it is a reconstructed picture of the war, based on reality, and we believe it reflects the dominant culture of the war.

We postulated that the culture of the war front was not a type of subculture or a special culture different from Iranian culture, but was an ideal form of Islamic Iranian culture that had never existed before as well as it did in the time of war. It is because of the fact that more than 5,000,000 people took part in the war, from all provinces and areas, with different linguistic, ethnic and social backgrounds. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the war produced the complete Iranian identity, not a certain subcultural milieu.

(Fahimi and Kamari interview 2000)

As can be seen, the authors do not conceal the political and ideological dimensions of Culture of the War Front, and not only do they not deny it, they proudly declare:

The Islamic Revolution's values, beliefs and culture at their best were embodied in the war fronts, and the Revolution's culture is the Shiism that is our Iranian identity. The Islamic Revolution refreshed and reinvigorated religion in Iran, the thing that has always been the core and cornerstone of Iranian identity. In the war, national and local considerations did not preoccupy the combatants; rather they were concerned with Islam and the culture of Ashura [the holy war between Imam Hossein and Yazid in Karbala AH 61]. Thus, Culture of the War Front seeks to portray that religious culture.

(Kamari interview 2000)

To analyse the ideological content of the monographs I will examine the first volume, *Customs and rituals* (1990).⁷¹

Customs and rituals

The first volume of the monographs begins with an introduction devoted to theory and methodology. Having discussed the notions of custom and tradition in Persian literature, Islamic knowledge and social science, Fahimi, as editor of the series, defines *rosūm* (customs) as: 'the basic and significant forms of habitual behaviours to which a society gives meaning. They are communicated through symbols and common aims, and express hallowed values' (1990: 18). Customs are divided into two types: good traditions (*sunnat-haye hassaneh*) and bad customs (*bavarha va adat nekohideh*). Good traditions are defined as 'A complex of beliefs, thoughts and rules that lead us to behave according to religious rules' (ibid.: 20). Bad customs are 'All social behaviours resulting from irreligiosity, ignorance and ethnocentrism, sheer nationalistic sentiments and obedience' (ibid.: 21). Examples of good customs that emerged after the Revolution are Friday prayer (*namaz jom'eh*), banning of mixed-sex gatherings and the elimination of alien words in everyday conversation (ibid.: 24).

The last part of the Introduction concerns methodology, and explains how, where and when the data were collected. Customs are classified into 26 categories, including 'conducting augury through use of the Quran' (*estekhareh*) and 'commending the good and forbidding evil' (*amre be ma'rof va nahy az monker*).

As we saw in Chapter 3, Hedayat classified customs into two types: foreign (non-Iranian) and Iranian. Here again customs are classified into two types: good (Islamic) and bad (non-Islamic). This is the main criterion for the authors of the monograph when collecting data. From their orthodox Shi'ite and Revolutionary point of view, good customs are those consonant with the Revolution's ideals. They present an ethnographic picture of the revolutionary discourse that is close to the teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini, the official discourse of the early years of the Revolution and the traditional ideals of Shi'ism. The ideal culture of

Shi'ism is epitomized in the Karbala tragedy, and the Revolution and the war were a reflection of that ideal culture. This is best explained by Michael Fischer when discussing what he calls 'the Karbala paradigm':

The Karbala paradigm is the story of Husayn, the third part of the origin legend of Muhammad, 'Ali, and Husayn. It is the part that is the most emotionally intense and concentrated, and is the reference point for almost all popular preaching... The complete origin legend, which might be called the paradigm of the family of the Prophet, focuses rather upon model behavior. Muslims should model themselves on the behavior of Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Husayn, and Zaynab.

It provides models for living and a mnemonic for thinking about how to live: there is a set of parables and moral lessons all connected with or part of the story of Karbala which are themselves not obviously contradictory and to which almost all of life's problems can be referred.

(1980: 13, 21)

The war customs illustrate this paradigm. Here, as in the other monographs, we see a way of life that is modelled on Karbala, the notion of a man who sacrifices himself for the sake of God, and a Sufi who pays no attention to material pleasures, whose ultimate goal is the other world. Imam Khomeini was a model of Imam Hossein and the Basiji volunteers were like the Seventy-Two martyrs of Karbala.⁷² The enemy, Saddam Hossein, was sarcastically called *Saddam Yazid*, referring to Mu'aviyeh's son Yazid, caliph of the Muslims, who killed Imam Hossein at Karbala in AH 61.

The monographs could be analysed from many aspects, but to demonstrate the ideological aspects I focus here on certain points. Although *Culture of the War Front* gives a vivid ideological picture of the war, it does not succeed in painting a realistic picture. The ideological aim of the project obscures the cultural diversity of the battlefields. I took part in the war as a Basiji myself, and from my personal observations I agree that there was a strong sense of religious motivation among the troops, but this was only one part of reality. There is no mention of any abnormal, immoral or unpleasant behaviour or customs in the whole corpus of *Culture of the War Front*, as if all the combatants were innocent and sinless. It is quite evident that in a war the fighters are under enormous pressures and constraints, and they cannot always act according to religious conventions and morality, however much they might want to. Socially and psychologically, at least, some of the warriors will be unable to adjust to war conditions and will fail to meet those standards.

A second criticism is the failure to represent the diversity of attitudes towards the war. The monographs depict a unified and homogeneous culture of the war front. According to this notion, the war is accepted as a holy and entirely undisputed event, and thus its culture reflects a utopian community based on cooperation, brotherhood, sacrifice, justice, piety, religiosity, forgiveness and other virtues that the monographs illustrate. On the contrary, at least two divergent attitudes

existed on the war front. For one group, mainly Basijis, the war was a religious crusade, but for the majority of officers and men in the regular army (*arteshian*), the war was a political matter, imposed by Saddam and Iran's leaders. These regular military combatants had less religious motivation for fighting. Many of them had not even supported the Revolution. The cultural patterns of this group were evidently different from those of the Basijis, but the monographs have ignored them. Furthermore, not all the Basijis who volunteered to fight in the war were motivated by religious conviction. Many material advantages came to volunteers: wages, special opportunities for higher education, high political and administrative posts and so on. For many Basijis, benefiting from these material advantages was more important than religious motivations. For them, war was not a holy crusade, and since they did not agree with the official war discourse, their behaviour diverged from that of the other Basijis.

A third problem with the monographs is that they ignored the cultural diversity of the battlefields resulting from the ethnicity of the combatants. Iran is a multi-cultural society comprised of Christians, Jews, Sunnis and Zoroastrians as well as the Shi'ite majority, and speakers of Turkish, Turkmen, Kurdish, Baluchi and Persian. Members of all Iranian ethnic groups took part in the war, whether voluntarily or compulsorily, Persian or non-Persian, Muslim or non-Muslim, but none of this diversity is reflected in the monographs. All these shortcomings stem from the fact that the monographs sought to present a pure Shi'ite Iranian identity, in contrast with pre-revolutionary ethnographic writings that represented the religious and cultural diversity of Iranians.

The religious–secular conflict

Although the concept of an Islamic social science is a polemical issue in Iranian academia, which has not reached a consensus on it (Tabataba'i 1995), its proponents enjoy government support and have produced a considerable literature. The concept has two different roots: first, a theoretical and philosophical conflict between social sciences and Islamic ideology, and second, an actual conflict between two groups – dissident intellectuals and the clergy. From a practical viewpoint, the Islamization of knowledge is an ideological tool. This point becomes clearer when we see how in recent years the Islamization of knowledge has turned into the Islamization of the universities, and the project of establishing an Islamic university. Recently, in particular after Khamene'i's 1997 speech on the Islamization of the universities, the Islamicists held several seminars and began to publish a journal called *Daneshgah Eslami* (Islamic University). In 1998, the Ministry of Higher Education held a high-level conference, the proceedings of which were published in two large volumes: *University, Society and Islamic Culture* (Moidfar 2000).

Anthropologists are unanimous in claiming that theirs is a liberal, secular and, to some extent, objective discipline. I will argue that these characteristics are antithetical to the Islamic Revolution's ideology and the Islamic education system of Iran. To demonstrate this point I will discuss two aspects of the discipline: first,

the Islamicists' theoretical challenges to the metaphysical and philosophical propositions of Western anthropology and their attempts to establish Islamic anthropology as an alternative and second, the practical tensions in teaching anthropology.

Theoretical conflicts: Islamic anthropology

In 1981 the universities were closed and the *Setad Enqelab Farhangi* (Committee for Cultural Revolution) was established.⁷³ The aim of the committee was to reconstruct and revise the higher education system, including curriculum, textbooks, disciplines, tutors rules and regulations, in accordance with the values and beliefs of the Revolution (Soroush 1987: 10). As already mentioned, the universities were reopened in 1983, but there were serious hesitations towards the humanities and social sciences because these branches of knowledge were believed to be anti-Islamic. To solve the problem, the government decided to re-establish these disciplines, but in order to Islamize them, the committee planned a cooperative programme with the Qom Seminaries (Howzeh-e 'Elmiyeh Qom), and established a new Office for Cooperation between Howzeh and University (Daftar Hamkari-ye Howzeh va Daneshgah). The main task of this organization has been to study modern humanities in order to establish an Islamic social science and provide Islamic textbooks for the humanities (Howzeh va Daneshgah 1994: 4). Subsequently, several other institutions were founded to Islamize the humanities, such as Imam Sadeq University, Sazman Ta'lif Kotob 'Olum-e Ensani (Organization for Compiling Human Science Textbooks), Mojtime' Amuzeshi va Pazhuheshi Imam Khomeini (Imam Khomeini Research and Teaching Institution),⁷⁴ Madraseh Shahid Motahhari (Motahhari School)⁷⁵ and Markaz Nashr Daneshgahi (Centre for Academic Publication).

When the universities were closed during 1980–3 the staff of the Anthropology Department at Tehran University were invited to Qom to the Office for Cooperation between Howzeh and University (H&U). Seminars were held about Islamic social sciences and the Islamization of universities. Various groups of clergy and academics took part in these seminars. Gradually, the Islamization of the social sciences became a predominant official discourse and H&U began to publish a journal dealing with this issue called *Fasnameh Howzeh va Daneshgah* (Howzeh and University Quarterly). Here I will examine the critical view of the Islamicists towards anthropology and their attempts to establish an Islamic anthropology.

Abdolkarim Soroush, one of the early eminent members of the CCR, has explained the theoretical arguments used by the Islamicists against social sciences, including anthropology. He states that the main source of recent controversies about the nature and functions of these disciplines is the different concept of humanity in the social sciences from that in the Islamic worldview:

Owing to our nature as human beings nurtured by an Islamic and Eastern culture, naturally we Iranians have a certain conception of the human and human characteristics. The humanities too, as evident from the name, claim

to identify humanity; hence, inevitably each of us asks, what sort of human do the humanities identify? And what are the sources for this identification? And what aims does it pursue?

(1987: 5)

Soroush then distinguishes between five concepts of humanity: *conventional*, *philosophical*, *mystical*, *religious* and *scientific or empirical*. He argues that social science approaches humanity from an empirical point of view. In Iranian and Islamic culture there is a rich variety of concepts and meanings about humanity, but the empirical conception is a novel view.

The source of doubt and disbelief about social science in Iran after the Revolution is due to the empirical approach of those disciplines toward humanity. These disciplines attempt to identify humanity and explain human behaviour in patterns that are far from our conventional understanding; therefore they inevitably provoke our refusal to accept them.

(Ibid.: 6)

For instance, one of these differences is related to the scope of Islamic theological anthropology and empirical anthropology. Whereas Islamic anthropology concerns both holy and ordinary people, such as the prophets and the fallible ones (*ma'sum*), and considers the prophets to be different from others, the subject of social science is limited to conventional and ordinary people; in this view, the prophets are approached like others. He also explains that the language of social science manifestly differs from religious language, so that when Islamicists deal with this vernacular they feel they have come to a mysterious land. This sense of inscrutability created doubt about social science. The Islamicists expect to approach humanity from Quranic values and beliefs. In this view, humanity is the surrogate of God (*Khalifat-Allah*) on earth, a concept totally lacking in social sciences.

Further, Soroush argues that, from the perspective of Persian literature, humans are mystical creatures whose nature and purpose is to love God (*'eshq va taqarrob be Khoda*). Mowlavi's mystical view in his well-known work *Masnavi* is an example of this. Social sciences do not entertain any mystical point of view (ibid.: 5–18).

Ruholamini states that one of the Islamicists' criticisms of anthropology is that the modern anthropological perception of humanity is based on Darwin's theory of the origin of man and evolutionism, which is totally against the Islamic view because according to the Quran Adam and Eve were the first generation of human beings. He states:

In Qom we anthropologists argued that evolutionism is only one theory among others in physical anthropology, and there are other alternative theories that are not contradictory to religious views, but the Islamicists were very sensitive about this issue and our explanations did not affect their view of anthropology.

(Interview 2000)

In 1987, The Ministry of Higher Education officially announced that it was no longer permitted to use the term *ensanshenasi* as equivalent to anthropology, because, in Persian literature and culture, that term refers to humanity and its creation, which is beyond the scope of anthropology. Instead, we must use *mardomshenasi*. However, Ruholamini states, ‘none of the staff of the Department of Anthropology paid any attention to this official statement’ (Interview 2000).

The other theoretical criticism by the Islamicists is that modern Western social science is based on and conditioned by modern European philosophy. This problem is twofold: first, the Western metaphysical standpoint contrasts with the Islamic world view. Therefore, the dissemination of Western social science would harm our Islamic minds and create the same cultural, social and moral problems that European countries are experiencing today (Golshani 1999: 9). Golshani, head of the Humanities Research Centre (Pazuheshgah ‘Olume Ensani, HRC)⁷⁶ of the Ministry of Higher Education, believes: ‘Indeed, the western science that came into our lives did not bring with it scientific findings, but a positivistic viewpoint that devalues religion totally’ (ibid.: 32). The second issue is that, if these disciplines are not scientific as such, and if we confirm their ideological nature, we should accept that every country can establish a social science compatible with its own metaphysical standpoint. They argue that modern social science is secular and non-religious knowledge, and that secularism is a metaphysical alternative to religious ideologies; therefore Muslims must establish a social science predicated upon Islam.

Khosrow Baqeri (2000), an Iranian scholar, argues that according to the post-positivist philosophy of science both social sciences and natural sciences arise from metaphysics. He refers to the ideas of Popper, Watkins, Koyser and Kuhn. These philosophers argue that social science scholars choose their research problems and hypotheses, and apply their scientific findings, under the influence of various metaphysical ideas. For instance, Kuhn (1970) argued that science is based on three types of paradigm: metaphysical, sociological and constructed. Popper (1949) believed *the rationality principle* that is at the core of social science to be a metaphysical idea. According to this principle, human behaviours are shaped according to one’s understanding of one’s situation. Baqeri then proposes some Islamic metaphysical ideas that may help to establish Islamic human science. First, he explains the Quranic notion of man. According to this notion, man is responsible for his behaviour and has the role of agency. He argues that this notion of man permits us empirically to study human behaviour and makes a religious human science. Regarding Quranic exegesis, he introduces six premises that might be posited in making an Islamic human science (Baqeri 2000: 87–99).

However, the Islamicists’ criticism of the metaphysical foundation of Western social science has not convinced the majority of Iranian thinkers and academics to accept the idea of Islamic social sciences. For instance, Soroush (1987: 56) argues that, if experiment is the criterion of scientificity and validity of knowledge, it is not possible to have different social sciences because ultimately all research findings must be evaluated by experimental criteria, not metaphysical or ideological assumptions. One may get an idea, information and result from

a dream, or by accident and or anything else; in science it does not matter what the source of data and or an idea is, the question is to what extent the claim and data can be empirically tested and evaluated. Furthermore, the intention of the researcher is not a criterion of the validity of a claim. However, he accepts that there are differences between Muslim and non-Muslim social sciences:

Certainly the anthropology, sociology, psychology and other bodies of knowledge which are created and formed within Islamic societies are not the same as those which are created within non-Islamic societies. This is because the concepts, tools, and methods that Muslims employ in defining a research problem and collecting data are not accessible to people of other societies. However, this does not mean that western human sciences are invalid and null, because what could invalidate a scientific claim is just an experimental assessment. Science can be nullified by science, not by ideology and philosophy.

(Ibid.)

Another of the arguments that the Islamists employ to justify their attempt to establish an Islamic social science is a reference to the history of the humanities in the Muslim world. They argue that the idea of Muslim social science led to the revitalization of Islamic knowledge in the early history of Islam. This argument should be examined in more detail.

Muslim anthropology

As discussed in the Chapter 4, the establishment of an Islamic social science has been a discourse in Iran since the 1970s. After the Revolution, it became stronger and an official discourse. The state has organized several attempts to Islamize social sciences.

The Islamicists follow two lines of argument to establish an Islamic anthropology. First, they try to extract the idea of anthropology from Islamic texts and traditions. Second, they evoke the intellectual history of Muslim societies. They argue that the study of culture – the subject of anthropology – is not limited to modern European academic disciplines, because Islamic sources (Quran, Hadith and Sunna Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence, theology and mysticism) are full of anthropological ideas and theories, and Muslim scholars throughout history have produced a vast literature on culture. They argue that Islam has its own Humanities. In the last two centuries, however, because of the imposition of Western knowledge and social science theories, Muslim scholars have lost their confidence and failed to focus on the Quran and Islam in order to extrapolate Islamic anthropological theories. On the other hand, it is said that in the early Islamic centuries numerous Muslim thinkers such as Biruni, Farabi, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Moskuyeh, Mas'udi and Muqaddasi established a Humanities based on Quranic knowledge, but the political domination of Western civilization over Muslim societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has alienated them

from Islam. Therefore, based on those experiences and sources we may attempt to revitalize Islamic anthropology as an alternative to Western anthropology.

Although it has not so far published any anthropology, H&U began to publish works in other fields of Islamic social science, such as economics, sociology, psychology and law. We can elicit their idea of Islamic anthropology from their publications in sociology. They issue a journal called *Howzeh*, consisting mainly of social science papers. In addition, they produce social science textbooks. Their most important sociological textbooks are *Mabani-ye Jame'eh-shenasi: Daramadi be Jame'eh-shenasi Eslami* (Principles of Sociology: An Introduction to Islamic Sociology), 1994 and *Tarikh-e Tafakkor-e Ejtema'i dar Eslam* (The History of Social Thought in Islam), 1999. These books are published by the Organization for Compilation and Publication of Humanities Textbooks, known as SAMT.

In *The History of Social Thought*, H&U state why the Islamization of the social sciences is necessary:

The exploration, examination and presentation of the ideas of Muslim scientists whose thoughts were inspired by authentic Islamic sources (the Quran and Great Tradition), and took shape in the atmosphere of Islamic culture, could fill the theoretical emptiness of Islamic society and might constitute new presuppositions for those prevalent in social sciences. These Islamic thoughts prevent socio-cultural alienation and provide a basis for finding solutions to practical problems.

(Howzeh va Daneshgah 1999: 1)

With this view, they define the meaning of Islamic sociology, which could be extended to all social science disciplines. The authors of the book argue that there are three meanings of Islamic sociology: first, Muslim sociology; second, sociological knowledge produced by Muslim scholars and third, 'a set of knowledge about society extracted from Quran and Hadith' (ibid.: 12). They emphasize that not only are the source and subjects of Islamic sociology different from other kinds of sociology, but also its methodology: 'The methodology of Islamic sociology is also taken from Quranic verses and Hadith and Islamic teachings' (ibid.: 15). In defining its methodology, the authors argue that Islamic sociology does not reject empirical methods. What makes Islamic sociology different is that it accepts divine methods (*ravesh-haye vahyani*), too (ibid.: 16). Likewise, the aim of Islamic sociology is to serve the values, aspirations and principles extracted from Quranic verses and Hadith (ibid.: 17).

The curricula of anthropology and sociology at all levels (BA, MA and PhD) include a three-unit course on the history of Muslim social thought. Students must study the history of religious and literary social thought of early centuries in order to familiarize themselves with Islamic social science. In 1989, when I was doing my MA in social anthropology at Tehran University and wanted to choose a topic for my thesis, Islamic anthropology was one of the main subjects available. In the course on Social Thought of Muslim Thinkers, we studied prominent earlier Muslim scholars such as Ibn Khaldun, Mas'udi and Biruni. My class consisted

of five students. 'Ali Reza Qobadi (who is now lecturer at Hamadan University and studying for a PhD in anthropology at Tehran University) and I chose to study the writings of two Muslim scholars from an anthropological point of view. I studied those of Mas'udi (Fazeli 1991) and Qobadi (1991) those of Moqaddasi. I believed that it was my task to demonstrate the importance of Mas'udi as an anthropologist, and so I argued that he established a scientific ethnography, according to Islamic knowledge, which is compatible with modern European anthropology. For me as an Islamist revolutionary student, the introduction of Mas'udi as an anthropologist was an honourable point that could give me a sense of Islamic professional identity. This is clear from the title of my thesis (*Mas'udi as an historian and anthropologist, a study of anthropological aspects of Mas'udi's works*) and in the rhetoric I used, which I will try to analyse here.

One of the main figures in this trend is Sayyid Hossein Nasr, Iranian philosopher, who has written extensively about the intellectual history of Muslims. In *Science and Civilization in Islam*, originally written in English, published in America and then translated into Persian, he notes about anthropological knowledge among Muslims:

The Muslim mind occupied itself not only with the sciences of nature, with mathematics, and with philosophy and metaphysics, but with the sciences of man, with anthropology in the most general sense of the term. Muslims studied man in his social and political setting; diverse activities were scrutinized with an objective eye, which sought to observe before it judged.

(1968: 230)

Documenting his claim, Nasr reviewed the works of Biruni and Ibn Khaldun, and especially Ibn Battuta's account of travel (Nasr 1968: 230–41). In Naser Khosrow's time, in the literal sense of first-hand observation and description, ethnography was accepted as a method of studying man and human society, and was used by historians and geographers. The ethnographic method used by Muslims had three characteristics. First, they focused on the study of 'Other cultures'. Because of this, scholars had to journey from their homelands and, accordingly, their studies were mostly in the form of travelogues. Second, ethnographers had a scholarly consciousness, and they were aware of the methodological importance of their enterprise. Third, ethnography was applied in different branches of knowledge, such as history and geography.

It is a commonplace among most Iranian scholars, not only Islamicists, that Iranian anthropology⁷⁷ first came into existence in the tenth century, when some Iranian scholars and writers recorded their autobiographies and observations of cultural phenomena (Khaliqi 1974: 5; Ruholamini 1975; Zahedi-Mazandarani 1984: 152; Shahshahani 1986: 65).⁷⁸ This group usually imply to the argument that, although until recently there was no mention of the term *mardomshenasi* (anthropology) as a specialized field of knowledge, many European anthropologists such as Pelto and Muessig maintain that 'there has always existed proto-anthropological writing' (1980: 9) and 'we in fact owe the first notion of anthropology to travelers, philosophers and naturalists' (Poirier 1991: 6).

Anthropological writings, from the perspective of Iranian anthropologists, are those whose style, content and methods of data collection may be considered anthropological: the content is concerned with culture, and the data mainly come from first-hand personal experience. In a review of Persian folk-narrative studies, Radhayrapetian has sketched the history of proto-anthropological writings in Muslim countries including Iran. She argues that in the Middle Ages a sizeable number of travel narratives were published. The expansion of Islam and the establishment of the Arab Empire encouraged and facilitated travel throughout the vast Islamic world. This was the period during which travellers could pass from the confines of China to the Pillars of Hercules, from the banks of the Indus to the Cilician Gates, from the Oxus to the shores of the Atlantic, without stepping outside the boundaries of the territory ruled over by the Caliph in Damascus or Baghdad. Factors responsible for the ever-increasing interest in travel in the Islamic World were, in one way or another, related to religion, politics and commerce. Every Muslim was obliged, within the limits of health and financial possibilities, to make the pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) at least once in his lifetime. Thus, a constant stream of pilgrims headed every year towards Mecca from different parts of the world. On the other hand, learning and the pursuit of knowledge was highly stressed in the religion and the teachings of the Prophet, as can be inferred from the famous saying attributed to him: 'Seek knowledge even if it be in China' (Radhayrapetian 1990: 13).

