Chapter III

Feudalism in Central Asian Khanates

(A). Overview of Feudalism in Central Asia:

Feudalism is generally defined as an exploitative lord-vassal rather than state-subject or ruler-ruled relationship. Such a relationship obtained not only in Europe, but also in other regions though with varying functioning and historical conditions, say in Europe, Japan, China, India, Russia, Spain, Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Italy, and even in the nomadic societies of the Turko-Mongol origin in


3 Montesquieu (1689-1755) was the first who held this opinion. As per him feudalism was “an event which happened once in the world and which will perhaps never happen again.” Calling it the “pure” theory of feudalism, G. V. Below restricted the institution to the Germano-Roman parts of the middle ages, particularly to the Frankish and neighbouring states; hence, a specific historical phenomenon, localized in time and space. The theory has its adherents even today like Harbans Mukhia who sees feudalism specific to Europe: Marc Bloch, Feudal Society: Social Class and Political Organization, Vol. II, Tr. L. A. Manyon, Taylor & Francis, 2005, p. 162; Lawrence Krader, “Feudalism and the Tatar Polity of the Middle Ages,” Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. I, No. 1, London: Cambridge University Press, 1958, p. 76; Chris Wickham, “The Uniqueness of the East,” The Feudalism Debate (ed.), New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 1999, p. 114.


5 Voltaire (1694-1778) refuted the pure theory of feudalism. To him “Feudalism is not an event... with differences in its working subsists in three-quarters of our hemisphere.” This initiated a debate regarding the questions of the existence of feudalism in non-European countries among
Eurasia. Pertinently, the regional variations were determined by distinct geographical, climatic, technological, anthropological, cultural and ethnic considerations. Marx rightly argues, “it (feudalism) assumes different aspects and runs through different orders of succession.” Nevertheless, chief characteristics, more or less, remained the same across the world though these involved serious debate among the social scientists like Boris Ya. Velidimirtsov, Sergey Tolstov, Zimanov, Potapov, S. E. Tolybekov, S. N. Wainstain, Yu I. Semenov and G. M. Markov, Sh. Nacadory, A. Minis, G. Sughbatoar, and N. Seradjav, N. Seradjav, Academician Sh. Natsagdorj, Earnest Gellner, Nikolay N. Kradin, Owen Lattimore, Lawrence Krader, etc. Vladimirtsov designated the entire period of 12th-20th century Mongolia and Central Asia as feudal for the presence of feudal lords (nokiut in medieval Mongol), fiefs, manors, and the serfs. However, Vladimirtsov observed a great deal of affinity in Western Europe and the Mongol-Turkic socio-economic and

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3. The degree of servility of the peasants to landlords also differed from region to region due to the varying nature of soil, forms and techniques of farming: Karl Marx and Fredric Engels, Pre-capitalist Socio-Economic Formations, Moscow: Novasti Press Academy, 1979, p. 23; R. S. Sharma, “How Feudal was India Feudalism?” The Feudalism Debate, Harbans Mukhia (ed.), New Delhi: Monahar Publishers and Distributors, 1999, p. 84.
political institutions. The core feature of the given fief-lord-serf relationship was the landed estate (fief) wherein the beneficiary, under the royal patronage, enjoyed enormous rights not only on land but even on the basic producers, the most exploited group of the nascent serfs. The institution of the land grant or fief was in vogue under the Khanates from the early times of Qarakhanids (9th-10th century AD) down to the Mongols and thereafter. Changiz Khan (1162-1227 AD) bestowed lands along with the subjects to his ruling elite/military commanders. Under the cover of the royal orders/charters, these beneficiaries exercised innumerable powers within their defined estates, virtually their personal property.

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14 These landed estates were called as the Iqtas under the Seljugs. Literally, Iqta defined ‘a piece of land,’ was a territorial assignment granted by the king/sultan to the military or civil officials called muqta’s in lieu of their services to the state. These (iqtas) first appeared under the Umayyads (661-750 A.D.): Chris Wickham, “The Uniqueness of the East,” The Feudalism Debate, p. 125; Mansura Hiader, Medieval Central Asia: Polity, Economy and Military Organization (Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries), New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2004, fn. 171, p. 433.


The manuscript, Ta'rikh-i Guzida-i Nusratnama in Turkish, deals with Eastern Turkistan and discusses history of Turks from early times. It was copied in the sixteenth century, which copy is available in the British Library under the No. 3222.