As the Empire of Islam expanded and new countries were added to its territory, it became an administrative necessity for the central government to have accurate, first-hand knowledge about the newly acquired countries, mainly boundaries, routes, population and revenues. Whereas some of this information was available to the central government through other means, travellers and merchants played the important role of providing first-hand observations. This need for information led to 'the collection of itineraries and other actual geographical knowledge (which in turn) brought into existence different books on diverse countries' (*al-Masalek val Mamalek*). The works of such authors as Ibn Khurdadbeh, Estakhri and Ibn Howqal belong to this category.

Regional geographies, such as Ibn Balkhi's *Farsnameh*, which is a description of the province of Fars in Iran, were another category which emerged from travellers' narratives. The records left behind by Arab and Iranian travellers of the Middle Ages embody more than geographical, topographical and historical information. These 'travellers had many-sided interests and possessed a keen sense of observation and took pains to obtain information of various kinds' (Ahmad 1972: 13, quoted in Radhayrapetian 1990: 13). Consequently, these documents provided insight into the beliefs, manners and customs of peoples visited by travellers. 'Legends, etiological tales, local legends, and other kinds of folk narratives are cited side by side with descriptions of towns and roads' (*ibid.*: 14).

It is said that Muslim thinkers had a scholarly awareness of the systematic and empirical methods of ethnography and its application. Mas'udi and Moqaddasi are two examples of Muslim ethnographers. Mas'udi, an outstanding Shi'ite historian, journeyed through Iran, Central Asia and the Near East for 25 years

(AH 320–45). He belongs to the tradition of universal historians like al-Tabari and al-Yaqubi. His *Moruj al-Zahab wa Ma'dan al-Jowhar* (Meadows of Gold and Mines of Precious Stones) is a notable ethnographic account,⁷⁹ whose pages include valuable scientific observations. It is a colourful source of culture, portraying a true-to-life image of the medieval Muslim and his world. At the beginning, Mas'udi makes the point that 'a man who stays at home and relies on information that happens to come his way cannot pretend to the same authority as the man who has traveled widely and seen things with his own eyes' (Masoudi 1989: 5). He was one of the first scholars to try to explain social and cultural phenomena by placing them in their geographical and historical contexts. Tanha'i, an Iranian sociologist, argued that Mas'udi was *one the pioneers of the science of anthropology* (1999). After quoting some passages of *Meadows of Gold*, Tanha'i maintains that Mas'udi's ethnography has two distinguishing features: first, he considered both the historical aspects of a community, and at the same time gives a detailed account of life as it is observable (1999: 186). Second, Mas'udi believed that any community has its own culture and its study requires understanding this sense of uniqueness. In his view, the task of the ethnographer is to study the distinctive historical characteristics of a community by observation. Tanha'i analyses Mas'udi's ethnographic methods and demonstrates how he followed an empirical and inductive methodology and used techniques of comparison and participant observation (ibid.: 185–7).

One of the best examples of the application of the ethnographic method in geography is Moqaddasi's *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Ma'rafat al-Aqalim* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions) based on his observations and travels around the world. My fellow-student Qobadi examined Moqaddasi's writings from an anthropological perspective (1991). To show that Moqaddasi was an ethnographer, Qobadi extracted cultural case studies and ethnographic accounts from *Ahsan al-Taqasim*, and analysed its methodological and theoretical importance. He quotes the following passage to show Moqaddasi's ethnographic knowledge.

It occurred to me to direct my attention to a science which [other authors] had neglected, and to specialize in a branch of learning they had not dealt with, except defectively – I mean an account of the Islamic regions, with the deserts and the seas in them; the lakes and rivers; a description of their famous metropolises, and noted settlements; the way-stations that are well used and the roads that are frequented . . . will state in my account the ingredients of their medicaments and drugs, the sources and cargoes of commerce, the diversity of the peoples of the countries in their expressions, intonations, languages, complexions, their doctrinal schools, their measures, their weights, their coins, large and small, with particulars of their foods and drinks, their fruits and waters, a recounting of what is to their credit and discredit . . .

I could not complete the compilation of it until after my travels throughout the countries, and visiting the regions of Islam, until after I had met the learned, and been of service to princes, had meeting with the Qadis, and studied under jurists; had frequented the society of men of letters, the

Readers of Koran, and the writers of the traditions; had associated with ascetics and Sufis; been present at the assemblies of the tellers of stories, and of public preachers, all this while engaging in trade everywhere, and associating with all the people I encountered. I paid careful attention to the elements of my science until I was familiar with them, . . . I travelled around the frontiers so that I could define them, and traversed the military districts so that I knew them, I made inquiry about the religious sects so that I became familiar with them; and arrived at a knowledge of the languages and complexions of the peoples so that I could classify them.

(1994: 2)

This passage exemplifies the typical themes and methods of the Muslim travellers and shows that their journeys were not just to quench their thirst for adventure, or to satisfy their sense of curiosity and entertainment. In contemporary terms, they were looking for first-hand information and a deep understanding of the Other.

Colonialism and anthropology

As already mentioned, after the Revolution the atmosphere in the universities became politically sensitive toward social sciences and humanities. It was commonly accepted by clergies and the revolutionaries that these disciplines entail a great deal of 'immoral' and 'noxious' ideas that would harm the religiosity of students. It was also widely agreed that not only were they not congenial to Iranian society and unable to meet the socio-economic needs of the society, but also that they were one of the main causes of the backwardness of the country in that these disciplines served Western colonial goals and increased Iran's dependence on the West. This was best reflected in the slogan of the revolutionaries who chanted 'Colonial education must be uprooted; the Islamic university must be instituted!!' (Behdad 1995: 194).

This hostility stems from Ayatollah Khomeini's attitude toward the West and the universities. The moral effects of the teaching of social science were one of his foremost preoccupations. In his view, these disciplines *are* modern Western ideology and the word 'science' is only a cover for this fact. He repeatedly warned about this issue and called for the domination of Western culture to be eliminated from the universities. In his view, the West had devastated the Islamic, national and moral identity of Iranians (Khomeini 1986: 97, 210). He approached liberalism, nationalism, humanism and progress, which universities had been disseminating throughout the country, as a set of appealing words intended to deceive Iranians, and in particular the youth (ibid.: 257). One of his watchwords was *farhang este'mari* (colonial culture). In his view the universities were a political tool to cultivate *farhang este'mari* in the minds of the country's youth. In a speech addressing the authorities of the Ministry of Higher Education, he said:

What we want to say is that our universities are dependent [on the west]. Our universities are colonial. Our universities train and teach westernized individuals (*afraad-e gharbzadeh*). Most of the instructors are westernized, thus,

they are westernizing our youths . . . We say that our universities have become a propaganda battlefield (*meidan jang-e tabliqati*) [between Islam and the west]. We say our youths may learn and become experts in knowledge, but they are not equipped with Islamic upbringing . . . Then, what comes out of our universities is not a committed person, who has sympathy for his country.
(Ibid.: 221)

As can be seen, in Ayatollah Khomeini's view Iranian universities suffer from two problems: colonialism and dependency on the West, and a lack of Islamic morality and culture. He was convinced that only by returning to our culture and gaining self-knowledge and, importantly, by combating Western culture, could we solve those problems. 'Until we have found ourselves, until the East has found itself, and until this *lost self* (*khod gomshodeh*) has been found, we cannot stand on our own feet. The name of the West must be totally wiped from our mind' (Khomeini 1988: 23). He called upon Islamist intellectuals to clean the universities of Western schools of thought: 'To rescue the country, engaged intellectuals must get rid of any Western and Eastern "ism" and "ist"' (ibid.: 141). He referred to the colonial uses of social sciences and more specifically to anthropological studies:

When westerners came to Iran, they began to study the country from different aspects. One type of studies was about mineral resources, to find out what materials exist to be plundered. Another type of studies was about beliefs; to see to what extent the people would resist and obstruct the plunder. Another type of their studies was about the morals and customs of different peoples such as the nomad tribes.

(1986: 26)

One of the government's measures taken to Islamize the milieu of the universities was the establishment of a system of ideological selection called *gozinesh-e daneshju* (student selection). In addition to passing the entrance exam (*konkur*), all university applicants had to show that they were committed to Islamic ideology and the Revolution.

Thus, social science courses became a battlefield on which orthodox religious students faced secular or non-orthodox lecturers who did not necessarily agree with the revolutionary ideology.

I was among the first group. The revolutionary students felt that their academic responsibility was to combat their secular instructors, despite the fact that we were not very familiar with social science concepts and schools of thought. We were ideologically stimulated to challenge our instructors, and we were backed politically by the university authorities, in particular the new revolutionary and Islamic institutions such as the Office of the Leader's Representative and the Student Islamic Association. We were able to challenge any lecturer who was in favour of Western schools of thought such as Marxism, Evolutionism, Liberalism, Materialism, Humanism, Nationalism and the like. We expected and sometimes forced the lecturers to criticize those schools and to explain the superiority of

Islamic ideology. The Islamist revolutionary students were able to expel any lecturer or student who was not in favour of the Islamic Revolution.

The culture of anthropology versus political culture

The political and ideological conflicts between anthropology and the revolutionaries were reflected in anthropology courses and classrooms. Although, as I mentioned, there was no anthropology degree before 1989, all social science students had to pass some anthropology courses. It is notable that after the restoration of the discipline in the 1980s, the ideological conflicts between anthropology and the revolutionaries continued. Here I discuss this conflict according to my personal experience and observations.

It seems that the underlying metaphysical and sociological paradigm of anthropology was antithetical to the Islamic discourse. The dilemma of social sciences and anthropology in present-day Iran, and perhaps in most non-Western societies, is the inconsistency of the culture of anthropology with the governing *political culture* of those societies. This is in part reflected in the anthropology classroom. Whereas ideological states try to use the universities as ideological sites for instilling a certain culture, academic disciplines have and create their own cultures. Sometimes disciplinary cultures and political cultures are inconsistent and tension results. Like others, anthropologists try to disseminate the culture of anthropology in the classroom. In this section, I argue that the ideology of the Iranian state was to some extent inconsistent with the culture of anthropology. To demonstrate this, first I examine the culture of anthropology, and then I describe some major features of the political culture of the Islamic state. Finally I compare them.

The culture of anthropology

Anthropologists not only study culture but also create their own culture: a set of values and beliefs that anthropologists follow in all their career activities including research, teaching and cultural enterprises. Indeed, they have their own tribes and territories (Becher 1993). It has often been said that 'anthropology is a way of life' (Du Bois 1963: 35),⁸⁰ not only does it study culture, but it also is a type of culture *per se*. So anthropology is not value-free. In particular, anthropology teaching, as Albert insists, 'by no means leaves students' attitudes unaffected, nor is it value-free in every sense' (1963: 563). This way of life or culture is a subdivision of modern Western culture. It has been said that modern Western culture consists of and is mainly characterized by secularism, liberalism, relativism, materialism, individualism and capitalism. These values are reflected in all academic disciplines as well as other parts of modern culture. Robbins and De Vita (1985) have shown how the teaching of anthropology operates as the teaching of human values. They have classified eight groups of values, which anthropologists teach in their classrooms. These values are related to the concept of culture: beliefs and values, modes of production, relationships, language, speech and linguistics and finally warfare and conflict resolution.

In what follows, I highlight some underlying values of anthropology, which clearly show the culture of anthropology, based on some eminent Western anthropologists' experience of teaching and research. These values are in different ways incompatible with the conservative, radical and fundamentalist reading of Islamic culture and values that prevailed in the early stages of the Revolution. In the first decade, the conflict between universities and the state was rooted in these incompatibilities. First, I quote some ideas about the culture and values of anthropology; then I compare them with the fundamental values of the political culture of the Islamic Republic.

Cultural self-criticism Anthropology is by nature a critical awareness of cultural life, and its exercise itself is a prophylactic against irrationalism, ethnocentrism and fanaticism. Not only anthropology, but also science is critical, and this makes it different from other kinds of knowledge. Geertz convincingly argues this: 'Where science is the diagnostic, the critical, dimension of culture, ideology is the justificatory, the apologetic one – it refers to "that part of culture which is actively concerned with the establishment and defense of patterns of belief and value"' (1973: 231; quoting from Fallers 1961).

Almost all anthropologists agree that one of the most important values that anthropologists should cultivate in students is a critical view of their own culture. It is generally accepted that anthropology teaching should help students build a personal philosophy of life. It should help the student think through his self-identity and his goals in relation to his own society and his position in it. Regarding this ideal, Robbins and De Vita suggest that teaching anthropology 'should encourage students to begin to question their own values and to re-examine unquestioned conventions in light of what we know about the life-style and values of other cultures' (1985: 252).

Anthropological point of view Anthropologists are unanimous in claiming that teaching anthropology involves not merely communicating information and ideas to students, but, as Philip Kottak puts it, 'recognizing and dealing with profound changes in students and society' (Kottak 1997: 4).

Combating ethnocentrism Albert argues that 'combating ethnocentrism or provincialism has been named frequently as one of the main objectives of anthropology' (1963: 561). Havilland also believes that 'the most important thing we can do in our introductory anthropology courses is to concentrate on combating the provincialism and ethnocentrism of our introductory students – their functional illiteracy about the world they live in' (1997: 36).

Nanda argues that the aim of teaching anthropology is to understand that 'all cultures are humanly constructed and that our own culture is just one of the many alternatives in the world, past and present' (1997: 113). This means that no culture can claim to be sacred and divinely constructed or superior for any reason. She argues that if we accept that cultures are humanly constructed and 'can thus be humanly changed in more reasonable and human directions – [this] gives cultural anthropology its inherent potential as *radical critique*' (ibid.).

Cultural tolerance If anthropology aims to study and demonstrate cultural diversity, the result is that we accept and tolerate this diversity. As Albert maintains,

‘The fact of cultural variation has been combined with a variety of premises, factual, theoretical, and valuational, to produce nearly the whole gamut of political-social-ethical theories of the western tradition’ (1963: 564).

Cultural uncertainty One of the values of scientific knowledge is to create uncertainty and provide a ground for tolerating ambiguity. Du Bois argues that anthropologists try to inculcate this kind of cultural uncertainty in students:

Briefly summarized, the viewpoints that professional anthropologists hope for in their students are empathy, curiosity and objectivity... I refer to a tolerance for ambiguity. By this I mean a capacity to entertain uncertainty, to cope with paradox, to allow for the indeterminate. Empathy, curiosity, objectivity and a tolerance for ambiguity are not always comfortable attitudes. Nor are they likely to be congenial to temperaments wedded to rigorous and elegant abstractions for whom rationalism, materialistic determinism and science are focal values. Rather, they are attitudes and virtues congenial to humanism.

(1963: 35)

The political culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Geertz summarizes the cultural foundations of the Balinese state as consisting of ‘the beliefs and values, for the most part religious ones, which animated it, gave it direction, meaning, and form’ (1973: 331) and the experiences, habits and beliefs that are essential elements in politics. Particularly in transitional periods, new states seek new modes of operation. A new symbolic framework, to equip the newly seated government to formulate and react to political dilemmas, is at the top of the agenda (ibid.: 327–41). Parvin and Vaziri (1992) have demonstrated the symbolic framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran as political culture. According to their study, the political culture of the Islamic Republic consists of the following components:

Absolute submission: submission to the interpretation of Islam according to the rule of *Velayat-e Faqih*.

Fractured individualism: internalization of individualism in sharply limited social spaces. Conformity of private and public life, isolated enclosures of Islamic prescriptions.

Spiritual materialism

Islamic philistinism: internalization of supreme value of conformity to clerical ideology.

Islamic unidimensionalism: Islam as the only appropriate dimension of being for capitalist, worker, peasant, intellectual, scientist and artist.

(Ibid.: 121)

I have already discussed philosophical and epistemological conflicts between Islamic and secular knowledge. The conflict between the political culture of

the Islamic Republic and the culture of anthropology is evident. To clarify it further, I will outline some practical problems in the way of anthropology in Iran.

The problem of divine versus human Stephan Fuchs in *Against Essentialism: A Theory of Culture and Society* (1999: 2) argues that ‘while all cultures are constructed, not all of them are constructivist, in the sense of understanding themselves as but one possible culture among many’. As we saw, one particular value of anthropology and teaching anthropology is to show that *culture is humanly constructed*. This is perhaps the most *radical* and intolerable part of the culture of anthropology from the Islamic point of view. It is fundamental to the dominant Iranian revolutionaries’ political reading of Islam that religion is divine, the word of God, not *humanly constructed*. Further, in that reading of Islam, some parts of culture and society are religious, hence they must be approached as sacred or God’s creations, not as social, cultural or overall human constructions. For instance, patterns of gender inequality are justified as the result of natural differences created by God, which cannot be challenged. People must obey the *Vali-ye Faqih* and the political system because God ordered Muslims to obey him, as God’s representative on earth. In fact, all aspects of society and culture have some relation with religion and therefore they cannot be considered as human constructs, or as ‘one among many’. From this point of view, any critical perspective on cultural issues will be seen as anti-religious.

Given these contradictions between the culture of anthropology and the political culture of the Islamic Republic, teaching anthropology has involved severe political tensions. In their courses, in order to avoid antagonizing the students, lecturers may refrain from speaking about Iran and they explain theoretical issues without reference to Iranian society. In my postgraduate studies at the University of Tabriz in Iranian Azerbaijan, the anthropology courses were the dullest we had. Later, when I became a lecturer and began teaching anthropology, I realized why anthropology courses are so boring and difficult to understand, and even why the discipline seemed to me and other students irrelevant to Iran. It was because the instructors didn’t dare exemplify their arguments by referring to present Iranian culture and society. Teaching anthropology without using films, pictures, and examples drawn from present Iranian culture made no sense for students, but it safeguarded the lecturer’s academic career.

The problem of criticism and self-criticism As argued earlier, one of the main values in the culture of anthropology is self-criticism and the attempt to invigorate students’ *critical faculties*. Generally anthropological self-criticism is inconsistent with the political culture of the Islamic Republic. When we write, speak, read and even listen we Iranian students and instructors of anthropology must consider the *red lines* drawn by the Islamic Republic if we want to be properly privileged by state support, the only way to professional job opportunities in Iran.

The students and the Higher Education System expected that anthropologists would present only what is good about Iranian society and culture, not criticize fundamental problems. But this is incompatible with anthropology, where ‘deconstructing central structural concepts in the society we are teaching such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity is an essential component of teaching anthropology’

(Nanda 1997: 118). As Marcus and Fischer (1986/1999) have demonstrated, anthropology has, in its entire history, functioned as a cultural critique, not by flattering a certain society or political system.

The problem of anthropological values As I have argued, the culture of anthropology, like any other culture, includes a set of values, beliefs and attitudes towards life, man and the world. The inculcation of those attitudes in students is an important professional preoccupation of anthropologists. Components of this culture, which I found to conflict with the culture of the Islamic Revolution, and which commonly met with strong resistance among students, include: *cultural relativism, cultural diversity, combating provincialism and ethnocentrism, combating Iranian cultural stereotypes about other cultures, in particular Western culture, critical approach towards Iranian culture, in particular religious issues, deconstructing the central concepts and values of gender, class, race and ethnicity in Iranian society, and exemplifying and portraying cultural differences and similarities, particularly when the tangible examples were not in line with the culture of the Islamic Revolution.* Until 1995, lecturers could not openly teach anthropological theories that were inconsistent with Islamic ideology, such as evolutionism, Marxism, cultural materialism and all theories about the origin of human beings and religion. It was also virtually impossible to teach students the anthropological point of view.

The problem of the anthropological point of view Contrary to the expectations of the Islamist revolutionaries, anthropologists in the classroom cannot act as preachers or politicians. Instead, they must perform their own role as anthropologists; as French states, 'acting like an anthropologist in the classroom means employing the discipline . . . as a major *point of reference*' (1963: 172).

It is true that 'teaching anthropology is an encounter between us and our students' (Nanda 1997: 114), an encounter in which governments and political powers have no business to intervene, threatening the anthropologists' professional stability and security. In Iran many instructors were expelled, not only at the beginning of the Revolution but also in the last two decades, and many social scientists have been directly or indirectly put under pressure to consider the political priorities of the state.

Because of all these conflicts between anthropology and the Islamic Revolution, in the early years there was a great philosophical tension, which has not yet been resolved. Ernest Gellner (1995) argues that in the contemporary world there are three views of truth: fundamentalists hold that 'truth is reserved by God'; relativists believe that truth is a matter of opinion and Enlightenment Puritans believe in the reliability of reason. 'The fundamentalists are unlikely to become anthropologists, since they have no sympathy with unbelievers. Anthropologists are, accordingly, either relativist or realist' (Kuper 1999: 139).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the opposition of the Islamic Revolution to Pahlavi nationalist and secularist policies, and the consequences of this for anthropology. After the Revolution, nationalism was treated as anti-Islamic

and consequently as an anti-revolutionary ideology. Similarly, secularism and liberalism were taken as manifestly against the Islamic nature of the Revolution. However, all these features, namely, secularism, nationalism and liberalism were the core components of Iranian anthropology. Therefore, the antagonism of the Revolution to anthropology was quite predictable and understandable.

The first impact of the Revolution on anthropology was the demolition of the Department of Anthropology at Tehran University, and the termination of the ISSR's anthropological activities. Also, nationalist folkloristic research and publication were banned, and the government no longer allowed the nationalists the privilege of state support.

Because one of the Revolution's main slogans and ideals was to be independent of any superpower of the time, whether Eastern or Western, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and in particular anti-Westernism became integral to the predominant discourses of the revolutionaries. This also had a great impact on the anthropological studies of Iran carried out by non-Iranian ethnographers since the 1960s. After the Revolution, the presence of non-Iranian anthropologists became virtually impossible, and no foreign fieldworker got a permit for at least a decade.

Following its closure of the universities in 1980, the government was faced with resistance by intellectuals and academics, and was forced to reopen the universities years later. The Revolution's proposed alternative to Western social science, and even to a nationalist Iranian native social science, was an Islamic knowledge based on Shi'ism. In the end, still hoping to Islamize the social sciences, the government accepted the reopening of the humanities and social science disciplines, having failed so far (up to present date) to achieve any of these ambitions.

However, as I shall show in Chapter 6, Anthropology has a special ideological function for the Islamic state. Anthropological knowledge can help the Islamic state to study and revitalize the Islamic parts of Iranian culture and civilization. As I argue, all religions must respect the past and history because all are rooted in the past. In that sense, anthropological knowledge can serve the Revolution through its function of studying Islamic tradition and the past. As we will see, in the 1990s the government began to support anthropological research and in recent years some new anthropological research centres have been established.

Further, the most important promise of the Revolution was that it would improve socio-economic conditions, in particular for the poor, the so-called *mostaz'afin*. This means paying serious attention to the rural and nomadic populations, which were among the most neglected groups during the Pahlavi dynasty period. As we will see, in the second decade of the Revolution the government began to implement socio-economic development programmes. Once more, applied anthropological research attracted the attention of the policy-makers.

6 Anthropology and Islamic modernization

Iranian anthropology in the 1990s

Anthropology will survive in a changing world by allowing itself to perish in order to be born again under a new guise.

(Levi-Strauss 1966: 126)

Introduction

This chapter examines the state of Iranian anthropology over the past 15 years, from the end of the Iran–Iraq war in 1988 through 2003. This period saw a revival and expansion of academic activity; higher education and academic disciplines in Iran found a new basis for institutional development. At the same time, government policy in rural and agricultural development became more participatory in nature, a change that also provided new grounds for anthropological studies of local knowledge. In this period, too, a new wave of cultural heritage studies emerged, giving prominence to folklore, archaeology and ethnography. In the 1990s, the government established several anthropological museums, and the Centre for Iranian Anthropology (CIAAnth) carried several national ethnographic projects. As part of its campaign against Westernization and what the Leader of the Revolution called *tahajom-e farhangi* (cultural invasion), the state decided to reinforce native, local and national cultures, giving further scope for ethnological studies and enterprises. In recent years too, secularist scholars and members of ethnic minorities have begun to produce and publish a series of secular and local folklore studies.

Meanwhile, the discipline has faced many political and institutional problems. Ethnographic studies of the nomadic tribes had lost their position on the map of Iranian anthropology and were replaced by quantitative sociological studies. Moreover, the universities have been unable to satisfy student expectations, and the available literature on anthropological theory and method is far from adequate, though the discipline has been developed institutionally.

In this chapter, I shall argue that these developments and constraints are mainly rooted in contemporary socio-political changes in Iran. This period has seen fundamental political, cultural and economic changes in Iranian society. The war with Iraq ended, Ayatollah Khomeini died, revolutionary anti-nationalism declined and a new Islamic nationalism was born. The demographic structure of society changed, with an explosion of youth and, as a corollary, the social demand

for higher education dramatically increased. New communication technologies arrived and society was opened to a global culture. Meanwhile, the government's postwar reconstruction plans failed to meet the people's social, political and economic expectations; policies for nomads and rural areas changed; the conservative, totalitarian and traditional nature of the state was challenged and, in due course, a reformist movement has made significant advancement over fundamentalist readings of the Revolutionary ideology and Islam. With all these changes in society, the universities, scholars, media and people have become freer to express their culture and desires.

To examine these issues further, I have organized this chapter in the following sections:

- important structural changes in postwar Iran;
- a synoptic account of developments and constraints of anthropology;
- the state of anthropology teaching;
- the emergence of local knowledge studies;
- the state of ethnographic studies of the nomad tribes;
- islamic nationalism and cultural heritage studies;
- the state of folklore studies;
- conclusion.

Structural changes in postwar Iran

On 18 July 1988, the eight-year Iran–Iraq war ended and the Islamic state entered a new historical phase and socio-political condition. In the postwar era, three main socio-political discourses emerged: *reconstruction*, *Islamic nationalism* and *reformism*. Each has had an impact on the development of anthropology.

The discourse of reconstruction

After the war, several factors put the government under pressure to reconstruct and ameliorate the social and economic structure of Iran. The ideology of the Revolution was committed to establishing social justice, giving freedom and liberating the country from foreign dependency. In practice, the revolutionaries forgot the slogan of political freedom and oppressed their opponents by labelling them counter-revolutionary (*zedd-e enqelab*), all the while insisting upon following a discourse of egalitarianism and populism. In egalitarian or populist thought, an economic system must create a classless, egalitarian society, promote self-reliant development and satisfy social needs (Hunter 1992: 58–60; Saidi 2001). The Revolution promised to establish a welfare state and a prosperous and egalitarian society with free education and proper health services for all the people, especially the poor (*mostaz'afan*). But the Iran–Iraq war prevented the government from keeping those social, political and economic promises. After the war, the priority of restoring the socio-economic structures and the need to fulfil the Revolution's promise of public welfare forced the government to focus on economic issues.

Responding to these problems, the government implemented two new five-year socio-economic plans, focusing on decentralization, privatization, rejoining the world trade market and modernization. Reconstruction (*sazandegi*) became a dominant state slogan.

One of the most important elements of the reconstruction programme was the huge expansion of the higher education system. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the Revolution led to a mass exodus of professionals from government and other institutions. Either they were expelled as part of a 'purification' campaign (*paksazi*) or they left because they found life under Islamic rule intolerable. The resulting depletion of managerial, medical and technical talent exacerbated Iran's perennial shortage of trained manpower. Thus, one of the state's first priorities was to educate a new generation of experts by developing the higher education system. This issue was raised in the first post-Revolution development plan, presented in 1983. Prime objectives of the plan were to 'expand education and culture, ultimately leading to free primary and secondary education and to... expand research, which is considered essential for acquiring the scientific and technological base necessary for economic independency' (Hunter 1992: 65–6). This policy was intensified in the second development plan (1990–5). All universities grew and the numbers of students increased dramatically.

Another focus of reconstruction was the rural areas. As will be elaborated, from the beginning of the Revolution the government generously funded the Ministry of Jihad to implement development programmes among the rural population. Despite its initial goals, the Jihad followed a top-down and non-participatory policy, which continued in the postwar era (Shakoori 2001). In recent years, the weaknesses of that approach became clear, and the Jihad has begun to establish a new participatory policy, part of which has been to study and make use of the native knowledge and culture of rural populations.

The discourse of Islamic nationalism

Shireen Hunter argues that from the beginning of the 1990s 'the religious establishment began reverting to its more traditional attitude towards Iran's pre-Islamic culture, with its delicate blending of Islamic principles, pre-Islamic Persian concepts, and other non-Islamic philosophies' (1992: 93). This change is best reflected in a set of cultural rules and policies called *Principles of Cultural Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (CPIRI), ratified by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution (*Shura-ye Ali-ye Enqelab-e Farhangi*) in 1991. From the official point of view, the CPIRI is the most important official expression of state cultural policy. The beginning of the CPIRI states that all government organizations are obliged to follow the policies clarified in the CPIRI – 'the principles of national cultural policy serving as guidelines for officials, managers, planners, and agents of cultural affairs' (1990: 14). The CPIRI may be taken as the official government view in the domain of culture.

One of the most striking points in the CPIRI is the special focus on nationalism. In fact, the CPIRI shows a fundamental turn towards a new nationalist policy.

Several articles of the CPIRI recognize and emphasize nationalism as well as Islam as foundations of cultural policy. From a total of 22 Articles, 'Basic Principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran', the following focus on the new nationalist policy of the state (emphasis added):

- Article One: Recognizing and evaluating *historical and national heritage and traditions* in various scientific, literary, artistic, and public cultural spheres; safeguarding Islamic and national works of art, and preserving and revitalizing the constructive and valuable achievements of civilization in Iran.
- Article Four: Being comprehensively cognizant of *Islamic and Iranian national culture* and civilization; promoting Islamic morality and knowledge; and introducing great figures and events of both Islamic and Iranian history to the public.
- Article Five: Consolidating *national and religious solidarity*; taking into account ethnic and religious characteristics; and endeavouring to eliminate impediments to national unity.
- Article Seven: Taking every effort to promote and enrich the *Persian language and literature*.
- Article Twenty-two: Endeavouring to identify and publicize the fundamentals of authentic *religious and national identity* to consolidate and perpetuate cultural independence.

I have emphasized the phrases that show nationalist tendencies and concerns. Article One focuses on *historical and national heritage and traditions*; Article Four on *Islamic and Iranian national culture*. The CPIRI displays a deliberate, conscious effort to blend *Islamic and Iranian national culture* as a unity. In Article Five we see *national and religious solidarity* considered as the basis of national unity. Article Seven stresses the importance of *Persian language and literature* for the Islamic Republic, something that was of no importance at the beginning of the Revolution. Finally, in Article Twenty-two, we see that authentic *religious and national identity* is regarded as vital for sustaining cultural independence.

Altogether, these principles demonstrate a significant shift in the Revolution's world view, by which the Islamic Republic now approaches culture in a more modern and nationalist sense. To explain why the state changed its cultural policy, several factors should be considered. Hunter argues that five issues forced the Islamic state to reconsider nationalism and Iranianism: first, 'public resistance to the anti-nationalist policy of the state'; second, the Iraqi invasion of Iran strengthened nationalist sentiments; third, 'the utilitarian benefits to be gained from promoting the national cultural heritage for tourism industry'; fourth, the influence of Persian language and finally, 'once in power, the Islamicists no longer felt seriously threatened by Iranian nationalism as an ideological rival' (Hunter 1992: 17–19).

However, we might bear in mind that Iranian national culture and Shi'ism have a long history of coexistence in Iran. Shi'ism is the Iranian state religion and,

since at least the Safavid period, it has been incorporated into and mixed with Iranian national culture, so historically there has until Pahlavi period been no tension between them. As we saw, this tension was created by Pahlavi cultural policy, to which the Revolution's anti-nationalism was in many respects a reaction. This deep historical background has accelerated the process of returning to an Islamic nationalist cultural policy. Moreover, Islamic nationalism is a particular brand of nationalism; despite the state's respect for ancient Iran and the pre-Islamic era they do not form part of its claim to legitimacy. From the state's point of view, nationalism is a device for creating a sense of cultural resistance against the penetration of anti-Islamic values propagated through the globalization process. Further, the rich cultural heritage of Iran is a major tourist attraction. In the 1990s, the Cultural Heritage Organization was moved from the Ministry of Higher Education and associated with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance so as to exploit the cultural heritage as an economic resource.

The discourse of reform

Mohammad Khatami's victory in the presidential election of May 1997 marked the start of a new era in Iran. This new era, which some call 'post-Islamism' (Adelkhah 1999: viii), suggests a fundamental reformist turn in Iranian politics. President Khatami and his reformist followers have attempted to present a new interpretation of Islam able to create a form of modern living compatible with democracy, civil society, freedom, economic development, individualism and Iranian national identity. These ideals are reflected in Khatami's popular slogans such as *jame'eh madani dini* (religious civil society), *hakemiyat-e qanun* (the rule of law), *mardomsalari dini* (religious democracy), *azadi-ye bayan dar charchub qanun* (legal freedom of speech) and *Iran abad va mostaqel* (a prosperous independent Iran). The reformists' nationalist orientation is best reflected in Khatami's catchphrase *Iran bara-ye hameh Iraniiyan* (Iran for all Iranians).⁸¹ Thus, the reformist government affirmed this new Islamic nationalist policy. As I will show, this policy required the development of anthropological research, mainly reflected in cultural heritage activities.

Additionally, by opening society to more liberal and democratic circumstances, the reformist movement paved the way for developing new discourses in Iranian social sciences. Since one of the major sources of the reformist movement was students and academics, the Khatami government continued the policy of expanding higher education. In the last few years, academics have found further political freedom, and the language of social science has become the basis of public discourse, widely reflected in the press. This has given great prominence to social science disciplines and their practitioners.⁸²

The restoration of anthropology

In the 1990s, there were rapid developments in anthropology in Iran involving all elements of the discipline: institutions, numbers of practitioners and students, research, teaching, books, journals, museums and finally epistemological and

methodological issues. It is not necessary to give a detailed account of these developments, but in order to provide a background for my discussion I will draw a general picture.

Teaching and academic activity generally in anthropology have increased since the beginning of the 1990s, in line with the massive expansion of higher education in general and of the social sciences in particular. During this period, undergraduate and research degrees were added to already established graduate degree programmes. Apart from Tehran University, other universities including those of Mazandaran, Sistan Baluchestan, Yazd, Tehran Islamic Azad University (in its three separate parts of central, south and north Tehran), Garmsar, Rudehen and the Centre for Higher Training of the Organization for Cultural Heritage began to offer diploma, undergraduate and graduate degrees in anthropology. According to my survey in October 2001, 300 students in different universities were registered for undergraduate, 60 students for graduate and 3 for research degrees in cultural sociology focusing on folklore and anthropology. Although these figures are much lower than for sociology students, they do show a great increase in numbers. In the winter of 1988, when I began my MA in Tehran University, only 5 MA students registered in anthropology, and at that time only Tehran University had an MA degree in anthropology. We also were the first post-revolutionary group of anthropology students in the country.

An important institutional development was the establishment of the Iranian Anthropological Association (*Anjoman Ensanshenasi Iran*) in 2001. By 2002 the Association had held four regional and national seminars concerning Iranian culture (Rafifar interview 2001). Dr Jalal al-Din Rafifar, Head of the Anthropology Department of Tehran University and the Director of the Association, stated that the Association consisted of four major branches including archaeology, folklore, ethnology and cultural anthropology and had 300 members (Interview 2002). The Association is located in the Faculty of Social Sciences of Tehran University and has a close relationship with anthropology students. It publishes a specialized anthropological journal, the first issue of which came out in spring 2003.

Another new anthropological journal is *Ensanshenasi*, the first academic journal of anthropology in Iran, whose first issue came out in summer 2001. The editor is Soheila Shahshahani, Lecturer in Anthropology at Beheshti University of Tehran, one of the most prominent Iranian women anthropologists living in Iran. The journal is published by *Nashr-e Danesh*, the most important academic publisher. Another recently established anthropological journal is *Ketab-e Mah-e Honar* (Art Monthly), which specializes in introducing and reviewing ethnological and anthropological books and publications concerning Iranian art and culture. So far 50 issues have been published and it has been successful in popularizing anthropological discussion and literature among both academics and the general public. Then in summer 2003, *Honar va Mardom*, the most popular anthropology magazine before the Revolution, resumed publication. Finally, a new professional folklore journal, *Fasnameh Farhang-e Mardom* (Journal of Folklore) was established in summer 2003.

An institutional development is the establishment and expansion of cultural museums. By the end of 2001, Iran had 125 museums. Within the last decade, the Cultural Heritage Organization has founded about 100 museums, many of which are research-oriented and render services to scholars. The Organization plans many new research museums around the country (Mirshokra'i interview 2001). The expansion of museums has been the result of various changes such as the development of archaeological excavations, government attention to cultural development and the academic needs of universities and scholars of history and anthropology. However, the major reason, I would argue, has been a new political priority that has emerged from the nationalist policy of the state.

In recent years, the CIAAnth has become very active, and has held several anthropological conferences and carried out national research projects, described in the following text. Some new research centres for applied anthropology have been established. A centre for the study of native knowledge has been established in Mahallat, a city in Central Province. In 2002 the Tehran municipality founded the Markaz-e Mardomshenasi-ye Iranian (Centre for Anthropology of Iranians), which aims to revitalize Iranian national and local customs and tradition. In order to popularize and disseminate cultural heritage issues more widely, in spring 2003 the Cultural Heritage Organization set up a news agency called *Miras Khabar* (Heritage News),⁸³ which announces anthropological and ethnological events and developments daily.

Alongside these institutional developments, the anthropological literature has been proliferating. According to statistics provided by the Iranian Book Society (Khaneh Ketab Iran) between 1989 and 2002, 5,529 books in different anthropological fields such as folklore, archaeology, mythology, ethnography, social and cultural anthropology, ethnology, and cultural studies were published. This indicates a dramatic growth in Iranian anthropological literature.⁸⁴ Besides, the fact that over 80 per cent of the books were published by non-governmental organizations shows that anthropological knowledge has attracted public attention and therefore that more intellectuals are working in this field.

In what follows, I examine why anthropology developed and why it found a basis for revival. Generally, I argue that anthropology, as conceived by Iranians, is potentially in line with the ideology of the Revolution and the political culture of the Islamic Republic. I argue that anthropology – in the Iranian concept – is the scientific study of tradition and cultural identity. The Revolution's major aim in the 1990s – to maintain Irano-Islamic identity and culture against processes of globalization and Westernization – was the basis on which the state and society tried to develop anthropology. This political logic has been visible in all anthropological activities.

However, these developments in the discipline have been problematic. In what follows I first explain the Iranian traditionalist concept of anthropology; then I show how this concept was reflected in the first anthropology curriculum, ratified in 1996. Later I focus on studies and activities related to cultural heritage, ethnology and local knowledge.

The teaching of anthropology

The Iranian concept of anthropology

In Iran, intellectuals, academics and ordinary people understand anthropology as a discipline limited to the study of issues such as folklore, mythology, nomadic tribes and local knowledge, which all relate to historical and traditional aspects of Iranian culture and identity. Although the scope of anthropology elsewhere today includes all aspects of life and there are anthropologies of development, medicine, media and so on, Iranian nationalists, nativists and Islamicists consider anthropologists to be ‘brokers of tradition’ (*kargozaran sunnat*).

To Iranians, anthropology has been a device to promote personal experiences of traditional communities. In fact, all well-known Iranian ethnographers have had tribal, rural or traditional religious backgrounds: Nader Afshar-Naderi, Abdollah Shahbazi, Mortaza Farhadi, Javad Safinezhad, Sekandar Amanollahi-Baharvand, Mohammad Bahmanbeigi, Parviz Varjavand, Mohammad Mirshokra’i, Mahdi Fahimi, Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Mahmud Ruholamini.⁸⁵ As I explained in Chapter 5, Al-e Ahmad, Sa’edi, Tahbaz, Behrangi and ethnographers like Bahmanbeigi, who studied the nomad tribes, saw ethnography as a way of preserving native rural and tribal identity, culture, natural environment and traditions against the Western-oriented modernization policy of the Pahlavis. This also has been true in recent decades.

Farhadi, Amanollahi-Baharvand and Bolukbashi, I suggest, take ethnography as a kind of device ‘to transfer the unique lived experiences of a unique traditional community that would soon disappear, and would never happen again, such as the Basij community in the Iran–Iraq war’ (Fahimi Interview Summer 2000). As I discussed earlier, writing an ethnographic monograph about nomads or rural areas was a common topic in Tehran University in the 1970s; 27 such monographs were written at that time. In my own classes that I taught (1991–8), I observed that ethnography was attractive mainly to students who are committed and loyal to their traditional local culture and communities. To explain this point, I will tell my own story.

I was taught that sociology, economics, politics and social psychology study urban life and modern social institutions, whereas anthropology focuses on traditional institutions such as traditional technology, folk culture and communities.⁸⁶ In fact, it was this notion of anthropology that motivated me to follow it, because when I was doing my BA I realized that I belonged to an ‘anthropological’ community: a village. My first ethnographic experience was to write about my birthplace, Moslehabad, a small village in Farahan, north of Arak, in the Central Province. Having been born and grown up in a village, I decided to write an ethnographic monograph as my BA final project. My tutor encouraged me, reminding me that having ‘lived experience’ of a village is a great advantage for an ethnographer.

First, I wrote the history of the village. Then I provided a descriptive account of cultural traits (to me, that meant all non-modern things) such as the local vernacular (*guyesh farahani*), wedding ceremonies, family relationships, religious beliefs, religious rituals such as mourning rites for Imam Hossein, local ceremonies for Nowruz, local dress, indigenous agricultural techniques, traditional methods of

carpet weaving, folklore and, in general, the things that would not be found in cities and modern communities. To me it was a cultural responsibility to portray rural culture, technology, knowledge and art as just as attractive and productive as modern culture. I felt deeply that I belonged to what I was writing about. When I completed the monograph, I was proud and excited, not for having written an ethnographic monograph, but for having recorded my traditional self, which had been humiliated underneath the wheels of modernization. I had reconstructed and described a community that had been losing its importance since the 1960s, when Mohammad Reza Shah began his White Revolution and Land Reform Programme.

In the 1980s, when I wrote my thesis, there was a sense of sympathy towards rural populations. One of the Revolution's ambitions was to revive the rural areas, and the state followed a rural-oriented policy for about a decade. As a zealously revolutionary student, I thought of writing about my village as not just describing a far-flung place, but as a revolutionary task to disseminate the Revolution values. Since one of the Grand Ayatollahs of the time, Ayatollah al-uzma Araki, also came from Moslehabad, I knew my ethnographic work would attract the attention of the state authorities.⁸⁷

This close relation between anthropology and tradition helped the discipline to be restored and developed in the context of the political culture of the Islamic Republic. As I have argued, the ideology of the Revolution has favoured traditionalism. This enthusiasm for tradition is reinforced by the increasing influence of globalization and Western culture in Iranian society. As I will later discuss in more detail, in the early 1990s the state felt it necessary to develop anthropology as a means for studying Iranian culture so as to disseminate and support local cultures against Western cultural influences.

The anthropology curriculum

The educational structure of anthropology in Iran is predicated on a more traditionalist conception. In 1996, the Supreme Planning Council (*Shuraye Aliye Barnamehrizi*) of the Ministry of Higher Education authorized the establishment of BA courses of anthropology and released a curriculum as the benchmark of Iranian anthropology. The first section defines anthropology as follows:

Ensanshenasi (anthropology) is a relatively new discipline of the social sciences, which was formed at the beginning of the twentieth century. It generally studies various characteristics of human beings including physical, cultural, historical and intellectual. Anthropology investigates the physical changes and transformations of human populations. *Mardomshenasi* (ethnology) studies the socio-cultural aspects of human populations in certain historical and geographical areas, and certain elements such as language, art, religion, kinship, economy, law, dress, custom, marriage, music, traditional technology and so on.

(Anthropology Curriculum Programme 1996: 3)

Then, quoting Tylor's (1871) definition of culture, it argues that culture is the subject matter of anthropology, which differentiates it from other social sciences.

The second section outlines the importance of anthropology and its applications for Iranian society. The curriculum states that the major importance of anthropology for Iran is ‘to study the traditional, ethnic and ethical elements and standards of the Irano-Islamic culture of Iranian society’ (ibid.: 4).

The curriculum then details the content of course units (*vahed darsi*) and their importance. To get a BA, a student must complete 135 units.⁸⁸ Courses are classified into five groups: general (*omumi*), basic (*payeh*), common compulsory, common optional and specialized (*takhassosi*). General courses are 20 units, including ‘History of Islamic Movements in Recent Centuries’, ‘History of the Islamic Revolution’, ‘History of Islam’, ‘Islamic Texts’ (Quran and Hadith), ‘Islamic Principles of Upbringing’ (*akhlaq va tarbiyat Eslami*), ‘Islamic Knowledge’ (two courses), ‘Persian Literature’, ‘English Language’ and ‘Sport’. The main aim of general courses is to familiarize students with Islamic knowledge and ideology. All these courses are compulsory.

Basic courses, 38 units, are intended to acquaint students with other social science disciplines such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, political science, economics and statistics. Courses which concern anthropology are: Introduction to Anthropology; Cultural Anthropology; Anthropology of Iran; Physical Anthropology; Sociology of Tribes; Human Ecology; History of Islamic Social Thought; Theories of Anthropology; Culture and Development; Ethnography; Research Methods; Museology; Rural Anthropology; Tribal Studies; Anthropology of Kinship; Anthropology of Art; Prehistoric Anthropology; Urban Anthropology; Anthropology of Religious Beliefs; Archaeological Anthropology; Semiotic Anthropology; Anthropology of non-Iranian Tribes; Linguistic Anthropology; Islamic Anthropology; Traditional Modes and Bases of Cooperation in Rural and Urban Communities in Iran and Anthropology of Iranian Tribes (ibid.: 11).

Significantly, tradition and traditional communities are at the core of all anthropology courses, and there is little attention to urban/modern issues. Most of the courses listed above concern rural, tribal and historical communities. Courses like Urban Anthropology, or Culture and Development, could be relevant to modern issues, but the Curriculum emphasizes that their concern is *Third World theories and perspectives on development with a focus on how to conserve Iranian cultural heritage and identity*.

Ethnography (*mardomnegari*) is defined in this curriculum as: ‘A method for carrying out a precise and comprehensive study of all material and non-material aspects of human activities in a bounded community’ (ibid.: 40). A ‘bounded community’ is: ‘a village, a small island, a tribe, a clan (*tayefeh*) or a parish (*mahalleh*)’. In this concept, anthropology is limited to small-scale communities and their problems, and other topics, for example, national problems, civil society, gender issues or the media are ignored. Predetermining the goal of anthropology as merely the preservation of Iranian cultural heritage and identity is a political restriction that prevents anthropology from going beyond its classical, traditional domain.

The students’ concept of anthropology

Despite the established traditionalist concept of anthropology, younger people and students commonly do not favour that concept; most of them want

anthropology to be a science for use in the present, real world, to help solve real cultural problems that, in their view, are not much to do with folklore, mythology, history, nomad tribes or tradition. To explore student concept of the subject, in summer 2001, I invited anthropology students at Mazandaran University to a meeting to discuss it. Thirty-one students attended the meeting. I asked them to say why they chose anthropology. How did they assess their department, classrooms, lecturers, and the state of teaching? What did they think of their professional future? In the following, I summarize and analyse the discussion.

Six students had high school diplomas in mathematics and sciences, two others were a filmmaker and a photographer. The rest had diplomas in humanities. In the meeting, the students described some current social problems, and argued that they had come to university to get to know, understand and solve those problems. They expected their university to equip them with the knowledge and skills that society needs. Some students did have strong intellectual expectations of anthropology, but all declared that anthropology could help society to change and get rid of social problems. They said anthropology was their chosen field of study, and they wanted to master it, not just for a qualification. The filmmaker explained how anthropology could help him make better films: 'Film is about culture and anthropology, too. So, if I become an anthropologist, I will master filmmaking, too.' The photographer justified choosing anthropology in the same way. Others did not have such clear ideas about the discipline, although most appreciated it as 'one of the best university options to follow'. Such enthusiasm for anthropology I had never seen in my classes in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The women argued that in their lives they had experienced constant, routine oppression and pressure, 'because people still treat women as the second sex. We think women's oppression has cultural roots, and anthropology could show us how it might be solved'. One said: 'I see my neighbours and relatives beat and torture their wives and sometimes daughters, but the wives always stay silent. Why are they silent? It is a cultural problem. The men think their wives are their property, so they treat them as they treat their animals. I think anthropology can enable us to tell men that we are not their property.'

Others, referring to their personal experiences, said that there were many cultural problems (*moshkelat farhangi*) which anthropology could help to understand and solve. They mentioned unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, despotism, youth depression, identity crisis, moral and cultural corruption, demographic explosion, underdevelopment, inflation, Western cultural invasion, political conflict, family breakdown, the generation gap, scientific and technological backwardness, drug addiction, hypocrisy, the refugee crisis (referring to Afghan refugees), crime, bribery and social mistrust.

One student said:

In my family I see my graduate brother and sister are unemployed and desperate about the future. In my village there are a hundred illiterate people. While western countries many decades ago celebrated the elimination of

illiteracy, unfortunately we still have millions of illiterate people. It is embarrassing and shameful. In my view, illiteracy has cultural roots, because government has provided the educational facilities yet many don't agree to go to school or *Nehzat Savad-Amuzi* (Adult Education Movement) to learn literacy. I think through anthropological study we can find a method for convincing and teaching the illiterate.

Another student argued:

On my way to university everyday I see many beggars, hawkers, the unemployed and itinerants. Why are we in this wretched situation? Which social, cultural and political forces and factors are responsible for this misery? How can we get rid of it? We all have come to university to find answers to those questions. We are here looking for betterment, social justice, democracy and freedom.

In Mazandaran University in 2001, a lack of trained anthropologists meant that non-anthropologists were teaching some anthropology courses. The students were unhappy with their teachers. On the other hand, the lack of freedom of speech meant that the lecturers could not openly discuss social and cultural problems, so they mainly focused on theoretical issues without referring to tangible examples and facts. This made the classes boring and unattractive. Students generally complained that though they were eager to know about the many problems affecting Iranian culture and the world they had to study problems for which they had no feeling or idea. For example, they had to study about race and biological issues, which they do not suppose to be relevant to Iranian society.

As a result, every day their interest in anthropology decreases. One lecturer suggested that this situation was due, on the one hand, to the lack of funding for anthropological research, and on other hand, to the lack of freedom. He argued: 'Sadly, I have to say that our department and courses are not in line with what anthropology should be and what we expect of it. Academics rarely carry out research; and those who do do not intend to solve a social problem and they never criticize the structures of social inequality, rather they only want to get paid and to get academic prestige.'

The students felt that much of the theories and issues that their tutors discuss in class are alien to them: 'We have read in our course books that scientific research does not exist in a vacuum and that theory and practice reflect the structure and values of society. But what we are studying at university as scientific has no affinity with Iranian society and culture. How can we say they are scientific?'

I interviewed many sociology and anthropology students in different universities in Tehran to explore their ideas and attitudes to anthropology. Based on my previous knowledge and understanding, I knew that anthropology has never been a popular discipline in Iran and among academics. My observations in 2001 showed that still to be the case. So I asked social science and anthropology

students in Tehran why anthropology was so unpopular? To summarize the students' views, I paraphrase their main ideas.

- Everyone comes to university with a view to getting a job, and intellectual or personal tastes are secondary concerns. Job prospects for anthropology are not good.

In my analysis, this idea is not justifiable, because the number of anthropology graduate students, by comparison with sociology, is very small and most universities and many other organizations need them. Also, by comparison with other disciplines, job opportunities in anthropology and sociology are the same, since all social science graduates are officially classified the same, as graduates in social science, irrespective of any special field such as sociology or anthropology.

- Students usually choose a field that can lead to a PhD. No university offers a PhD in anthropology, whereas many universities offer a PhD in other social science disciplines such as sociology, psychology or economics.

This is not entirely borne out by the facts because anthropology students can study for a PhD in other social science disciplines, and in sociology they can choose an anthropological thesis topic.

- By comparison with other disciplines, opportunities for studying anthropology at all levels are very limited, and very few universities offer anthropology at MA level. Therefore it is hard to pass 'konkur' meaning the entrance exam.

Although anthropology has fewer departments than other disciplines, passing the exam in anthropology is not more competitive than others because anthropology is unpopular and there are not many applicants for it.

- There is no serious difference between sociology, anthropology and other social sciences. So I think all who study social science are interested in anthropology as well.
- Sociology in Iran has become popular because some recent leading popular intellectuals such as Shariati were sociologists. But anthropology lacks such inspirational figures.
- Anthropology in its academic sense is not relevant to Iran; it is more a European field of knowledge. In Iran it is a luxury import that Iranians cannot understand or apply. BA students read anthropological theories such as those of Linton, Malinowski, Mead and other Western anthropologists, but they cannot understand how their theories and ideas are relevant to present day Iran.
- Anthropology has no specific subject and its classical subject, namely primitive and nomadic tribal communities, is irrelevant to Iran. Western intellectuals favour these communities because they have certain philosophical problems.

- Anthropology is not compatible with the morals and personality of young people. Anthropology is a conservative field of knowledge, whereas young people are looking for intellectual topics related to modern society.
- Anthropology examines small groups, minorities, nomads and rural areas. But present-day Iranian social problems mostly concern the media, crime, rapid urbanization, globalization and development. I think modern culture is a media culture (*farhang rasane'i*) and not an 'anthropological' culture, that is, a bounded community.
- Why should one study anthropology, not sociology, psychology or law? There is no advantage in anthropology. It is Western knowledge, suitable only for Western societies.
- To study anthropology there is no need to go to university. In a sense, everybody is an anthropologist, in that we can all experience culture and analyse it. It is something like literature. Most Iranian ethnographers are self-taught. What university teaches is not as effective as what life teaches.
- If Iranian anthropology turns to what European anthropology departments study now, such as film, disease, crime, music, nuclear weapons, globalization and postmodernism, it could attract more attention.
- Anthropological research and ethnography require a great deal of resources, and government and other organizations are not inclined to fund it. So we cannot take advantage of those facilities as practitioners of anthropology, but sociological research is quite well known and is supported by many organizations.
- Anthropology is unknown among the public at large. Most people do not even know what anthropology is about.
- Fieldwork is the main research method of anthropology and students have to go to villages or nomads and stay there for a long time. Most young people are unable or unwilling to do that.
- Lecturers in anthropology are unable to attract students. Some of them are not knowledgeable enough about Iranian culture, and their classes are boring. So postgraduate students prefer to study other disciplines.
- We have good and interesting topics and courses. Our curriculum is good; one can find every cultural issue on our curriculum. The problem is the teachers. We have courses about urbanism, development, family and kinship, social problems, the Revolution and everything you say. However, in reality, we don't discuss anything at all because our lecturers are not politically daring enough to focus on or even to refer to our society.

As can be seen, the students mentioned a range of predicaments of anthropology in Iran. When I asked them which was the worst of these problems, there was no single answer, but all agreed that anthropology was the most unpopular of the social sciences and that this was mainly due to the nature of Iranian anthropology. I suggested that the majority opinion held that the focus on history, folklore, nomad tribes and old fashioned issues related to cultural identity was what made Iranian anthropology unpopular and unattractive. They argued, however, that

a focus on *cultural identity* could be a strength of anthropology, as it is one of the central issues in Iranian society. The point was, *how* should Iranian anthropology approach cultural identity. If it is to thrive as a discipline, it must approach cultural identity not as necessarily fixed or rigid, as it may have been in the past, but as flexible and fluid because our present culture is a compound of modern and historical elements. On the contrary, anthropology has been trying to discover, restore and revive tradition, while ignoring the cultural changes that have happened in the last century. In the final analysis, all knowledge should broaden our insight into the future, but it seems Iranian anthropology focuses only on the past and ignores tomorrow. It concerns nomadic tribes, peasants and elders, who are still living in the past. Students cannot understand it, not because of its complexity, but because they cannot and do not want to be in the past. New generations seek new life, approaches and identity. They are not conservative and do not like a conservative discipline. In a world of rapid change, they wish to change the existing situation of life, society and culture; but present Iranian anthropology aims to stop cultural change.

The second factor in the unpopularity of anthropology, according to what they said, is its lack of an intellectual profile. The students argued that if we could point to Hedayat and Al-e Ahmad as anthropologists, they would be attracted to the discipline. Shariati inspired and stimulated the sociological imagination, but academic anthropology has not yet generated its own intellectuals; in fact, the students expected anthropology to play a certain intellectual role which it has not yet done.

Anthropology in Iran is too marginal to academia and society. Students and academics thought anthropology should have something to say to the public, and anthropologists should say it to a wider audience, like sociology, philosophy and literature. This objective is attainable by performing an intellectual role and incorporating it into intellectual anthropological writing. But all felt that *Iranian academic anthropology* is not oriented towards Iranian culture and society, contrary to amateur anthropology, which has always been intellectual. The students argued that what they need as an ideal discipline is *an indigenous intellectual academic anthropology*.

There are two problems impeding the attainment of that ideal: first, there has been no serious academic challenge to Western social sciences, including anthropology; a debate between Western and indigenous anthropologies has not yet started. Second, there is no serious dialogue between academic and intellectual anthropology. Since the Islamic Revolution, relationships between Iran and the West have been extremely polarized; from the Revolution's viewpoint the West and its culture are alien and are to be condemned. In that view, the indigenization of anthropology has only one simple meaning: *to get rid of Western anthropology* and establish Islamic or indigenous social sciences as alternatives to Western ones. As I have explained in Chapter 5, before the Revolution there was a strong movement, supported by almost all Iranian academics, to establish a national or native anthropology. However, political developments in the 1990s pushed academics into opposition against Revolutionary discourse and thus the idea of indigenizing

anthropology, which has become part of Revolutionary discourse, lost its legitimacy and popularity. Academics opposed the Islamization and indigenization of anthropology by two strategies: first, by being silent and inactive on the issue; second, by actively teaching and disseminating Western texts and theories. They maintained that their duty to develop anthropological knowledge should be achieved by importing modern concepts and methods of anthropology. Because of this, between 1979 and 2001, in my survey, 295 articles and 403 anthropological books in European languages, mainly English and French, on archaeology, mythology, ethnography, socio-cultural anthropology and folklore were translated into Persian. More than 81 per cent of these texts are educational or theoretical texts, and irrelevant to Iranian studies as such.

By contrast to this trend, however, many students reject Western social sciences as incompatible with Iranian society. In several interviews and conversations with me, they argued that social sciences are not indigenous and did not come from the intellectual and scientific development of Iranian society, but were a reflection of modern institutions of Europe. In order to meet local needs, social sciences should gradually take a native intellectual form and become compatible with local circumstances. According to postmodern epistemology, they said, social sciences are not universal but rather determined and conditioned by the history, geography, metaphysics and philosophy of the societies that produce them. Thus, instead of universal anthropology or sociology, there exist various sociologies and anthropologies.

The conflict between these two trends, such as the lack of serious academic challenges to Western social science theory on the one hand, and the rejection of Western social science theory by many students on the other, is not limited to the problem of the dependency of social sciences on the West. Most students and academics are aware of the multiplicity of scientific perspectives in the West. They argue that what is taught in Iranian universities is not necessarily Western knowledge as such, but an inefficient and distorted version of some theories and perspectives. Every lecturer, according to his/her ability, taste and personal politics selects and learns something from European universities and then translates it for Iranian academia. Most academics do not mean that what they are teaching is Western anthropology; what they do mean is that the lecturers present their own personal reading, interpretation and translation of Western anthropology, which is preconditioned by many social and political determinants.

The slogan of scholars who insist on teaching and importing Western social science is scientism. This scientism, under the aegis of positivism, has been the dominant ethos of professional practitioners of social sciences in Iran over the past two decades. They believe that social science is not locally oriented but universal, like the natural sciences, and that what is prevalent in Europe and the West constitutes the latest advances in a universal social science. Thus, by importing and disseminating these theories and methods, Iranians can advance to the highest level of scientific development. This scientific extremism is usually justified as a strategy for separating and extricating academics from the ideological and political net of the government, despite the fact that, as I explained in Chapter 5, it

was severely criticized in the 1960s–70s by Shariati and Al-e Ahmad as Western ideology and politics. Shariati described it as *cultural alienation* (*az-khod-biganegi-ye farhangi*), meaning that Iranian intellectuals had lost their faith in and loyalty to Iranian culture and identity by pursuing scientism, enchanted by Western social thought. Al-e Ahmad (1966), too, examines and criticizes Iranian scientism, which he considers to be due to an insular attitude and the political dependency of intellectuals on the West.

However, the slogan of appeal to science cannot persuade and satisfy the younger generation of students and scholars. What this group expects of anthropology is not a requirement to memorize Western terms, theories and techniques; they expect to be taught *why* they should learn them and how they can be relevant to Iran. Many students say that they know anthropology is not a new discipline and it is not invented by Iranians, and culture is its subject. As one student explained, 'We know that anthropology speaks about folklore, tradition, customs, beliefs, language, nomads, rural people, and so many other issues. It studies the origin of man, art, family, religion and other institutions. We learned many things about Malinowski, Morgan, Mauss, Radcliffe-Brown and so many [other] anthropologists. We studied structuralism, evolutionism, diffusionism and other schools. It is a really interesting intellectual discipline.' But what the students do not know is why they have to study these topics, and how they are relevant to Iranian society and their personal lives. Like Western students, Iranians have to learn about the origin of culture and human beings, but those issues do not answer their concerns and questions. Because of this, anthropological theories such as evolutionism, diffusionism, structuralism and functionalism do not stimulate their interest and minds.

Even established topics in the anthropological literature on Iranian culture, such as tribal studies, are of no concern to the younger generation. They argue that Iranian society has changed and that the rural and nomadic populations will become urbanized. They ask why they are studying folk culture and folklore, when ordinary people are no longer interested in traditional customs and life, and are giving them up. One student stated, 'Of course, folklore is an interesting intellectual entertainment for literati, not social scientists. I personally am not traditionalist or conservative, and I have no interest in our folklore heritage' (Interview 2000).

As can be seen, young people are looking for an anthropology that is politically committed and epistemologically reflexive. This expectation can be explained by attributing it to the Revolution that, on the one hand, has enhanced political consciousness and participation, and on the other hand, has encouraged a strongly critical attitude towards Western culture and intellectual products. It can also be attributed to postmodern epistemology, particularly the Critical School and Michel Foucault. Foucault's influence on contemporary Western thought has also affected Iranian academia and intellectual life. Almost all his works are known in Iran, particularly his ideas on the relation between power and knowledge. Many of his writings have been translated into Persian, and he is now probably the most popular European social philosopher in Iran.

However, teaching anthropology in Iran is a complex issue and many factors might be considered to explain why thus far it has not been successful. Despite the political changes of recent years, the issues raised in Chapter 5 still impede the teaching of anthropology: notably the conflict between the culture of anthropology and the political culture of the Islamic Republic. Moreover, it is not just the state that resists ideas such as cultural relativism, critical analysis and cultural diversity; the students, too, are not always ready to engage with these kinds of anthropological issues.

As a lecturer myself, I found it very difficult to teach anthropology in Iran. There are three main problems. First, as Nanda maintains, 'Deconstructing central structural concepts in American society such as race, gender, religion, and ethnicity is an essential component of teaching cultural anthropology as cultural critique and most explicitly requires consideration of encounters and power' (Nanda 1997: 118). But the intellectual atmosphere of Iran inhibits anthropologists from deconstructing and defamiliarizing these dominant concepts of gender, race, politics, ethnicity and religion; and most Iranian students are not receptive to a critical approach to their own culture. The information presented in social studies is constrained by a demand for the presentation only of what is good about Iranian society and the country in general. Second, students initially reject, both emotionally and intellectually, the idea of cultural difference. Thus, they cannot call on relevant case studies and practices for comparison at a teachable moment. Third, every student comes into an introductory anthropology course already equipped with some ideas about the subjects to be discussed – yet students often lack any background knowledge of anthropology, which has been excluded from the pre-collegiate curriculum, as well as from teacher training courses.

Local knowledge studies

The main task of ethnographic studies in Iran, as we have shown, has been to represent Iranian national culture in order to meet the ideological interests and concerns of different political groups, with their focus on issues of national cultural identity. The study of the folklore, traditional technologies, handicrafts and local knowledge were part of this project. Such studies mainly focused on collecting oral and symbolic aspects of culture such as narratives, myths, rituals, proverbs and literature. As we saw, in the Pahlavi era nationalist, modernist and Islamist scholars and writers agreed on the political importance of studying folk culture, though they approached the topic differently. For dissident scholars and intellectuals, collecting folk culture was an act of opposition to the Westernization policy of the Pahlavi regime; whereas for monarchic nationalists it was a way of strengthening the state's nationalist aims. In recent years, a new approach has emerged towards local folk culture in Iran, akin to what is called 'local knowledge' in the anthropological literature. Although the origins of this trend can be traced from the beginnings of anthropology in Iran in the 1930s, it is mainly a product of the Revolution's policies towards rural society. It was initiated and supported by the Ministry of Jihad Sazandegi and the recently created Centre for Iranian Native

Knowledge (CINK). Here, I first briefly explain the concept of native/local knowledge and its political importance, then I discuss the rural and agricultural policies of the Revolution; finally, I introduce and examine the Centre.

Local/native knowledge

Since the 1990s, local knowledge has been a fashionable topic in the anthropological literature on development (e.g. Grillo and Stirrat 1997; Antweiler 1998; Sillitoe 1998). Various terms are used to denote 'local', such as indigenous, endogenous, native, traditional, folk, cultural, peasant and everyday knowledge (Antweiler 1998: 471). Whatever words we use, these ideas are generally defined as 'the unique, traditional, knowledge existing within and developed around specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographic area' (Grenier 1998: 1).

Local knowledge 'encompasses taking into account the local environment, participation in development measures, harnessing existing local technical solutions, local capacity and institution building, and efforts to make visible and articulate for the first time problems experienced by indigenous communities, women and other disadvantaged social groups' (Antweiler 1998: 472). It is far from being just a descriptive term, it also has political connotations. As Long (1989) argues, the study of native knowledge always threatens power relations at all levels, from local to international.

From a political standpoint, local knowledge discourse is part of a nativist approach of non-Western societies towards the West. In a sense, 'indigenous knowledge contrasts with the international knowledge system which is generated through the global network of universities and research institutes' (Warren *et al.* 1995: xv). Moreover, from this perspective, local knowledge discourse is a critical response to the modernization approach to development, which is largely informed by models derived from Western economic history and theory. The modernization approach 'is essentially evolutionary, seeing development as a unilateral process. It expects changes in lesser-developed countries to imitate what occurred in the West with the industrial Revolution and its aftermath' (Sillitoe 1998: 212). Many theories of development, like those of modernization, overlook the specific socio-historical circumstances of different cultures, and how unique internal social factors interact to influence the direction of any change (*ibid.*: 212).

Iranian native knowledge

In the context of the discussions on local knowledge, one observes a trend aimed at collecting and using native knowledge (*danesh-e bumi*) in Iran. This trend has been followed by a variety of different groups such as folklorists, geographers and anthropologists. Within the last decade, the government has funded many research projects and established a research centre for collecting local knowledge from various areas of the country.

Major goals of the Revolution were to abolish inequality and poverty, to bring social justice, and in particular to rescue the poor (*mostazafin*) from the oppression and misery, which the revolutionaries believed them to have suffered under the previous regime. On the other hand, the anti-Western nature of the Revolution created a strong social demand and policy expectation for fundamental changes to the economic and social system based on policies that would bring independence from the West. For this and other reasons, just a few months after the advent of the Revolution, a large group of revolutionary volunteers went to the villages to help the poor rural population. Following that movement, in 1980 Ayatollah Khomeini established a revolutionary institution called *Jahad Sazandegi* (Campaign for Reconstruction), which later became one of the largest ministries. The task of the Jihad was to deal with rural affairs in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture. Until the end of the Iran–Iraq war, rural reconstruction was one of the main priorities of the state and, as a result, the Jihad enjoyed excellent financial support which enabled it to carry out innumerable infrastructural projects such as construction of roads, communal baths, communications, electrification and schools. Of course, the driving forces behind the Jihad were political and ideological. Because the Revolution was an urban movement, and rural people, for several reasons, did not take full part in it, it was politically necessary to gain the support of the rural population.

By the turn of the century, despite two decades' effort, apart from some notable infrastructural facilities and services, the Jihad had failed to meet some of the basic needs of the rural population. More importantly, despite opening up of fallow land, extensive mechanization and the general expansion of the area under cultivation, agricultural production remained far below target (Shakoori 2001: 166–7). Despite the original intention to adopt a participatory, bottom-up approach, under the influence of and pressure from the centralized administrative system of the country the Jihad did not give participatory opportunities to the peasants (*ibid.*: 109).

It was not until the late 1990s that the Jihad began to study and utilize local knowledge in order to increase the efficiency of its development programmes. Dr Mohammad Hossein Emadi, the founder and head of the CINK states:

We have so far applied the classic modernization approach in rural development plans. In this approach we usually try to use imported western technologies and methods to promote and enhance the efficiencies of rural and agricultural programmes. We have never studied the existing local and native knowledge and experiences. Now we have realized that the native experience and methods are not as inefficient as commonly accepted.

(Emadi 1999)

Emadi explains that it was in 1997 that the Jihad decided to carry out a nationwide project to collect and study all the native knowledge and technologies in the country. To carry out the project, the ministry established the CINK in the

large ancient rural village of Khorhe, in Mahallat in Central Province (Arak). Dr Emadi expands on the importance of the study of native knowledge:

We need to collect and know all the knowledge, skills, and experiences of native rural and nomadic peoples about their social and national environments; and what they know about ways of life, work, customs, and agricultural and animal-breeding knowledge. We no longer follow the classic modernization approach; we want to consider all the past, the present and the future in a single perspective. In order to have sustainable development, rural people's participation in development programmes is necessary. One of the advantages of applying native knowledge is that it provides a ground for the peasants' participation. One of the main objectives of using native knowledge is to prevent and limit excessive and inappropriate usage of modern western technologies and methods. We aim to create a balance between modern and traditional knowledge and technologies.

According to the CINK's constitution, its objectives are:

- identification and application of native knowledge of the area;
- creation of a national data bank of native knowledge of the country;
- dissemination of native knowledge through publication of research reports and academic texts.

By the year 2000, the CINK had created a large databank: an archive of native knowledge of different regions of the country and a databank of Iranian expertise on native knowledge in fields such as water and irrigation, gardening, animal husbandry, agriculture, architecture, handicrafts and traditional arts. In the same year, the CINK carried out a number of applied research projects and implemented several development programmes. The following are some of those activities:

- building a bakery on the basis of a forgotten vernacular architectural style;
- re-discovery and restoration of native weaving arts;
- restoration of the native traditional custom of collective decision making;
- restoration of a native bird-breeding method;
- collecting different native and local carpet industry skills and providing a national market for them;
- restoration of local historical buildings for tourism purposes (Anon 1999: 139).

Additionally, the CINK has run many educational courses in several different fields of native art and knowledge. Likewise, to collect native knowledge the CINK has launched a nationwide movement and invited all peasants and nomads to collect and send their experiences and local knowledge to the CINK. The CINK annually gives a prize to all local individuals who contribute to the

movement. The collected materials are regularly publishing in the Jihad's periodicals such as the monthly magazine *Salehin Rusta* (rural reformists) and the *Jahad Rusta* magazine.

The movement has not yet attracted public attention and even most social science academics were unaware of it. As Dr Mortaza Farhadi, a Professor of Anthropology in Allameh Tabataba'i University, and one of the outstanding figures in the field, argued, 'many academics not only do not support or contribute to the movement, they make fun of us for studying and collecting native knowledge' (Interview 2001). He has made extensive collections of local knowledge of different regions of Iran (1990, 1994a, 1999b). In *The Culture of Co-operation: an Introduction to the Anthropology and Sociology of Co-operation* (1994), Farhadi first argues that it is commonly accepted that Iranian peasants have a non-cooperative ethic and culture. The core aim of the book is to challenge and disprove that idea. To do so, Farhadi collected a wide range of traditional and native forms of participatory and cooperative activities, beliefs, knowledge and behaviour. Based on his observations and ethnographic studies in various rural areas of Iran, Farhadi shows that peasants are a valuable source of knowledge and experience, which should be considered in development programmes. In *Muze-haye Baz-yafteh* (Rediscovered Museums) (1999), which is an ethnographic study of the culture of climatology of Kerman, he has studied the traditional meteorological system, and the lore of the peasants and nomads of Kerman and the city of Sirjan.

Farhadi and I have for many years been close colleagues at Allameh Tabataba'i University, so I am very familiar with his views and writings. He began collecting and studying as an amateur ethnographer some years before the Revolution of 1979. At first he was interested in folklore about agriculture and pastoralism. He first studied Khomein (Kamareh), a small city in Markazi Province (Arak), his birthplace. In 1980, he published the results of those studies in his first book, *Nameh Kamareh*, in two volumes. He was among the dissidents under the previous regime, and criticized the Westernization policy of the Shah. His major concern was to protect and maintain Iranian native culture from the harmful consequence of modernization. Jalal Al-e Ahmad had a great impact on Farhadi, who was a student in his Persian literature course, and always lauds him for his loyalty to native Iranian culture.

Farhadi believes the main task of Iranian anthropology to be the study of native and local knowledge because, first, Iran has a very rich and valuable store of this resource. Collection of this knowledge would be an immense contribution to anthropology, in general, and Iranian anthropology and society, in particular. In his view, the study of native knowledge will develop credit right across the country for the discipline in Iran because people will be able to see and feel anthropology as a useful, concrete form of knowledge in their lives. On the other hand, modernization and development programmes under both Pahlavi and Islamic regimes have destroyed most of the national, native cultures and has caused immense environmental damage throughout the country. The study and utilization of native knowledge in rural development programmes can redress the balance and lessen the harmful consequences of radical mechanization and

modernization. It can reinforce people's cultural identity and may prevent culture from being destroyed completely by globalization.

I should state that although none of Farhadi's studies was sponsored by a government organization, most of his scholarly works have been much supported and rewarded by the state in recent years. His *Culture of Cooperation* was published by Nashr-e Daneshgahi, a government publisher. It was nominated 'Best Social Science Book of the Year' by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in the 13th Iranian Book Year Festival in 1995, and won First Prize in the 9th Rural Festival of the Ministry of Jihad Sazandegi. Likewise, his *Muzeh-ha'i dar Bad* (Museums on the Wind) (1998), which is about the anthropology of Iranian ancient art, was nominated Selected Cultural Research in the field of anthropology and art in 1998. Both politically and socially, Farhadi is highly respected by academics not only for his scholarly work but also for his loyalty to Iranian traditional and folk culture.

Studies of the nomads

Another change in anthropology in the last decade has been the decline of ethnographic studies of the nomads. Although historical, economic and sociological studies of the nomad tribes have proliferated in the last two decades, very few ethnographic research projects have been carried out.

As we saw, modern ethnographic studies in Iran began with Nader Afshar-Naderi's research activities in the 1960s. In the 1970s, the Anthropology Department of the Institute for Social Studies and Research (ISSR) was the most important centre for ethnographic studies of the nomad tribes. As narrated in Chapter 4, when different ministries established their own applied research centres, anthropological research activities at ISSR were gradually phased out.

Following the Revolution, Dr Afshar-Naderi died and other researchers left the faculty and the ISSR. The Institute became inactive and gave up ethnographic studies. Safinezhad, Head of the ISSR Anthropology Department until 1995, stated that after the Revolution it was almost closed. After 1988, the Department began to train postgraduate students and accepted eight students to do a master's degree every year, but, as explained in Chapter 5, besides a lack of funding for fieldwork in nomadic areas and a few other reasons, traditional communities and topics no longer attract the attention of younger anthropology students, so very few have studied the nomads. The only anthropology project carried out by the ISSR has been the publication of a bibliography of Iranian nomads (Safinezhad 1997).

More recently, however, nomad studies have revived, and about 100 compilations, translations and research reports about Iranian nomadic peoples have been published. A bibliography of Iranian nomad studies shows that between the Revolution and 1998, 663 Persian articles were published (Shah-Hosseini 1998). Another bibliography lists 55 books about the nomads published in Iran in the first decade of the Revolution, amounting to 25 per cent of available sources at the time. As *Zakhayer-e Enqelab* (Journal of the Organization for Nomadic Affairs) shows, nomad literature has flourished since 1990.

Ayatollah Khomeini called the nomad tribes *Zakhayer-e Enqelab* meaning Treasures of the Revolution and repeatedly criticized Reza Shah's treatment of them. So, a few months after the Revolution, a large organization was established within the Jihad for dealing with the nomads – Sazman Omur-e 'Ashayer (Organization for Nomad Affairs, ONA).

Ebrahim Musavi-Nezhad, founder of the ONA Office for Nomad Studies and editor of the journal *Zakhayer-e Enqelab*, maintains that after the Revolution the nomads received a great deal of attention from government, 'because one of the Revolution's ultimate goals was to establish social justice and deal with the *mostaza'fin* (the poor). The Pahlavi regime aggressively and brutally exploited, demoralized, subjugated and oppressed the nomads, so after the Revolution the Islamic government wanted to reconstruct nomadic life and economy' (Interview 2000).

The main policy of the Islamic government has been to settle the nomads and incorporate them into the national economy and society. As with the rural areas, generally, the government gave priority to modernization and the provision of infrastructural facilities such as electrification, schools, health services and direct financial support to the nomads. However, unlike the Pahlavi regimes, the government has never used military force to settle the nomads and implement development programmes among them. In 1985, the ONA held an important international conference on nomadic affairs, the first since the Revolution. Jahanshah Sediq, former director of ONA and editor-in-chief of *Zakhayer-e Enqelab*, notes in an editorial that *samandehi* (management, direction, settlement)⁸⁹ is the main present policy of the government in relation to nomadic affairs. This policy, Sediq maintains, was first introduced, by Ali Khamene'i, president at the time, in a message to the conference (1999: 2).

The conference brought a more academic view to the government's attention and showed that nomadic affairs and problems are very complicated and need to be studied. So the ONA established a special office for nomadic research called *Edareh Koll-e Motale'at Ashayeri* (General Office for Nomads Studies). At the same time, the Iranian Statistics Centre of the Plan and Budget Organization decided to carry out a nationwide socio-economic survey. Two years later, in 1987, the Iranian Statistics Centre carried out the first comprehensive socio-economic census of the nomads, which provided basic data for social and economic planning.

After the war, in 1991 the ONA held another national conference to discuss government development policy for the nomads. In a message to the conference, President Hashemi-Rafsanjani focused on two points as the government's ultimate aim and policy for the nomads. First, he emphasized that 'the government is committed to removing poverty and deprivation from the nomadic population areas, and the intolerable gap between the nomads and other groups must be speedily filled'. Second, 'changes and reforms must be compatible with nomads' morale and interests. And the changes must provide the nomads access to modern technology along with their own values and technologies' (Sazman-e Omur-e Ashayar-e Iran 1991: 1).

In 1998, 11 years after the first census, the Centre for Statistics carried out a second census. The government's need for applied research and surveys for

implementing their development programmes meant that the ONA only funded social survey projects and did not sponsor any ethnographic study. I interviewed Mr Musavi-Nezhad about the research activities of the Office for Nomad Studies and the state of recent studies of the nomads. He explained that in 1986 the ONA and the Plan and Budget Organization came to the realization that, in order to implement development plans among the nomads, they must follow a participatory policy in which the nomads themselves took part in the programmes. They realized that to achieve that goal they must obtain a true and deep knowledge and an understanding of the life and socio-economic situation of the nomads. Under the previous regime, the ISSR and foreign researchers had done several studies of nomadic tribes, but those studies were mainly theoretical and served academic, not practical, purposes. In the past we did not know and consider regional ecological and social differences among the nomadic tribes whereas we now know that, for example, the southeastern tribes are quite different from the northwestern ones such as the Shahsevan, and that the Baluch are not like the nomads who live in Kerman.

Musavi explained that the purposes of his Office were:

- to get a regional knowledge of the nomads;
- to lessen the cost of implementing development programmes;
- to assess and control the results and consequences of nomad development programmes;
- to train nomads as experts and skilled manpower for implementing development programmes;
- to increase the nomads' participation.

He said that in the ONA they are aware that the censuses so far have suffered from many methodological shortcomings but, on the other hand, they believed that quantitative research is not enough to understand nomadic culture and problems. He suggested that the lack of professional ethnographers was the main reason that the ONA has not so far funded anthropological research (Interview 2000). Musavi believed that, compared with the past, their research was now more effective and applied. Whereas, in the past, studies of the tribes were limited and focused on specific cases, now studies are carried out at the national level and research covers all Iranian tribal groups because only that kind of research can provide the data and statistics needed for development programmes. He maintained that the Office for Nomad Studies had trained many people who can manage research and development programmes among the nomads. They may not have deep anthropological knowledge but they know enough to carry out applied research. He said that another feature of present projects is the focus on the total environment and ecology of the nomads.

As for the expansion of anthropology departments and the institutional development of the discipline, it is quite possible that in future Iranian anthropologists will deal with the nomads. For many reasons, the nomads are and will continue to be important to Iranian society and, therefore, Iranian academics

cannot ignore them. Nomadic tribes were part of Iranian history and still number over 1,000,000 people. They play an important part in the economy of Iran. Besides, nomadic groups, with their distinctive cultures and social organization, are typical anthropological subjects. The nomad research projects of the ONA may provide a basis for the future anthropology of Iranian nomads, and all these studies can serve the development of anthropology.

Cultural heritage studies

As I described in previous chapters, one of the major fields of anthropological study in Iran has been cultural heritage. As we saw, cultural heritage was a very significant issue for the Pahlavi regime, which understood it as the tangible symbols of the Iranian nation. After the 1979 Revolution, cultural heritage briefly disappeared from government attention, but gradually the new regime came to realize that cultural heritage cannot be dismissed but must be preserved and revitalized. With the Iran–Iraq war, cultural heritage gained more importance, especially when in 1982 Iraq bombed Shush, a historic city in the southern province of Khuzestan. The war also inspired strong national sentiment and patriotism. In that situation, the state faced a dilemma. In view of the political use of cultural heritage by the Pahlavi regime, the newly established Islamic state could not attempt to protect and revitalize the cultural heritage of the pre-Islamic period as it would be politically conceived as antithetical to the ideology of the Revolution. On the other hand, it could not totally abandon historical relics and cultural heritage. So, as a first step, the government tried to depoliticize the concept by defining Iranian cultural heritage as a scholarly and scientific issue, and arguing that the Pahlavi regime had abused it politically. Mahdi Hodjat, who was secretary of the organization of cultural heritage from 1984 to 1994, wrote that in order to avoid the political abuse of the cultural values of historical relics and traditional culture, it was ‘imperative to give pre-eminence to research aspect. In fact, by emphasizing this aspect, a new definition of cultural heritage was being presented to Iranian society, a definition which preserved it from falling into the abyss of economic, political and propaganda-oriented abuse’ (1996: 230).

The government’s method for depoliticizing cultural heritage was the establishment of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization as a major scholarly institution. In 1982, the Cabinet decided to identify those sections of the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education that were involved in educational and research activities to form an independent ministry, and integrated the remainder, mostly belonging to the former Ministry of Arts and Culture, into the newly created Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

On 19 July 1988, the Iranian Parliament ratified the proposal: ‘The Ministry of Culture and Higher Education is charged with forming an organization entitled “The Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization” from the merger of different units including four anthropological institutes: the Institute for Iranian Archaeology, the Centre for Iranian Anthropology, Iran Bastan Museum, and the Office for Historical Monuments.’ As can be seen, the Organization constitutes a very large

anthropological research institution, with the brief, according to its Articles of Association, of: 'Carrying out ethnographic surveys, ethnological, anthropological and biological research, and studying local cultures in the country's various regions.' The following are defined as its aims:

- studying and conducting research on ancient relics with a view to publicizing the values they hold;
- carrying out research in archaeology, ethnology and traditional arts;
- surveying, identifying, registering and conserving the country's movable and immovable cultural-historic relics;
- preparing and implementing projects necessary for the repair and revival of the country's artefacts, monuments and ensembles.

In 1992, the structure of the Organization was shifted into a more academic fabric compatible with its scientific and research tasks, and its name became *Pazhuheshgah Miras Farhangi* (Cultural Heritage Research Centres). The new structure consisted of five research institutes. Three of them are anthropological, including the archaeological, ethnographic and linguistic institutes. Each of the institutes has been called a *Pazhuheshkadeh*, which indicates a highly academic research centre. Accordingly, the CIAntH was renamed *Pazhuheshkadeh Mardomshenasi*.

Since 1992, anthropological research has been developing steadily, and in line with the policy of depoliticization of the concept of cultural heritage, the Organization's researchers have had more chance to focus on their scientific interests. For instance, within the last decade the CIAntH has done two nation-wide ethnographic research projects: first, a national survey to collect folk narratives from all regions of Iran, and second, identification of the ethnographic aspects of all regions, focusing on material culture. In my conversations with many of the ethnographers, they maintained that carrying out that research had been their personal concern, and for them the scholarly value of the research was more important than its political applications.

However, it might be noted that a new politics, based on Islamic nationalism, has dominated the Organization. According to this new politics, studying and publicizing cultural heritage represents, first, the government's desire for scientific advances in anthropology, history, archaeology and architecture, and therefore, its compatibility with modernity. Second, it is a means of strengthening Iranian cultural identity in the face of the processes of Americanization and Westernization brought by globalization. In this view, the state does not differentiate between Islamic and national culture because it sees both of them as threatened by a common enemy, namely Western culture. Third, in this new politics the state believes there is no serious gap between the national and Islamic identity of Iranians; therefore, any identification of Iranian historical relics and tradition is in line with Iranian Islamic culture.

In recent years, Islamic nationalism has become the governing discourse of all cultural activities of state organizations. Because most government anthropological activities are based in the Cultural Heritage Research Centres, I interviewed

Sayyid Mohammad Beheshti, the present secretary of the Organization, and Mohammad Mirshokra'i, director of the CIAnth. In these interviews, I tried to explore the Organization's current policies. Since Beheshti has the highest position in terms of cultural heritage we may consider his to be the official government view of the issues in question. For me the important questions to ask were: what does cultural heritage mean in an Islamic context? How does the Iranian government approach it? Does the government exclude pre-Islamic Iranian cultural heritage from its present policies?

Beheshti in an interview with me stated that our present cultural policy, which is reflected in the third five-year development plan, approaches cultural heritage from two aspects: first, as symbols and constituents of Iranian identity, and second, as *sarmayeh-e farhangi* (cultural capital), which must be used in all development planning.

We believe these aspects are complementary and should not be considered separately. Cultural heritage constitutes the most significant part of a nation's cultural identity. When we ask what Iranian identity is, we must refer to history, art, language, religion, archaeology, architecture, technology, and everything else that belongs to Iran and is characterized as Iranian as such. All of those things constitute cultural heritage. From an Islamic point of view, nothing is wrong with cultural heritage, and the Quran frequently calls Muslims to appreciate the value of history, and to live in their own way of life. Besides, over 1400 years Islam has created a glorious civilization and left us a valuable heritage. What Iran, and perhaps other developing countries face is a disease of *nesyan-e farhangi* (cultural amnesia). Cultural heritage planning in Iran is an attempt to cure this disease.

(Interview Summer 2000)

I argued that the Pahlavi regime acknowledged Iranian identity, that nationalism was its political philosophy, and therefore that the state focused intensively on cultural heritage. The question is why, after the Revolution, did the Islamic Republic trivialize the Pahlavi governments' attempts to preserve and revitalize Iranian cultural heritage? Beheshti explained that the Revolution never trivializes Iranian cultural heritage and pre-Islamic culture. What happened at the beginning of the Revolution was just a reaction to Pahlavi political abuse of cultural heritage.

Unfortunately, there always was, both before and after the Revolution, a superficial and wrong notion of cultural heritage in Iran. We usually approach Iranian culture from a political, not a cultural, point of view. This is the first misconception of cultural heritage. In the political view, one can see Iranian history as based on the rise and fall of kings and dynasties, but from a cultural perspective it is simply impossible to separate the process of Iranian history (into various parts). Culturally there is a firm continuity between pre-Islamic and post-Islamic eras; Islam did not destroy Iranian civilization, but contributed to its evolution and development. So there are

complementary rather than contradictory relations between Iranian national culture and Islamic culture.

This is the first difference between our present view and the policy of the Pahlavi regime. The other significant difference is that the Pahlavi regime never approached cultural heritage from a development standpoint. The Pahlavis had a romantic conception of Iranian cultural heritage and isolated it from real social planning whereas now the Islamic Republic of Iran views cultural heritage as cultural capital applicable in all aspects of development planning and activities, not just as a set of romantic symbols. However, this is a new approach towards development and cultural heritage, and many Iranian politicians as well as the public are either in disagreement with or unaware of this approach. What we, as the brokers of cultural heritage, are trying to do is to alert people to this fact and to disseminate this view to other parts of the state and society.

When we (the government) speak of cultural heritage, we immediately consider the past, and historical monuments, not all the cultural capital and capacities of a society. This is a major and most destructive mistake. From the cultural heritage standpoint, every social and natural ability, including language, vernacular, folk and local knowledge, music, narratives, arts, in particular technology, and even physical characteristics, is capital we have inherited from our culture, irrespective of when it was formed and emerged or by whom it was created. For us, all we have is our capital, and we must utilize it in development plans.

(Interview Summer 2000)

The other misunderstanding, in Beheshti's view, is that we (Iranians) commonly consider culture and cultural heritage to be directly in opposition to modernization and development. That is, we assume culture to belong exclusively to the past, not the present or future. But the fact is that 'it belongs to any time when we use it, either past or future'. Beheshti makes no distinction between culture and cultural heritage, and does not draw a distinction between history and culture. In addition, he considers nature and culture to be closely related. In this view, he defines Iranian cultural heritage not just as a simple resource for nationalist, Islamist or any other political ideology, but as an inevitable part of our social and cultural identity that we have to take into account in all policies. Having said that, he argues that the study of cultural heritage is not the task of one specific organization, but is rather a complex issue that all organizations have to study. 'We hope that the time will come when, as with tourism, policy makers planning for education, agriculture, transport, industrial affairs, and entertainment, all take cultural heritage into account.'

***The Centre for Iranian Anthropology:
the final phase***

Most of the ethnographic studies and activities of the cultural heritage organization have been carried out by the Centre. In order to examine the recent policies of

the Centre, I outline its major activities. As already mentioned, the Centre was virtually closed after the Revolution, and was inactive for several years. With the end of the Iran–Iraq war and the formation of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, this Centre resumed work. Its first significant activity was a seminar held in 1990, since when it has pursued several large-scale investigations, partly based on fieldwork. According to the Centre's official report for 1988–99, it carried out 562 different historical, folkloric and ethnographic research projects along with many other activities such as anthropological conferences, publications and films (CIAntH 2000: 1). It published its research results in a variety of journals, books and pamphlets. The first was *Majmu'eh Maqalat Mardomshenasi* (A collection of anthropological papers) (1992) in four volumes. The journals *Miras-e Farhangi* (Cultural Heritage), *Asar* (Work) and *Muzeh-ha* (Museums) have also published the anthropological research of the CIAntH.

Anthropology is a basic and applied field of knowledge for Iran's new cultural policy and meets many political, cultural and social needs of government development and ideological programmes. A brief outline of the recent activities of the CIAntH will show this. At present, it has an office in every province. Besides a large number of associate researchers, the centre has 71 full-time professional ethnographers.

The Cultural Heritage Organization has also established a Higher Education Centre called Markaz-e Amuzesh-e Ali-ye Miras-e Farhangi which offers different applied and technical courses in museology, architecture, traditional technologies, local knowledge, ethnology and anthropology. Between 1989 and 2000 it carried out 123 ethnographic research projects (CIAntH 2000: 1). Some of the projects were nation-wide and on a huge scale. For example, the Centre is identifying and collecting all the cultural materials of Iran such as the traditional clothing of rural peoples, tribes and ethnic minorities, the folk narratives of all regions, customs, games, religious practices (both Islamic and non-Islamic such as Zoroastrian), Sufi practices, folk music and rural architecture. The Centre has also recently focused on identifying and documenting local knowledge of different regions.

This is not the place for a complete list of the Centre's research projects, but in order to examine the dominant political discourse, I will classify the projects according to their implicit and explicit political significance. To this end, they can be divided into five major categories:

(1) *Religious research on Islamic culture* In this category the Centre has studied cultural issues that are politically in line with government policy. Such studies are descriptive, without any theoretical orientation. Completed studies include: Anthropological study of the Islamic shrines of Qom, Mashhad, Kashan and other parts of Iran (1999); Ethnographic study of Moharram and Ashura mourning ritual in different parts of Iran (1997); Hazrat Ali in Iranian folk culture (2000) and Anthropology and holy places of Iran (1996). None of this research has been published.

(2) *Development studies* Since the 1940s, the Centre has been collecting Iranian traditional technologies, arts and knowledge. This interest can be seen in its

publications before 1979. At that time, the Centre focused more on issues which had no economic benefits; it did not approach cultural issues from a socio-economic or development perspective. Since 1991, with the re-establishment of the Centre, its focus moved to issues such as environment, ecology, technology and local knowledge with the aim of contributing to socio-economic development planning. This approach stemmed from the government's ambition to achieve more sustainable and comprehensive development based on Iranian local and domestic requirements. Examples of this category of research are Cultural factors affecting population control in Iran (1995); Recent cultural change among Baluch Groups of Iran (1998); Ethnographic study of the relationship between ecology and culture in Darab (2000); Traditional modes of sugar production (1993); The culture of tea in Iran (1998); Study of cultural consequences of changing fuel in rural areas (1997); Traditional modes of cooperation in agriculture and animal husbandry among rural people (1996) and Traditional modes of fishing (1997).

(3) *Nationalist and historical studies* As already mentioned, the Centre was established chiefly to study Iranian folklore and historical culture. Though the Centre has not looked at pre-Islamic culture since the Revolution, it has done extensive work on Iranian national culture as whole. The main aim of these studies, as Mirshokra'i states, is to identify and publicize the cultural diversity and richness of Iran in order to reinforce Iranian cultural identity against the cultural invasion of the West. Studies in this category are varied and include folkloristic, tribal, rural and linguistic topics. Examples are: Identification and study of all Iranian dialects around the country (1995); Collection of Iranian folk narratives (1992); Iranian Zoroastrian customs (1999); Khuzestani Arab customs (1996); Anthropological studies of Qeshm island (1999) and Funeral customs in different parts of Iran (1998). In addition, the Centre held two important international seminars on Nowruz, of which Mirshokra'i says: 'Norouz had always been crucial to the Cultural Heritage Organization because it is our most important spiritual and cultural heritage. It is not only a symbol of national unity, but also is a symbol of unity of all nations in the Iranian culture area including Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Azarbayjan and all Central Asian countries. It is a common feature of Iranian culture around the world: in India, America, China and everywhere else' (Interview 2001). The first seminar was held in the historical building of Darius's Palace in Persepolis in March 1998. The second was held in 2000 in the Arg in Kerman, a very important historical cultural heritage site.

(4) *Cultural change studies* The government of Iran, as an Islamic state, is ideologically very sensitive towards people's behavioural changes. Because of this, in recent years cultural studies have developed considerably. The main aim of Iranian cultural studies is to examine cultural change, and especially to measure to what extent people have been loyal to Islamic values and beliefs. Examples of this category are: Changes of Iranian cultural patterns in food, dress, games, music, architecture (1999); Cultural change among girls in Mashhad (1997) and Cultural change among youth in Zahedan (1995).

(5) *Research related to the Revolution* The Centre carried out a considerable number of ethnographic studies about the cultural aspects of the Islamic

Revolution. One of the most significant projects is a series of studies called 'Content Analysis of Epitaphs on Martyrs' Gravestones' (i.e. martyrs of the Revolution and the Iran–Iraq war). By 2000, martyrs' tombs in the Provinces of Ilam, Kohkiluyeh va Boyer Ahmad, Semnan, Bushehr, Gilan, Esfahan, Azarbaijan and Ardabil had been studied. Another important ethnographic project is a study of the role of nomad tribes in the Revolution: *Enqelab-e Eslami va Ashayer* (The Islamic Revolution and the Nomad Tribes) which was carried out in 1989 and 1990. These projects have not yet been published.

One important aspect of the Centre's activities is its focus on material culture. As can be seen, almost all anthropological research centres in Iran have studied material culture. This is mainly because, as already mentioned, one of the major strategies of the state to guard the Islamic national identity against global hegemonic cultural processes and to symbolize and materialize a sense of national identity, has been to conserve and maintain material culture. 'National identity', Edensor maintains, 'is partly sustained through the circulation of representations of spectacular and mundane cultural elements . . . including landscapes, everyday places and objects, famous events and mundane rituals, gestures and habits, and examples of tradition and modernity which are held in common by large numbers of people' (2002: 139).

Folklore studies

Folklore has always been an important element in Iranian anthropology. As we saw in Chapter 4, the Centre for Iranian Folklore (CIF) of Iranian National Television was founded in the Pahlavi era, and I outlined its history and activities. After the Revolution, the CIF became inactive. As Ahmad Vakilian, an outstanding scholar of the CIF, explained, following the Revolution the government withdrew support from the CIF since folklore was seen as superstition (Interview 2000). After the war, however, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) began to restore the CIF. In 1997, I was invited to join a committee at the CIF to publish a folklore journal; many prominent Iranian folklorists such as Bolukbashi, Farhadi, Vakilian and Ahmad Panahi Semnani came together to give a fresh impetus to the CIF's folklore studies. The CIF was reorganized and established a new museum of folklore, based on materials collected throughout its several decades of activity.

In addition, during the past decade, hundreds of folklore books have been published and a spontaneous folklore movement has emerged in the country. There was a solid political and social basis for such a movement to flourish. First, as the different ethnic groups acquired greater cultural and political awareness, they began to collect and publish their folklore as a symbolic expression of their identity and political existence. According to the records of Mo'asseseh Khaneh Ketab Iran (Iran Book Institute), between 1979 and 2002, 465 folklore books were published, covering all the ethnic groups in the country, such as Kurds, Turks, Baluch, Gilaki, Arab, Lor and Turkman.

Although the government has not established a folklore research centre, it has funded and supported folklore studies in other ways. In 1991, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance began to publish regional cultural studies journals, planning to do so for each province: so far, 13 such journals are in existence. Their major task has been to collect and publish materials on folklore and local culture. I was founder and chief editor of *Rah-e Danesh* (The path of knowledge), the cultural studies journal of the central province (Arak), which continues today, having already published several hundred pages on the region's folklore.

Another important recent national investment in folklore studies was the establishment of *Shura-ye Iran-shenasi* (The Council for Iranology). In 1996 the government decided to establish a national movement to study all cultural aspects of the country. To this end, every province must establish a council under the auspices of the governor. Dr Hassan Habibi, Vice-President of the Islamic Republic at the time, became the head of the Council and continues to serve in that capacity. His presence was an indication of the seriousness of the government's intention to support cultural studies throughout the country. The Council has mobilized all regional researchers and has held several provincial gatherings on *Ostanshenasi* (The Study of Provinces). It has also established or supported several regional studies centres (Markaz Ostanshenasi), for example in Khorasan, Kerman and Shiraz. Without reviewing all the activities of the Council and the centres, one can say that, although they have not managed to achieve all their goals, they have made a major contribution to folklore studies around the country. The Council has also organized a series of conferences about Iranian studies since 2002. The first conference was warmly embraced by hundreds of scholars from India, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Iran. One of the main elements of the conference consisted of anthropology and folklore in which 38 articles were presented. Also, the Council established a scholarly journal called *Iranshenasi*. The first issue came out in the summer of 2003, and includes some of the papers presented in the first conference.

The main political motive for these government measures is again to strengthen local culture in order to prevent or diminish the penetration of Western cultural influence. Ali Khamene'i, the Supreme Leader, announced in the early 1990s that Iran was experiencing 'cultural invasion' (*tahajom-e farhangi*) by the West. Although his controversial idea was challenged, it became part of state cultural policy, and part of the national budget was devoted to studying issues related to cultural change. From the *tahajom-e farhangi* point of view, recent changes in society such as increasing demands for freedom, democracy, secularism and liberalism, and also increasing drug addiction, broken families and sexual problems are all due to American and Western cultural plots and conspiracies. It was supposed that one way to prevent and reduce the impact of Western cultural invasion was to reinforce people's Islamic and Iranian identity by reinforcing local values, knowledge, customs and culture, which are partly reflected in folklore. Many cultural research centres began to study recent cultural changes. The Centre for Basic Cultural Studies (Markaz Pazhuhesh-haye Bonyadi) in the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, of which I was then executive manager, funded several projects to study aspects of cultural change so as to assess the impact on society of globalization and Western culture.

In recent years, secular and nationalist scholars and intellectuals have been active in collecting Iranian folklore. In 1989, Parviz Varjavand, a prominent nationalist and retired Professor of Anthropology at Tehran University, published *Progress and development based on cultural identity*. The book reflects Iranian nationalist discourse on the role of culture and tradition in the process of development. Varjavand's main argument is that tradition and modernity are not always or necessarily in contradiction because developed societies didn't abandon their traditions but used them as a resource instead. Using Japan, India and European countries as examples, he argues that Japan and India did not reject tradition but reinterpreted and changed the usages of tradition. He believes that Iran could be an industrial society without losing its cultural identity and traditional principles and ways of life. Although his argument is controversial, it was, as Varjavand claims, widely read and the book was reprinted in 1990 and 1999. However, the book's main significance was that it illustrated a position shared by government and nationalist groups, and reinvigorated the secular nationalist view of Iranian national culture.

The most outstanding recent folklore study has been Shamlu's *Ketab-e Kucheh*, which began to come out before the Revolution. It was not until 1990 that Shamlu resumed publication of the whole series, which is said to amount to 40 volumes. In Chapters 4 and 5 I discussed the political importance of *Ketab-e Kucheh*. Likewise, Khatami's presidency has seen the reprinting of some folklore studies published in the past but then banned. Likewise, in 1999 all of Sadeq Hedayat's folklore writings were reprinted. Also the writings of several leftist folklorists, such as Ali Ashraf Darvishiyan and Samad Behrangi, have been published or reprinted.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the socio-political context of anthropology in Iran between the end of the Iran–Iraq war in 1988 and 2001. I have shown how, in the postwar era, because of demographic changes, the expansion of education, the rise of general awareness of citizenship rights, and government need to implement development and reconstruction programmes, there was a massive increase in social demand for higher education which forced government to extend it and to restore the academic disciplines. Moreover, given the state's newly perceived need to strengthen the people's cultural identity in the face of globalization and Western cultural influences, anthropology found a new *raison d'être*.

I also argued, however, that because of the lack of trained anthropologists and the historical backwardness of the discipline, the universities have been unable to satisfy students' educational expectations. Moreover, increases in student and academic staff numbers do not always indicate development in academic knowledge and in the discipline. Government has regarded an advanced and developed higher education system as an indication of development; it has treated the expansion of higher education as an end in itself, and at the same time, as a means of educating a skilled work force to implement socio-economic and development plans.

As discussed earlier, this was the same policy that was dominant in the Pahlavi period. After the Revolution, it was criticized by the revolutionaries, who argued that the higher education system was a bureaucratic machine for Westernizing and secularizing students, and that educated people gained nothing from university except a diploma void of any mastery. Yet the recent development of higher education can be seen as the consequence of the expansion of such a bureaucratic system rather than of any structural development in academic disciplines.

There are structural barriers impeding the teaching and institutional development of anthropology. First, despite half a century of modern anthropology in Iran, the discipline is still immature and in the first phase of professionalism. It is less than three years since a professional association has been formed, and just one issue of an academic journal of anthropology has been published. There are few trained anthropologists in the universities, and as we saw, the students are not satisfied with them. Moreover, although the traditional conception of the discipline has provided an appropriate political ground for its institutional development, it has not attracted the attention of younger students. Iranian society is experiencing rapid cultural change, and anthropology must be reoriented and adjusted to the present needs of society. While students want to learn about and understand contemporary cultural problems of their everyday life, the universities teach them about folklore, mythology and nomadic tribes.

From a political standpoint, however, the growth of social science disciplines and the universities in general have been very important elements in the political changes of the last decade. The university is a modern institution that disseminates modern knowledge, ideas and perspectives, and functions as a modernization machine. Thus, it has a deep impact on people's attitudes, and students learn a more critical and modern view of their culture and society. Because of this, as we saw in Chapter 5, since the beginning of the Revolution the universities have challenged the nature of the Islamic state. As I have argued, the state policy of Islamizing the universities and academic disciplines failed, and in the 1990s, students and academics once more began to challenge state policies and the ideology of the Revolution. In recent years, we have seen students playing a major role in cultural and political change in Iran, as has been most evident and significant in the reformist movement that led to Khatami's presidency.

Globalization, new communication systems and technologies and several other political and social factors have brought changes to the cultural fabric of society. To prevent or diminish the impact and penetration of Western cultural influence, the government has undertaken policies which aim to strengthen the people's national and local identity. The government policy of Islamic nationalism led the Cultural Heritage Organization to extend its anthropological activities and to establish several museums, and the CIAnth to hold conferences and carry out nation-wide ethnographic research projects. The government established many new research institutes for studying Iranian national and regional culture and massively funded all kinds of cultural studies, including folklore. The new Council for Iranology, the regional cultural research councils set up by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the publication of regional cultural studies

journals have promoted a national folklore movement. In the last decade, thanks to Government policy for subsidizing book publication and special support for publications on national and regional cultures, hundreds of folklore books have been released. All these developments are the result of the emergence of the discourse of Islamic nationalism.

The other recent trend in anthropology has been a focus on local knowledge. Despite a wide range of activities, the newly established CIF has been unable to gain academic attention. Native knowledge has not so far become part of general cultural discourses, not even in rural development programmes. The development of the local knowledge movement has been impeded by the lack of trained researchers, the youth and inexperience of those active in the field and the lack of any cultural and political background in society. However, it is the first time that anthropological knowledge is being directly applied in rural development programmes. And the Centre's successful results may eventually provide an appropriate basis for a new social and institutional development in anthropology.

Despite these problems, there are some indications that in future anthropology may take a distinct and influential position in the universities. First, by comparison with the past, there is now a good institutional basis for training a new generation of anthropologists. Second, for the first time in Iran, anthropology now has a professional society and journal. Third, the anthropology curriculum and educational materials have been greatly changed to meet new concerns such as gender studies, development and culture, urban issues, globalization and cultural change.

In conclusion, I would mention two points. First, despite the above developments, because the Iranian government has had an instrumental approach towards anthropology, in line with its ideological propaganda and policy, anthropological activities have been unable to go below the surface of Iranian culture and cultural problems. Second, because government organizations have never intended to contribute to methodological and theoretical debates in the discipline, anthropological research and activity in Iran, however extensive, have not contributed to the basic development of anthropological method, knowledge and theory.

7 Iranian anthropology

A conclusion

The native anthropologist looks at society from his ideological point of view . . . and his ultimate goal is to improve and change the community studied. We believe anthropology must be at the service of amelioration of human beings.

(Naraqi 2000a: 275)

Introduction

WHAT IS IRANIAN ANTHROPOLOGY? Throughout this study I have attempted to provide an answer. I have argued that examination of this question requires an ethnographic investigation of the contextual meaning of anthropology in contemporary Iran. This in turn involves examining such questions as: how has anthropology been relevant to Iranian society in the last century? How did political changes affect Iranian anthropology? How and to what extent has Iranian anthropology been involved in socio-political ideologies in twentieth-century Iran? To answer these questions, I have examined the institutional, ideological and socio-political situation and context of the discipline. Accordingly, this study seeks to contribute to the growing field of the ‘anthropology of anthropology’, notably projects that seek to uncover the ideological presuppositions behind ethnographic practice, and the socio-political context of anthropology as a discipline (Pels 1999; Strathern 2000). Nevertheless, this study does not represent a definitive and comprehensive statement of what Iranian anthropology is or can be, nor does it have that task as its ambition. Rather, the aim of the study is to explore various political and ideological features of the discipline in Iran.

As I have already argued, Iranian anthropology has been mainly approached from two perspectives: ‘modernization theory’ and ‘dependency theory’. Some have seen social science and anthropology as a by-product of modernization and the need for applied knowledge as well as the emergence of a new educated elite (Tavassoli 1976; Tehranian *et al.* 1987; J. Behnam 1997; Azad-Armaki 1999). Others such as Shariati, Al-e Ahmad and Hamid Enayat approached all social science disciplines in Iran as part of ‘cultural imperialism’ and saw Iranian anthropology in the light of dependency theory. In their view, Western political and economical interests create social sciences in Third World countries in order to exploit them. The official ideology of the Islamic Revolution saw anthropology

in this light, too. The Islamicists approached the discipline critically, as the outcome of the hegemony of Western ‘scientific colonialism’ and ‘political imperialism’.

Although these scholars and their approaches illuminate some aspects of Iranian ethnographic writing and activities, they do not provide a detailed explanation of the vicissitudes and political tensions experienced by the social sciences in the Pahlavi era and after the Islamic Revolution. Moreover, they are incapable of explaining the broader problematic issues of ‘ideologies of representation’, changes in methods and practices, and the history of Iranian anthropology as a whole. They overlook the ideological interactions between ethnographic accounts and the discursive contexts within which such work is produced and ignore the fact that such interactions have given rise to various social movements over time.

The impact of ideology on the formation of modern Iranian anthropology and ethnographic writing is more complex. The history of Iranian ethnography is not an integrated continuum but a series of episodes distinguishable by their ideologies of representation. A history of this ethnography and anthropology therefore requires a perspective that takes account of such patterns of change. This study has attempted to provide such a perspective. I have demonstrated the different ideological discourses underlying anthropological enterprises in the twentieth century, including nationalism, modernization, nativism and Islamism. The underlying basis of all these ideological trends has been the crisis of identity, in that each sought to depict a certain culture and identity as authentic.

In this concluding chapter, in line with the purpose of the research and its major questions, I shall compare the three periods studied in order to draw out the nature of the discipline and its main characteristics from my data and the debates throughout the chapters. I shall also compare Iranian anthropology, as a national tradition, with Western established traditions such as British and American anthropologies as well as the anthropologies of other, non-Western countries. Based on current changes and developments in the discipline, I shall also venture a forecast of the future of the discipline in Iran.

Iranian national anthropology

On the basis of the arguments and evidence I have so far presented, one may draw some general conclusions about the characteristics of Iranian ethnography and anthropology, and the culture of Iranian social sciences, although, as I shall argue, they are not peculiar to Iranian anthropology. On the other hand, they are mainly common to anthropology in ‘developing countries’ or the countries that constitute the so-called South’, while a few are true of the community of anthropology as a whole. Accordingly, in what follows I have tried to characterize and highlight the culture and nature of anthropology in Iran from a political and ideological approach.

Let us begin by defining Iranian anthropology. As we have discussed in Chapter 1, Iranian anthropology includes various fields of knowledge and can usefully be divided into ‘the anthropological study of Iran’, whether conducted by Iranian or non-Iranian anthropologists, and ‘Iranian national anthropology’,

which is the main subject of this chapter: *a modern national and ideological intellectual field of knowledge that has mainly studied and focused on ethnological issues concerning Iranian society and culture*. Although there is a long history and tradition of Iranian anthropological thought and ethnographic writing dating back to the early centuries of Islam and pre-Islamic periods, modern Iranian anthropology was born and developed in the twentieth century as a by-product of modernization processes in Iran. As discussed in Chapter 4, it has been influenced and marked by Western anthropologies and Western anthropological studies of Iran, though its precepts, functions and preoccupations have been quite different.

As I have argued throughout this study, Iranian anthropological representations have been a means of portraying a certain sort of culture in a competitive political context, and there has been less interest in pure scientific inquiry and theoretical discussion, at least as compared to that found in British, American and French anthropology. Hence, it would be difficult to identify a distinctively organized or established Iranian national theoretical tradition in socio-cultural anthropology or anthropological research.

This, it is said, is a *common characteristic* of native anthropologies in non-Western countries. For instance, Choong Soon Kim, a Korean anthropologist, has described the role of native anthropologists in relation to Western anthropologists as ‘educated informant’ (1990: 199). Hayano (2001: 32) demonstrates this in his pioneering discussion of native anthropology; quoting Hau (1973), he argues that ‘native ethnographers are usually cited in scholarly journals because of their data reporting, rather than theory’. He maintains that ‘several studies in the sociology of knowledge and the communication of scientific information support Hau’s charge (Friedrichs 1970)’. This alienation from the Western anthropology community is partly due to the lack of theoretical orientation of non-Western anthropologies, and partly due to the differences between non-Western and Western anthropologists’ presuppositions about culture and society. As Delmos Jones argues, native anthropology is ‘a set of theories based on non-western precepts and assumptions’ (1970: 251, in Narayan 1993: 677).

However, as I noted earlier, the role of native anthropologists in their own society is more than ‘educated informant’. They play different political, social and cultural roles, and based on these roles they shape their discipline and society, and they have their own way of interpreting and creating the world, although it is different from what Strathern calls ‘Western ways of creating the world’ and ‘the culture of Western Social Science’ (1989: 4, in Escobar 1992: 397). In a sense, one of the major contributions of this study is to explore and clarify this point. So, let us focus on it further.

The main significance of Iranian anthropology that stands out in this study is its continued engagement with political developments and ‘national preoccupations’. As Foucault noted in his discussion of the emergence of human sciences, ‘all human sciences are in relation with *the characteristic national preoccupations*’ (1970: 250, in Stocking 1984: 5, emphasis given by Stocking). This seems to be the most common feature of anthropological knowledge in national anthropological traditions. As Stocking puts it, when discussing the historical contexts of

European anthropology, ‘the European anthropological traditions – the British, the French, and the German – doubtless exemplify the respective national manifestations of the “scientific spirit” . . . And while they can scarcely be disposed in these terms, one can see them also in relation to *the characteristic national preoccupations*’ (1984: 5). He identifies political economy, anatomy and folklore as the national preoccupations of those countries, respectively (*ibid.*: 6).

Similarly, discussing the relation between American anthropologists and American society over a hundred years, Eric Wolf argued that ‘there have been three major phases’ in the development of American anthropology which ‘correspond largely to three phases in the development of American society’ (1969: 251). The latter – successively Capitalism Triumphant, Liberal Reform and the military-industrial complex – were met by American anthropology’s focus on evolutionism, human flexibility and power, respectively (*ibid.*: 252). In the same vein, de La Pena, a Mexican anthropologist, argues that there are ‘three theoretical stages for Mexican anthropology throughout the twentieth century: the first related to modernization and developmentalist theories, the second to political economy, and the third to a variety of post-modern orientations. Yet this characterization, to be adequate, would have to take into account the ongoing debate on the meaning of Mexican nationalism’ (2002: 47). Swedish anthropology is another example. Gerholm and Hannerz in their discussion on *The Shaping of National Anthropologies* (1982: 19) write: ‘Swedish anthropology in the 1970s was preoccupied with social inequalities of various kinds: those between centres and peripheries in the world economy, those between social classes, and those between men and women’. These issues were Swedish national preoccupations, too.

In the preceding chapters, I have sought to identify similar themes in the relation between Iranian anthropology and Iranian society. Thus, Iranian anthropology in the twentieth century preoccupied itself successively with three major national preoccupations: shaping a modern nation-state and its ideology, namely nationalism; engaging with the West and its ideology, namely modernization and the Islamic Revolution and its ideology, namely Islamism. I have argued throughout this study that Iranian anthropology is deeply embedded in Iranian culture and politics. As that politics and culture have been dominated successively by nationalism, modernization and Islamism, so too has anthropology.

Another feature of Iranian anthropology that I would highlight here is its preoccupation with the search for an ‘authentic culture’ instead of the analysis of society and culture. At the beginning of this study, I quoted Gerholm and Hannerz: ‘Anthropology is an interpretation of culture. Could it be that this interpretation is itself shaped by culture? Could some of the differences between national anthropologies be derived from differences between the cultural systems which have formed the anthropologies?’ (1982: 13). Iranian ethnographic writing has been the cultural representation of Iranian cultures since the beginning of the twentieth century.

The process of modernization always requires deciding what should be changed, what are the impediments to change, and what form that change should take. Change confronts traditions and established institutions. Therefore, modernization challenges the nature of Iranian society and demands cultural and

intellectual reorientation as well as institutional change. It was in the context of such confrontations and challenges that modernity and modernization were understood as antagonistic to Iranian tradition, creating a situation of crisis. I have argued that anthropology, as an intellectual field, became an arena where individuals and political groups could compete for the right to define what is intellectually respectable and culturally legitimate. In twentieth-century Iran this competition emerged in the form of ideological debates about Iranian identity and culture, and this has been reflected in ethnographic and anthropological writings.

As we saw, the major question for all parties was the representation of an authentic Iranian culture. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Constitutionalists began to challenge the established and traditional Islamic concept of the Iranian self. They introduced a new alternative, modernist–nationalist identity, based on ancient Iranian culture and Aryanism. Folklore and archaeological studies and materials were employed to represent that modernist–nationalist concept. This became the dominant discourse for several decades. In Reza Shah’s reign, folklore studies found a suitable socio-political basis, and the state began to establish anthropological institutions, such as research centres and museums. The aim of these institutions was to modify the state’s rapid modernization and Westernization policies, on the one hand, and to support the state’s nationalist ideology, on the other.

The 1950s, which was the period when professional Iranian anthropology was born, witnessed heated intellectual debates about authenticity and how to create an authentic modernity for Iran. After 1941, the cultural repercussions of Pahlavi modernization policies gradually became clear. On the one hand, the influence of traditional religious values, beliefs and perspectives on the younger generations declined considerably; on the other hand, social problems like poverty, inequality, delinquency and social deviance such as prostitution, crime and drug dealing greatly increased. Thus, the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah is commonly known and characterized as a period of cultural ‘strangulation’, ‘loneliness’, ‘darkness’, ‘fatigue’ and ‘nothingness’ (Bill 1972: 74–6).

Most intellectuals saw this situation as a product of Westernization and the ignoring of authentic Iranian culture. This critical attitude towards modernization and Westernization led intellectuals to ‘look for local answers to their predicaments’ (Mirsepassi 2000: 76). They adopted different positions. Islamicists, led by Ali Shariati and Jalal Al-e Ahmad, established one very influential discourse. Others, such as leftists, romanticized rural life or even embraced the pre-Islamic cultural heritage, but with a different interpretation from the state’s ideological reading.

All, however, were seeking an authentic native culture and identity different from the Westernized model favoured by state mass media and development programmes. Nonetheless, it is important to note that none of these intellectuals was against modernity as such; rather their movement ‘was an attempt to reconcile with modernity in the fabric of the “Iranian” and “Islamic” context’ (ibid.: 78). For instance, Shariati and Al-e Ahmad defined an Islamic modernity that was not welcomed by the traditionalist Ulama.

I have shown how the anti-modernization discourse in anthropology took three different directions: first, an Islamic anthropological discourse focused on the ethnographic study of the Hajj and a study of the negative cultural and social effects of modernization in rural and urban areas from an Islamic view; second, a liberal nationalist discourse focused on oral traditions and folklore and third, a leftist and Marxist trend focused on folklore and rural studies.

Another feature of the Iranian anthropological tradition, in particular of studies sponsored by the state, is its focus on development. It is true that social science research in developing countries, anthropological research in particular, is very much development-oriented, and indigenous anthropologists in those countries are much involved in problems of nation-building and therefore cannot afford to abstain from political involvement. As an Indian anthropologist maintains, 'Indigenous anthropologists and sociologists have a tremendously important role to play both for the scientific development of the discipline and for the progress of their societies' (Cernea 1982: 125). In most non-Western countries the discipline is marked by its contributions to development programmes and is 'development oriented' (Koentjaraningrat 1982: 177). The contributors to *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries* (Fahim and Helmer 1982) showed how anthropology in South America, Africa and Asia is directed towards ameliorating conditions of health, literacy, agricultural and economic development and how theoretical concerns are secondary. This is also true for anthropology in North African and Middle Eastern countries (Antoun *et al.* 1976).

According to Afshar-Naderi, anthropology should be entirely practical; it should enable a happy life full of contentment, and serve development-planning agencies. In line with this perspective, Iranian anthropologists in the 1970s focused on tribal studies, which became the most distinctive element of Iranian anthropology. From the Pahlavi modernization perspective, the nomad tribes were seen as a problem for the construction of an integrated national society and culture, so the government funded anthropological research in order to find a strategy for incorporating the tribes into the so-called national society. More recently, in the Islamic Republic, anthropology has become both a cultural resource in the service of the promotion of Islamic nationalism and a system of practical knowledge to be used for studying cultural change and facilitating development programmes.

A further feature of Iranian anthropology is its literary and humanistic nature. 'Field research is not, and has not always been, an obligatory part of a professional training in all national anthropologies' (Gerholm and Hannerz 1982: 28). This may be because 'funds in these countries are generally unavailable for sending graduate students and young scholars to the field; [and because of] lack of contact with the modern literature of anthropology' (*ibid.*: 29), but in Iran it mainly has to do with other factors like the Iranian literary and historical modes of thought. Nader Afshar-Naderi and his followers, such as Safinezhad and Amanollahi-Baharvand, who studied the nomad tribes, did extensive fieldwork but showed little interest in literature, and their work never found as much national importance and status as folklore studies and literary anthropology. However, most anthropological studies in Iran have been done by social historians

such as Ebrahim Pour-Davud, Yahya Zoka, Jalil Ziyapur and Ja'far Shahri; literary figures such as Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, Rezazadeh Shafaq, Rashid Yasemi, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi, Samad Behrangi and Ahmad Shamlu; linguists such as 'Ali Akbar Dekhoda, Sadeq Kiya and Manuchehr Sotudeh or folklorists such as Mohammad Ja'far Mahjub, Sadeq Hedayat and Abolqasem Anjavi-Shirazi. Even professional anthropologists such as Mahmud Ruholamini have worked extensively on literary issues.

This is due to several factors. First, anthropology as a branch of scientific knowledge has its roots in Europe and the Enlightenment. But, as we saw in earlier chapters, there has always been a humanistic side to the study of culture in Iran, where literature and the literary approaches have been dominant in intellectual life. Among the most distinguished Iranian thinkers were great poets such as Ferdowsi, Moulavi, Khayyam, Hafez and Sa'edi, and not scientists. Furthermore, most prominent classical Iranian scholars in all intellectual fields such as Biruni, Ghazzali, Sohrevari and Mirdamad were scientists and philosophers as well as literati. Even the most prominent contemporary Iranian scientists, such as the mathematicians Mohsen Hashtrudi and Gholam-Hossein Musaheb, the physicist Mahmud Hesabi, and Abdul Karim Gharib, founder of children's medicine in Iran, have created literary works. Because of this, there has always been a great enthusiasm for literary and humanistic approaches to Iranian culture. Second, in the twentieth century all Iranian intellectuals and scholars had political and ideological goals and wanted to use folklore and anthropology to address the masses, not the academic elite. So inevitably they chose topics and methods that the public could relate to. Third, anthropology is intertwined with aesthetic aspects of culture and society. This has inevitably led its practitioners to the humanistic side of the discipline. As Geertz (1988) has shown, even the most prominent 'positivist' anthropologists such as Malinowski, Evans-Prichard and Levi-Strauss were 'authors' as much as 'anthropologists'.

Another feature of Iranian anthropology is its focus on morality and the model of a good man (human). In other words, Iranian anthropologists have been idealists seeking an ideal culture rather than actual cultural practices. Anthropologists in Iran, both secular and religious, have always been concerned with questions of right and wrong rather than true or false. As we have seen, they have sought to enlighten people as to what is good and what is bad culture, though with different ideological orientations and objectives. Constitutionalist intellectuals and scholars such as Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, Dekhoda and Jamalzadeh, who were the first to collect and study contemporary Persian folklore, wanted to enlighten the Iranian populace and stimulate them against what they saw as non-Iranian, superstitious, harmful and irrational culture, beliefs, values and meanings. Later, in the 1930s and 1940s, Hedayat clearly differentiated all Islamic and religious customs and beliefs as bad and non-Iranian. Although Hedayat's followers modified his perspective, secular folklorists never saw religious folklore and culture neutrally and objectively.

Nationalist folklorists such as Anjavi Shirazi, Amir-Qoli Amini and Sadeq Homayuni wanted to preserve native folklore from the storm of rapid

modernization. They praised folk culture and condemned everything that damaged it. As nationalists, they were concerned about Iranian national culture. Socialist scholars represented Western culture as capitalist cultural imperialism and praised rural and folk culture. Al-e Ahmad successfully ‘othered’ Western culture as antagonistic to the Iranian Shi’ite culture and self. His *Gharbzadegi* theory was not only a cultural pathology of contemporary Iran, but also a presentation of an ideal culture based on an Islamic world view, which saw Western penetration as ‘cultural corruption’ and prescribed Shi’ism as the authentic cure. Even monarchic nationalists were seeking a kind of ideal moral culture; they acclaimed Zoroastrianism and other pre-Islamic Iranian religions as alternatives to Islam and Shi’ism.

The attempt to establish an ideal moral man and culture in Iranian anthropology intensified with the Islamic Revolution. The revolutionaries and Islamicists sought an ideal Shi’ite man and culture. In the Culture of the War Front, Fahimi portrayed the Basiji volunteer as the Iranian ideal, a person whose heart and mind are imbued with Shi’ite Islamic values and beliefs, as Ayatollah Khomeini presented and interpreted them.

The attempt to represent an ideal man and culture has been suggested as the core difference between Muslim anthropology and Western anthropology. Asad (1986) argues that Western civilization defines the aims of modern knowledge differently from Muslim traditions of scholarship and civilization. In his view, Western knowledge aims ‘to elucidate the nature of society’ whereas the underlying goal of Islamic scholarship is ‘the moral person’. Similarly, Merryl Wyn Davies argues that indigenous Muslim social scientists should rethink their perception of anthropology and the object of knowledge. She quotes Naquib al-Attas, who maintains that while Western civilization has been interested in what makes the ‘good citizen’, Islam’s interest is in the ‘good man’, the moral person. Importantly, she points out that the moral person is not an isolate but a microcosm of the Islamic vision of the moral universe (Davies 1988: 168–9).

As can be seen, a strong emphasis on small-scale communities and traditional aspects of Iranian society and culture are further features of Iranian anthropology. Iranian anthropologists and folklorists mainly focused on tribal, rural and minority populations, and/or had a special concern with Iranian past and traditional culture, though their definitions of the past and of tradition differed. However, an emphasis on the past and on tradition is not just a feature of Iranian anthropology. According to Margaret Mead, ‘anthropology as a conglomerate of disciplines... has both explicitly and implicitly accepted the responsibility of making and preserving records of the vanishing customs and human beings of this earth’ (Mead 1995: 3). This image of anthropology is of an old-fashioned discipline irrelevant to the contemporary world. Given the traditional and conservative nature of the Islamic Republic, issues related to tradition are viewed as the political concern of the state. Young people who are looking for change and modernity show little interest in anthropology.

Another fundamental difference between Western anthropology and Iranian anthropology is that, whereas the former claims humankind as its subject,

Iranian anthropologists focus on Iranian ethnic/national entities. Strictly speaking, in Iran we have ethnology, not anthropology. The recent course of change shows that both academics and government organizations have had little interest in anthropology as the science of humanity. In the Iranian perspective, anthropology is the science of nations not the science of humanity. As we saw, *ensanshenas* and *mardomshenasi* developed as a discipline which aimed to help Iranian society to cope with contemporary problems. Ethnology (*goum-shenasi*) was regarded as an intellectual activity that studies the language, customs and institutions of Iranian peoples in order to uncover their origins and first settlements. Ethnology should thus be concerned with the history of individual Iranian ethnic communities.

Anthropology as an academic discipline practiced in Western countries concerns itself with broad questions such as: what is humankind; what are its origins and its processes of cultural development; what is it that makes 'humankind' different from animals? In Iranian academia, these questions are generally regarded as religious and theological questions, and it is not the business of anthropologists to ask them. Iranian anthropology does not consider these questions and continues to behave as if it is possible to ignore them. Because of this, there is a view within Iranian academia today that Iran has never had an anthropological tradition and does not need one now. As we saw, all the research activities of anthropological centres are concerned with ethnological aspects of Iranian culture and society.

A related issue is that Iranian anthropologists have mainly ignored other cultures. It seems as if Iranian anthropologists see culture rather as an isolated entity. In other words, Iranian anthropology might be characterized as the study of culture as seen from the 'inside', as opposed to classic anthropology, which is the study of culture as seen from the 'outside' (Levi-Strauss 1966: 126). Apart from the travel accounts examined in Chapter 2, few Iranian professional anthropologists living in Iran have studied 'Other cultures'.⁹⁰ The established culture of anthropology in the west assumes that anthropology is 'the mutual interpretation of cultures one by another' (Madan 1982: 7) and is 'a worthwhile endeavor inasmuch as it enables us to understand ourselves in relation to others (ibid.: 6). The reverse is the case in Iran. Even in the present period of globalization and time-place compression, when people around the world are connected in unprecedented ways, and keener than ever to know about other societies and cultures, I can see little sign of interest in the study of other societies among Iranian anthropologists and practitioners of social sciences in general. This may be attributed to several factors such as the lack of facilities and funds, social and political difficulties impeding access to foreign communities, and so forth, but it is mainly due to the general style and tradition of anthropology in non-Western countries.

It has been argued that focusing on one's own culture rather than others is a common feature of anthropology in the South. Krotz has distinguished Southern anthropologies from Northern or Western anthropologies by highlighting the fact that in Southern countries 'those studying and those being studied are citizens of

the same country'. This, Krotz maintains, 'creates a significant link between the professional interests and the social and political interests of anthropologists' (1997: 244). If native anthropologists in non-Western countries are uninterested in other cultures, this is due to their interest and closeness to their own society.

However, this 'significant link' has put the authority of the discipline at stake because it makes the discipline a policy instrument at the service of the state and leaves little room for academic autonomy and independence. It is commonly accepted that one of the fundamental contributions of all social scientists is to create a 'critical knowledge' and independent analysis of institutions and policies, and to question basic assumptions. The creation of critical knowledge and insight is what Habermas (1978) calls the major function of social science knowledge and its 'emancipatory potential'. Even an eminent educationist such as Barnett sees not only social sciences but also the entire institution of *Higher Education: [as] A Critical Business*⁹¹ (1997). Thus, academics and, in particular 'social scientists, must be able, to some extent, to stand outside the system' (Madan 1982: 281).

Generally, the institution of the university in Iran has never enjoyed an adequate sense of autonomy and freedom. This 'denial of academic freedom and autonomy is often justified on grounds of national interest, patriotism, territorial integrity, religion, peace, or law and order' (Mojab 2000: 145). Consequently, the political and social cost of doing independent research has always been high. Under these circumstances only pro-regime scholars, those who seek economical and political rewards, and anti-regime scholars who heroically accept myriad political and social pressures, have succeeded in working. Accordingly, a scholar in Iran may be a hero or a servant of the state. The third way, namely, the life of an independent scholar who seeks to critically elucidate society and culture is difficult if not impossible. In these circumstances, as a non-Western anthropologist has put it, 'we have left to foreigners the scientific analysis and chronicling of our customs, habits, and ourselves as people' (Hau'ofa 1982: 215).

A lack of academic freedom and autonomy⁹² is not limited to Iran; it is a common feature of many underdeveloped or developing countries. For instance, Krotz characterizes the relationships between Latin American intellectuals (including anthropologists) and the state as follows:

- the scant importance that governmental officials are accustomed to give to the results of academic research;
- the frequent suspicion that social research and training centres are over-politicized;
- the not infrequent appointments of once independent social scientists to important administrative or political positions;
- the difficulties of surviving as a critical social scientist in the face of different types of censorship and even personal menace.

(1997: 250)

As I have discussed, in these circumstances very few academics in non-Western countries have been able to fully dedicate themselves to academic activities and

research. This has caused anthropology, and social science disciplines generally, to remain underdeveloped; and this, in turn, has caused anthropology in the South to be marginalized and absent from global and local academia. ‘When one examines the discipline’s histories, the most published translated textbooks and main journals, the anthropologies generated in the countries of the South, and their institutions and parishioners, hardly exist’ (ibid.: 241). Furthermore, Krotz argues that

Things are even worse. The anthropology of the South hardly ever appears in the South. Academic courses taught at universities on ‘anthropological thought’, as well as the historical segments of courses on special themes, usually present the anthropology generated in the countries of the South almost exclusively as the result of a permanent and worldwide process of diffusion of ideas, methods and debates, which has had and continues to have its only origin in the heart of North Atlantic civilization.

(Ibid.)

One of the consequences of the political pressure and lack of academic freedom and autonomy in Iran has been the fact that the discipline has so far relied mainly on amateur anthropologists who were not trained as professionals or never worked as academics. As can be seen, many prominent scholars discussed in this study – such as Hedayat, Al-e Ahmad, Shariati, Safinezhad, Farhadi, Anjavi-Shirazi, Sa’edi, Shamlu and Fahimi – were not academically trained anthropologists and/or professional academics. On the other hand, there are a considerable number of practitioners of anthropology – university lecturers or employees of research centres – who have not produced significant academic works and have not played a significant social and political role in Iranian ethnography. As we saw, students expect academics to play an intellectual role in society and to deal with major controversial issues, but most academics prefer to be silent. It is not surprising that many non-Western participants in the Burg Wartenstein Symposium on *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries* ‘viewed, with scepticism, the possibility of social scientists maintaining an independent role vis-à-vis their government’ (Fahim and Helmer 1982: xxviii).

Since anthropology in the South is development-oriented, lives under authoritarian states, and at the same time is preoccupied with national problems, it cannot be separated from politics. Thus, politics is and has always been one of the most complicated problems of Southern anthropologists. As Quinlan, a South African anthropologist, states, ‘in the “South,” a particular concern is how to keep politics and scholarship in constructive tension, in the face of “modern” scientific injunctions to keep them separate and the postmodernist penchant for conflating them’ (2000: 126).

However, involvement in politics has had many positive influences on anthropology in Southern countries. As we have seen, in Iran ‘political experience’ has always been one of the main factors that geared anthropologists – and other social scientists – towards different ideological perspectives in studying and representing society and history; political experience has been one of the major sources of

inspiration and motivation for intellectual activities. All the scholars who studied either struggled against the Qajar dynasty, the authoritarian and Westernized Pahlavi regimes, or the present authoritarian Islamic regime, or they actively supported these political systems. Those who avoided any kind of political experience failed to play a significant intellectual role in society or academia.

Rethinking anthropology in Iran

Anthropologists have constituted a relatively small proportion of the community of social scientists and intellectuals in twentieth-century Iran, but this should not be a reason to overlook or discount their work and the issues they have raised, since they have played important roles in political ideologies and discourses. Moreover, new developments in the Iranian academic and intellectual community show that there is a growing concern and appreciation for the contributions of anthropology and anthropologists in society. *Kétab-e Mah-e 'Olum-e Ejtéma'í* (Social Science Monthly), a popular social science review, devoted its issue of June 2002 to reviewing anthropology in Iran. Contributors argued that, given the richness of Iran's cultural heritage and diversity and the various cultural problems that society is facing, anthropology, as the science of culture, can play a very important role in present-day society. It seems that anthropology in Iran is gaining greater significance and consequently is under pressure to undertake a serious rethink; the next generation may well see a transformation. The urge to rethink, of which this study is perhaps but one example, is itself an indication that one period is coming to an end and another emerging. As I argued in the previous chapter, Iranian anthropologists nowadays take for granted the need to reconstruct and redevelop the discipline.

Let me list some of the signs of rethinking in the discipline. First, as I said above, it seems that society has come to accept the necessity of the discipline. Several universities are offering anthropological courses and several new anthropological institutions have been established. Second, the teaching of anthropology is turning to issues that are more topical. The Anthropology Department of Tehran University now offers courses on the anthropology of women, development anthropology, urban anthropology and other courses related to current cultural problems of Iranian society. These courses are entirely new in the discipline in Iran. Third, new anthropological books are being published on unusual subjects. In addition, a new critical tendency towards anthropology and Iranian culture is strengthening the rethink movement within the discipline. Ethnologists, sociologists and philosophers support it. The movement has facilitated lively critical discussion and provided a kind of shock therapy for a discipline long removed from important critical reflection. Anthropologists now look to the rethinking of their own traditions as well as to the re-establishment of intellectual ties with the West as being the most pragmatic way forward. There also exists a desire to subject to critical rethinking the research that has been done hitherto, while the renewal of contact with Western institutions seems to offer the most constructive possibilities for Iranian anthropology.

I should emphasize that great social changes in the country have meant that Iranian folk life is under threat. Recent changes in Iranian traditional life have been rapid, and Iran has come to a turning point. Traditional anthropology – or rather ethnology – has lost its influence, and there is a strong trend towards studying Iranian culture and cultural heritage based on a theoretical model that deals with people as forward-looking explorers of the possible rather than as conservators of the past.

Besides, there have been some important methodological developments in the discipline that must be considered in assessing its present state. First, anthropology and sociology have drawn closer together, and earlier distinctions between them are generally seen as irrelevant today. Anthropologists have turned from rural and tribal communities towards urban groups and centres; similarly, sociologists engage in fieldwork in rural and urban settings. However, the distinction has not disappeared completely.

Second, there has been a diversification of theoretical frameworks which can only be mentioned briefly here. The first generation of academic anthropologists in Iran were by and large structural-functionalists who drew their models from Barth (1961), as we saw in Chapter 4. Now there are diverse approaches towards nomadic, tribal, rural and urban communities. The dominant approach is multidisciplinary, using historical, sociological, ethnographic and literary data and theories to construct analyses suited to both theoretical and applied needs. Examples of this trend in different fields are: Solasi⁹³ (2001), Bolukbashi (1999), Safinezhad (1989, 2002), Shahbazi (1987, 1990), Fakuhi (2000).

A third major development is a growing demand for all social scientists to contribute directly to the most urgent task at hand. Contrary to the hostile attitude of the 1980s, in the 1990s, the application of social sciences was increasingly seen as a priority; several national conferences were held to define and clarify the role of social sciences in development programmes (e.g. SAMT 1994). In general, the social sciences were first seen to have a role in economic growth, development and the provision of basic needs for all citizens. During the 1990s, there was a continuing debate about the social responsibilities of social scientists in general and about the criteria of relevance in social science research in particular. What supporters of the movement for relevance seem to be saying is that, unlike foreigners, native anthropologists and social scientists have a role in the future of their society and must, therefore, become agents of social change; they must give history a push in a particular desired direction.

These issues were discussed in April 1997 in a national seminar on *Karbord-haye Mardomshenasi* (The Uses of Anthropology) held by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Tehran University, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The seminar proceedings were published in the Faculty journal, *Nameh 'Olum-e Ejtema'i*, in spring 1998. The seminar, its agenda and the issues discussed are all signs of the new emerging role of anthropology in Iran.

Nowadays, Iranian social scientists contribute to cultural and political changes in the country through their writings in the public press; in Iranian newspapers one can read sociological and anthropological articles every day. Naser Fakuhi, an anthropology professor at Tehran University, has published a collection of some

of his recent writings in public magazines and newspapers (2000). In this book he presents his readers with a new perspective on anthropology; he discusses the everyday problems of urban life, which Iranian anthropologists have rarely, if ever, focused on before. In his perspective, the most important function of anthropology in Iran is to contribute to the solution of development problems (2000: 6). As we saw in Chapter 6, this is the dominant opinion among students of anthropology in Iran. For instance, an anthropology student at Mazandaran University expressed her expectation of anthropology as follows:

Anthropology should help us to achieve those ultimate goals. I don't accept anthropology as a discipline just for discussion. It is and it must be more practical, more useful and effective than a collection of words and ideas. To me, if an anthropologist doesn't criticize his society and culture, and more importantly if he doesn't show the way to solve social problems, to free us from poverty, despotism, inequality and darkness, I don't call him an anthropologist. That is why I am studying anthropology.

(Interview of student by author Summer 2000)

The older generation of Iranian anthropologists failed to adapt their studies and findings to Iranian intellectual discourses. In their view, the way to indigenize and Iranianize anthropology was to mix the intellectual anthropological experience with the academic system and to reinforce a mutual dialogue between them. They called for the indigenization of theories and concepts, not merely the utilization of anthropological research. In this regard, Jamalzadeh, Shariati, Al-e Ahmad and Hedayat are examples of Iranian anthropologists who created theories and concepts congenial to Iranian society. As we saw in previous chapters, Jamalzadeh's cultural 'hotchpotch' (*darhamrikhtegi farhangi*), Shariati's return to Irano-Islamic self (*bazgasht be khishtan*), Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* ('Westoxication') and Hedayat's Cultural Dualism Theory (*farhang khodi va biganeh*) are examples of indigenous theories of Iranian culture.⁹⁴ However, the point is that the older generation of Iranian social scientists are unwilling to accept these theories as 'anthropological' because they consider them 'unscientific'.

All these trends can be explained in a global perspective. Many have shown that virtualization, postmodernism and globalization have changed the nature of higher education, forms of knowledge and research and teaching (e.g. Jarvis 2001; Raschke 2003). Anthropology is no exception. As Gledhill argues, 'the global transformation of the nature of universities is underway that has radical implications for the contemporary politics of doing anthropology' (2002: 74). Anthropology in Britain is under pressure from market forces and global processes, as can be seen in the following issues:

- Students demand 'to be taught skills that will help them get jobs' (ibid.: 85).
- Government has made it obligatory in anthropology departments that 'students must spend a year being trained in "skills" that the state deems relevant not to research, but to modern managerial culture' (ibid.: 80).

- Students in Britain come to anthropology courses because, 'First, the subject is seen as broader in scope than most disciplines, and in the case of some programs, as bridging the gulf between art/humanities and sciences. Second, for many it is the global, comparative dimension of anthropology that is its attraction...students also seem attracted to critical perspectives on global political economy and social welfare issues... they can be attracted by an anthropology that pursues big issues in a critical spirit' (ibid.: 84).

As we have discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, all these issues are, more or less, relevant to the state of anthropology in Iran.

Notes

1 Iranian anthropology and ideology

- 1 Brian Spooner (1986, 1999) in his survey of Iranian ethnography and anthropology has provided a bibliographic review. C. G. Feilberg was the first Western ethnographer to do fieldwork in Iran, visiting Luristan in 1935; Elizabeth Bacon did research on Hazaras in Mashhad in 1938–9. Then there was a gap until Robert Alberts' study of a village in Garmsar (1956–7), and Fredrik Barth began his famous study of the Basseri in 1958. After Barth, many European ethnographers carried out fieldwork in Iran: in 1963, Spooner himself, Nina and Warren Swidler, David Brooks and Richard Tapper all began their studies, followed in the 1960s and 1970s by Richard Antoun, Catherine Bateson, Janet Bauer, Lois Beck, William Beeman, Jane Bestor, Anne Betteridge, Jacob Black-Michaud, Daniel Bradburd, Christian Bromberger, Martin van Bruinessen, Jean-Pierre Digard, Michael Fischer, Erika Friedl, Grace Goodell, John and Mary Gulick, Mary Hegland, Eric Hoogland, William Irons, Reinhard Loeffler, David Marsden, Mary Martin, Carroll and Steve Pastner, Robert Peck, Carl Philip Salzman, André Singer, Gustav Thaiss, Susan Wright and others.
- 2 This date is challengeable because the Islamization trend was started in the early 1970s.
- 3 The journal of cultural studies of Markazi Province, called *Rahe Danesh* (The Route of Knowledge) was established in 1994 and continues to appear. I was its editor until I left Iran to study in London. The journal has published the writings of anthropologists such as Farhadi, Mirshokra'i, Safinezhad and myself.

2 Anthropology and Iranian cultures: Iranian anthropology 1900–25

- 4 By traditionalism I mean the domination of Shi'ism and traditional folk culture.
- 5 I mean ethnography in the literal sense of first hand observation and description.
- 6 According to Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh the exact date of the publication of the *Safarnameh* is not clear, however 1034 is the most likely (2000: 121).
- 7 Ahmad Ashraf, an Iranian sociologist, in a survey of the history of autobiography in Iran (1996: 5–26), recorded only two autobiographies published between the sixth and the nineteenth centuries. One of them is *Baday al Vaqayeh* by Zein ul-'Abedin Mahmud Vasefi (1510–87); the other is *Tazkareh Sheikh Mohammad Ali Hazin Lahiji* (1154/1742) that is an autobiography as well as a book of travel. Though from literary and historical viewpoints these texts are invaluable, it is hard to classify them as anthropological writing. A small book published in the seventeenth century, *Aqayed al-Nesa ya Kulsum Naneh* (Women's Beliefs) (1970) by Aqa Jamal Khonsari, has been identified as the first Persian folklore text (Katira'i 1970: 3). In fact it is about the folk beliefs of people of Esfahan.

- 8 Many have examined and reviewed Persian travel accounts of Western societies. Two comprehensive English studies are those of Wright (1985; cf. 1977) and Ghanoonparvar (1993). These accounts are two of the major sources for modern Iranian history, and almost all scholars of modern Iran deal with them. Tabataba'i (1999) has examined nineteenth-century Persian travel accounts from a political perspective.
- 9 Because it is not the purpose of this research to examine foreign anthropological studies of Iran, here I have not focused on them. Radhayrapetian has comprehensively examined and analysed foreign studies of Iranian folklore (1990).
- 10 According to Iranian folk tradition, Kaveh was the name of a blacksmith from Esfahan who rebelled against the alien and tyrant king Zohhak. Kaveh's rebellion led to a national uprising, which eventually culminated in the overthrow of Zohhak. Zohhak was replaced on the throne by Fereidun, descendent of a traditional Iranian family (Vatandust 1977: 30).
- 11 Folkloristics is the analytical and descriptive academic discipline of folklore.
- 12 *Kaveh* was published between 1916 and 1922. The whole run was collected and reprinted by Iraj Afshar as a book in 1977. All references are to this book.
- 13 See Chapter 6.
- 14 From Cole (1996: 38), who gives the reference 'Akhundzadeh/Ruznamah-i millat-i saniyah-i Iran', 16 May 1866, translated in Iraj Parsinejad, *Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzadeh: A Literary Critic* (Piedmont, CA: Jahan Book Co., 1990), 19.
- 15 However, many social, economic and political factors provided a ground for the Constitutional Revolution. The identity crisis was one of those factors.

3 Anthropology and nationalism: Iranian anthropology 1925–41

- 16 This was not the first Persian-language discussion of anthropology, however. In 1315/1936, *Sonboleh*, an Afghan magazine produced in Kabul, published a paper by Mohammad Qadir Khan Taraki entitled '*Mardomshenasi*'. The author reviews the history and aims of anthropology, its major themes and subjects and the state of anthropology in different European countries, ending with a brief discussion of the state of anthropology in Afghanistan. Taraki was also an Aryanist and his interest in anthropology derived from this fact. He translated a series of anthropology papers called 'The principles of research method in ethnology and the origin of the Aryan race; and now European attribute themselves to Aryans' (1936; ISSR 1977: 1). The Aryan Theory fascinated and excited many Afghan intellectuals and they began to produce anthropological knowledge to support the idea that Afghan intellectuals and they began to produce anthropological knowledge to support the idea that Afghans are Aryans too. For instance, Mohammad Ya'qub Khan, an Afghan historian, wrote a scholarly paper called '*Nezhad Afghani*' (Afghan Stock) (1933), in which he discussed 'the place of primitive peoples, the languages of the Aryans, the place of the first Aryan people, different divisions of the Aryans, the mixture of Pathan and Afghan races' (ISSR 1977: 14).
- 17 The author of the article translated this into Persian as *Daeratollmaaref Nezhadhaye Irani* (Encyclopaedia of Persian Races).
- 18 By 1938 the *Farhangestan* proposed and confirmed 650 Persian words as alien. All of them were Arabic; no European word was considered alien (Yunesi 1998: 52).
- 19 For a brief account of Ali Hanibal's work and writings, focusing on his folkloristic studies, see Ayati (2000a: 364–8). Hanibal was born in Russia in 1881. During the 1917 Russian Revolution he migrated to Iran, converted to Islam and married an Iranian woman. He spoke fluent French, Dutch, Russian and Persian. Although he was not Iranian, he loved Iranian culture and began to collect Iranian folklore. His first anthropological activity was in cooperation with the MIA. He founded the magazine *Majalleh Mardomshenasi* in 1335/1956.
- 20 At this time, French was the dominant academic and intellectual language, and most writers when speaking of scientific issues used French equivalents to Persian terms.

- Most of the first and second generations of Iranian practitioners of anthropology, such as Hedayat, Al-e Ahmad, Varjavand, Ruholamini, Anjavi-Shirazi, Tabibi and Naraghi, had been trained in France. Consequently, the French school of anthropology was dominant in Iranian academia for several decades.
- 21 As we saw, the Centre was initially termed *bongah*, that is, ‘company, organization’. After a year it was renamed *mo’assaseh* or Institute. In the 1970s it was reborn as *markaz*, ‘Centre’, as it has remained, and as I shall term it throughout this thesis.
 - 22 These issues are discussed in Chapter 5.
 - 23 Ebrahim Pour-Davud, who translated Avesta into the Persian language, wrote extensively on Zoroastrian culture and left many anthropological writings, was an outstanding scholar. He effectively established the anthropology of ancient Iran. His writings are significant in anthropological study of the religion and mythology of ancient Iran.
 - 24 Abrahamian (1980) has given an overview of Kasravi’s life and thought.
 - 25 There are some very brief descriptive discussions of Hedayat’s folkloristic work by, for example, Radhayrapetian (1990), Shahshahani (1986), Katouzian (1991), Katira’i (1979) and Anjavi-Shirazi (1992a). Radhayrapetian gives the first comprehensive English introduction to this part of Hedayat’s writings, with an emphasis on folk narratives. Katouzian, too, reviewed and briefly analysed these writings and discussed their nationalist and critical significance.
 - 26 In 1999 a collection of Hedayat’s hitherto unpublished folkloristic material, together with all his other relevant writings except *Jadugavi dav* (1965) and some of Hedayat’s letters, was published under the title of *Farhang Amiyaneh Mardom Iran* (The Folklore of Iranian People). According to Jahangir Hedayat, the editor, it is the most comprehensive collection of Sadeq Hedayat’s folklore studies. In this chapter I have used this book and also some of the original editions of Hedayat’s texts.
 - 27 In reviewing Hedayat’s writings on folklore, I quote from Hedayat (1999); in reviewing his literary writings I mainly quote from Katouzian (1991).
 - 28 See note 26.
 - 29 French translations of *Owsaneh* and *Neyrangestan* were presented by Henri Massé in his *Croyances et costumes persans*. In the introduction, Massé praises Hedayat for publishing *Neyrangestan* and calls him a pioneer in folklore studies in Iran (1938: 14, in Radhayrapetian 1990: 99).
 - 30 In the *Shahnameh* and ancient classical texts all non-Iranian nations, in particular Arabs, were called Turanians.
 - 31 Published as a section (pp. 219–32) of *Farhang Amiyaneh Mardom Iran*; originally published in *Majaleh Musiqi* in 1962.
 - 32 Hedayat perhaps meant ‘ethnology’, because he has always used *mardomshenasi* as equal to anthropology.

4 Anthropology and modernization: Iranian anthropology 1941–79

- 33 In his study of Iranian anthropology, Ata Ayati (2000) introduced some of the major non-Iranian anthropologists who worked in the USSR, including Bessaiguet, Barth and Paul Vieille. He also discussed a number of Iranian anthropologists such as Afshar Naderi, Ale Ahmad, Hedayat and Keyhan.
- 34 Aaron Antonovsky (PhD in Sociology from Yale in 1956) migrated to Israel in 1960 and became a distinguished medical sociologist until his death in 1994. He is particularly well known for developing the concept of Salutogenesis, meaning everything that helps to gain and maintain physical and psychological health.
- 35 Ayati states that ‘Vieille was the first foreign social scientist to come to the USSR, sent by the Office of Cultural Relations of the French Foreign Ministry. He was a self-taught sociologist and was well known in France. Some of the most eminent

- researchers of the ISSR such as Abol Hassan Banisadr (who later became first president of the Islamic Republic of Iran) and Baqer Parham worked under Vieille. The Department of Urban Studies of the ISSR was under Vieille's supervision. This department held several seminars and carried out some research projects about Tehran (2000b: 495).
- 36 Ayati provides a full report of Bessaignet's anthropological activities in Iran that I summarize here. Bessaignet (1914–89) was a prominent twentieth-century French anthropologist who studied economic anthropology and established this course in French in 1940. In view of his long-term anthropological studies in Dacca (Bangladesh), and in response to Naraghi's request, UNESCO sent him to Iran in 1959. His contribution to Iranian anthropology was very significant in many respects. Upon arriving in Iran he started to teach anthropological methods at the ISSR. Afshar-Naderi and Mohammad Ali Kardan began to translate his course and taught at the same time and the ISSR published their work, as a research guideline book called *Ravesh-e mardomshenasi* (Method of Anthropology, 1961). Likewise, Bessaignet carried out ethnographic research among the Shahsevan (1961a). He also carried out a research project for a French company called Sogreah Cotha in 1960 in the province of Gilan in northern Iran. Another of his contributions to Iranian anthropology was his attempt to translate English and French anthropological terms into Persian with the cooperation of Sediqi and Sadeq Kiya. When he left Iran in 1964, he introduced another French anthropologist to continue his work at the ISSR (Ayati 2000a: 395–404).
- 37 He later wrote a very popular autobiography called *Il-e Man Bokhara-ye Man* (My Tribe, My Bokhara, 1980).
- 38 Earlier in this chapter we briefly discussed this group.
- 39 Cooper 1925. Amir Hossein Zafar Ilkhan Bakhtiyari translated this book into Persian as *Safari be Sarzamin Delavaran* (Journey to the land of heroes). It was published in 1955.
- 40 I should mention that in Iran tribal studies is different from rural studies.
- 41 As we shall discuss, the magazine was banned after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. However, it has recently reappeared, published independently in Tehran. The first recent issue came out in July 2003, with articles about Iranian folklore, folk art and material culture.
- 42 Part of this book was translated and published in Persian by the Faculty of Social Sciences (1974). *Jamehshenasi dar Adabiyat* consisted of two parts. The first was a translation of the first chapter of Coser's book, and the second was a sociological examination of classical Persian poet Nezami's work from Coser's viewpoint.
- 43 For this group and their studies, see Bateson *et al.* (1977).
- 44 On Hanibal, see note 18 earlier.
- 45 As we have seen, the Centre has had different names at different periods. As explained in Chapter 2, there is a political significance in the use of *mardomshenasi* instead of *ensanshenasi*. The terms *bongah*, *mo'assesseh*, *edareh* and *markaz* usually indicate the scope of activities of an organization.
- 46 Several books and articles were published on this theme, including E'temad-Moqaddam (1967).
- 47 This monograph was written by Houshang Pourkarim, one of the ethnographers of ISSR, which had published his ethnographic account of Fashandak (1962). He also studied the Iranian Turkman and published a series of articles about them in *Honar va Mardom* (1966).
- 48 Ziyapur 1964.
- 49 As far as I know, this book has not yet been published.
- 50 Azad-Armaki and Asgari-Khanqah (1998), Behnam (1999) and Shahshahani (1992) have briefly reviewed Al-e Ahmad's ethnographic writings.
- 51 Al-e Ahmad borrowed the term *Gharbzadegi* from the philosopher Ahmad Fardid (1912–94), but used it with a different meaning. There are several translations of the

- term Westoxication, West-struckness or (as in the translation of Al-e Ahmad's book *Plagued by the West* (1982).
- 52 From Daneshvar's translation of the preamble to *Ovrazan*, attached at the end of the book.
- 53 From a 1964 interview, when Al-e Ahmad was going on a pilgrimage to Mecca, published in *Andisheh va Honar*, a monthly literary magazine of that time. Al-e Ahmad later republished it in *Arzyabi-ye Shetabzadeh* (1965).
- 54 Jafariyan in a study of 'Iranian Pilgrimage to the Hajj in the Qajar era' (2000) has analysed the content of those accounts. His study shows that the Hajj accounts contain rich historical information about Mecca and the Islamic world, but less information about the individual understanding and experience of the pilgrims.
- 55 The history of the Centre has not yet been written. However, scattered information can be found in Anjavi's introductions to the publications of the Centre and his own work. The best single account of the history of the Centre is Anjavi (1992). To investigate the Centre, I interviewed Ahmad Vakilian, who was a permanent member of the Centre and co-operated with Anjavi for a long period.
- 56 The information about Ali Bolukbashi is taken from his interview with a local paper called *Ava* (1995) and my own talk with him in 2000.

5 Anthropology and Islamism: Iranian anthropology in the 1980s

- 57 The few studies of the academic system and the universities of Iran before and after the revolution have focused chiefly on the students and their educational problems.
- 58 Sohrab Behdad (1995) has examined the impact of the Revolution and its Islamization ideology on economics, and has provided a brief account of the Revolution's attitude towards the social sciences.
- 59 He graduated from Berkeley University in cultural anthropology, and became professor at Tehran University.
- 60 A professional sociologist who is now teaching in Australia. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, he wrote the first comprehensive introduction to anthropology in the Persian language.
- 61 Rahmatallah Sediq Sarvestani, a radical Islamist sociologist, became director of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Tehran University after the Revolution.
- 62 See Chapter 4.
- 63 The Faculty of Social Sciences of Tehran University has nowadays five departments: sociology (the largest), anthropology, cooperatives and social services, demography, and media and communication. The Institute for Social Studies and Research (ISSR) is also a part of this faculty.
- 64 The difficult relationship between Islam and nationalism has been much studied; see, for example, Ernest Gellner's *Nationalism* (1997).
- 65 The Council is the highest authority of the higher education system.
- 66 Basij literally means 'mobilization'. It was the name given to the contingents of popular forces who were mobilized to defend Iran in the face of the Iraqi invasion of 1980, when the military, which was still reeling from an extensive overhaul instituted after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, proved too weak to resist the invasion on its own. The force gradually grew into an organized militia affiliated with and supervised by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. As the war ended, the Basij also took on a more social and political role alongside its paramilitary function, with offices set up in local mosques, universities and governmental organizations. A. Dostdar (2003) in www.persianblogger.com/english/blogforimamhusain.html
- 67 Fischer in his well-known work *Iran From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (1980) has provided a very rich anthropological analysis of Imam Hussein Movement.
- 68 Iranians believed that the war was imposed on Iran and Saddam invaded the land of Iran. So, they called it *jange tahmili* meaning the war that has been imposed upon them.

- 69 There are some reviews of the Culture of the war front series in Persian, published by the editor of the series. Two volumes of the *Farhang-e Jebbeh* are devoted to reviews, under the title *Jebhe'i Now dar Farhangshenasi-ye Iran* (A New Front in Iranian Cultural Studies) (1998). In one, Bolukbashi has reviewed the series critically from an anthropological point of view. Methodological issues are the subject of only two studies: by Fahimi himself in *Savaneh* (Incidents) (1999) and *Bud va Nemud* (Being and Appearance) (1998a) by M. Mehrabadi – a collection of interviews with the authors of the series, where some important political and methodological aspects are explained.
- 70 Fahimi and his colleagues have explained these issues and other aspects of their project of Culture of war front in detail in *Bud va Nemud Farhang Jebbeh* vol.1 (Reality and Appearance of the Culture of the War Front) (1998).
- 71 Because it is not possible to examine all 30 volumes, I focus on only one. Any one could be regarded as typical, since in most respects all the monographs are very similar.
- 72 In the battle of Karbala, 72 people in Imam Hossein's camp were massacred by Yazid's army. These people are highly respected by Shiite Muslims and known as The Seventy-two martyrs (Haftad-o-do-tan).
- 73 Later this committee's duties were extended and it became the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, which is the highest educational authority in the country today.
- 74 These are two important universities whose educational programmes and curricula combine modern and Islamic topics. The students of the Imam Khomeini Institution have to be chosen among the clergy.
- 75 A law college in Tehran that teaches Islamic and modern law.
- 76 HRC is perhaps the most outstanding centre of cultural studies in Iran. After the revolution many prominent scholars of the humanities gathered here.
- 77 By anthropology they mean proto-anthropological writing.
- 78 Some Iranian scholars hold Iranian anthropology to be as old as Persian literature, and consider Pahlavi texts such as *PandNameh Ardashir Babakan* and *Ardaviraf Nameh* to be anthropological. They also claim *farhang* (culture) – the subject of anthropology – to be a very old concept in Persian literature; therefore cultural issues are not a new agenda in Persian literature (Khaliqi 1974; Shahshahani 1986). However, I distinguish between two types of anthropological materials: first, sources for anthropological studies of Iran, which consist of various written, oral and material sources such as historical documents, religious, geographical, philosophical and literary texts and archaeological objects. These materials should not be considered anthropology. The second category is anthropological texts such as those I have considered in this study; I have already suggested criteria for distinguishing them from other texts.
- 79 In my MA thesis I reviewed Mas'udi's two books, *al-Tanbih al-Sharaf* and *Moruj al-Zahab*, extracting all the ethnographic data and also analysing Mas'udi's methodological discussions.
- 80 Geertz argues that 'the various disciplines (or disciplinary matrices), humanistic, natural scientific, social scientific alike . . . are ways of being in the world, forms of life' (1983: 155).

6 Anthropology and Islamic modernization: Iranian anthropology in the 1990s

- 81 Because of this nationalist tendency, fundamentalists who are loyal to a revolutionary reading of Islam and support the strong anti-modernization, anti-Western and anti-nationalism discourse of the early Revolution years, such as Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, have challenged and criticized the Reformists.
- 82 Many of the prominent Reformist figures and thinkers are practitioners of social sciences: Said Hjjarian (PhD political sociology), Hossein Bashireyeh (professor of political science and political sociology, Tehran University), Abdul Karim Soroush (literary figure, philosopher and expert in philosophy of social sciences), Abbas Abdi (engineer and social researcher specializing in sociology of law and quantitative social

- research), Hamid-Reza Jala'ipour (PhD sociology and a staff member of Tehran University), Sadeq Ziba Kalam (professor of political science, Tehran University), Alireza Alavi-Tabar (PhD development economy), Ahmad Zeyd-abadi (PhD political science) and Emad addin Baqi (MA sociology) among many others.
- 83 Here is its URL address: www.chn.ir/; or www.chn.ir/english/
- 84 The *Bibliography of Iranian Folklore and Anthropology*, which lists all Persian-language anthropological books (mostly folklore) published until 1971, mentions only 216 anthropological books. My own survey of academic anthropological books published by 1993 (Fazeli 1994) lists 100 titles. Likewise, Safinezhad's bibliography of Persian-language nomadic studies published up to 1990 (1997) lists 220 book titles.
- 85 As far as I am aware, the only exception is Sadeq Hedayat, who came from a noble and aristocratic family. However, he did not engage with his own family status.
- 86 I should mention that in the first chapter of all anthropological textbooks it is usually mentioned that today anthropology studies both large-scale and small-scale communities. But in practice in Iran we learn that anthropology is about small communities.
- 87 After Ayatollah Araki's death in 1994, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance asked me to complete and publish my monograph, and provided finance to enable me to do so. I completed *The Socio-economic Monograph of Moslehabad: The Birthplace of Ayatollah Araki*, but publication has been delayed.
- 88 Each unit represents a one-hour lesson per week. Usually each course contains a two or three-unit lesson per week in one academic term of 17 weeks.
- 89 *Samandehi*, as Sediq defines it, is a new way of 'settling' the nomads; not by compulsion, but by supporting their efforts to change their present ways of life.

7 Iranian anthropology: a conclusion

- 90 There are some exceptions that I should mention. Asghar Asari Chanukah, a distinguished professor of physical and ecological anthropology at Tehran University is an Africanist, and has studied some African peoples. However his African studies have never been given any importance. Fatemeh Givechian, professor of anthropology at Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, did her PhD on 'The Work Ethic in American Culture'. Her husband, Dr Farhang Raja'i, a well-known professor of Political Science in Iran, introduced this unpublished study in an article 'Gharb-seta'i, gharb-setizi, va gharb-shenasi', in the monthly magazine *Ettela'at Siyasi-Eqtesadi*. I have read the article, but I am unable to provide the full reference.
- 91 Barnett argues that higher education generates and promotes critical knowledge in three domains: the world, self and knowledge itself.
- 92 I mean all forms of academic freedom and autonomy that are relatively common in Western universities. Berdahl has defined the meaning of academic freedom and autonomy as follows:
- *Academic freedom* is that freedom of the individual scholar in his/her teaching and research.
 - *Substantive autonomy* is the power of the university or college in its corporate form to determine its own goals and programmes, the *what* of academe.
 - *Procedural autonomy* is the power of the university or college in its operate form to determine the means by which its goals and programmes will be pursued, the *how* of academe.
- (Berdahl 1999: 50)
- 93 Mohsen Solasi is an educational staff member of the Department of Anthropology at Tehran University, who has translated a number of classical and contemporary anthropological texts such as Malinowski's *The Sexual Life of Savages* and Morgan's *Ancient Society*.
- 94 I have explained this standpoint in 'Pathology of Anthropology in Iran' (1999).

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