Such rights, they could, at will, share with their subjected peasantry in their specific fiefs termed as *hoshun* in the 18th century Mongolia. The holder of the *hoshun* was accordingly called *nutug-un-ezen* (lord of the domain) or *nutug-un-ezen jasag noen* (ruling noble lord of the domain) or simply *jasag*. On the disintegration of the Mongol empire in the 16th century, the Uzbek Khans (16th century) upheld the same system with differences in the names of land grants and termed them as *iqta*, *tankho*, *waqf*, and *suyurgul*. However, among the nomadic population, land usage was determined by the nature of their pastoral economy. The possession of pastureland depended upon the ability to seize land and hold it against the pressure of other groups. Boundaries were only vaguely defined and changed in accordance with the changing strength of each group. The winter camp, where a small amount of land was cultivated, was more permanent.

Before his death (1227), Changiz Khan divided the empire among his four sons as appendages - the *vilayats*, *mamlekat* or *mulk* as per the family traditions. Jochi, the eldest son was allotted the newly conquered area of west-Irtysh as his *ulus* (fief), Chagatay *Mawarannahr*, Kashgaria, Samirechie, and Western Jungaria, Ogedie/Ogatie eastern Jungaria, Mongolia and the Chinese provinces and the fourth son, Touli, was in charge of his father’s household, the treasury and ancestral pastures: Rashi-ud-din Tabib, *The Successors of Changiz Khans*, tr. John Andrew Boyle, New York: Columbia University Press, 1971, p.159; Gavin Hambly, *Central Asia*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, p. 100; Svat Succok, *A History of Inner Asia*, London: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 113; *Medieval Central Asia: Polity, Economy and Military Organization* (fourteenth to sixteenth centuries), p. 408.


(B). Feudal Structure and Functioning:

Since feudal institution was agrarian-oriented in the Khanates, agriculture was, as such, the main source of economy and means of production.\(^2^{1}\) The whole set of socio-economic and political relations revolved round lord-tenant ties within the medium of land tenures. According to the Islamic law, land in the Khanates belonged to the Khan, the \textit{memlek-i-padshahi/memleke/mumliki} or \textit{mamlak},\(^2^{2}\) much like the feudal societies in Europe. Being the legitimate owner, the Khan owned and governed everything from above and below in his specified landed estates. The peasants as the mere tenants, held non-proprietary nature of land rights, and paid a certain quantum, usually substantial, of their produce as rent for the use of the land of their over-lord, lord or sub-lord.\(^2^{3}\) Obviously, they were debarred from the rights to sell, mortgage, and transfer their land to any third party.\(^2^{4}\) In theory, therefore, private ownership on land was non-existent. But in practice, the over-lord, instead of paying in deficient cash,\(^2^{5}\) distributed some portion of land among his heirs, civil and

\(^{21}\) As per 1879 reports, in Bukhara, the sedentary population was estimated at 65%, semi-nomadic 20%, and nomadic at 15%. In Khiva, the figures were 72% sedentary, 6% nomadic, and 25% semi-nomadic. By 1913, agricultural sector constituted 73.8% of the national income, while industry, construction, transport and communication constituted 15.7% and remaining other sectors. However, under the Soviet industrialization policy (1930’s), it (agricultural share) reduced to 34.1%. while industry, construction and transport rose to 50% of national income: Symour Becker, \textit{Russian Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924}, London: Harvard University Press, 1968, p. 10; Devendra Kaushik, \textit{Central Asia in Modern Times: A History from Early Times}, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970, p. 67; \textit{Socialist Uzbekistan: A Path Equaling Centuries}, USSR Academy of Sciences (ed.), Moscow, 1982, p. 54.


military officials, as grants called tankhoh/chek. However, he reserved special type of land called khasa for his personal use.\(^{26}\) In return, the assignees committed to place at the Amir’s (overlord’s) disposal troops (qara-chirik).\(^{27}\) Besides, individual assignments, the Khans, and the tribal chiefs provided waqf grants for the maintenance of religious and other institutions. With the passage of time, such grants became hereditary and naturally the kings lost control over them.\(^{28}\) The right to use the land was not free, rather assignees paid a fee as tribute in the same sense as the English lords paid a fee to the king for holding their property.\(^{29}\) In some cases, however, the given rights were irrevocable both in terms of land ownership and its accruing revenue, which gave rise to different land tenures including tankhoh, waqf, amlok, khasa, milki, etc.,\(^{30}\) all were the major socio-economic units.\(^{31}\) However, each set of land tenure had a varying share in the overall land composition. For example,

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\(^{26}\) As per estimates, the extent of Bukhara was 2, 50, 000 sq. kms. Because of vastness, some regions were inaccessible and so remained independent from the central control: Central Asia: Pre-Historic to Pre-Modern Times, Vol. 2, p. 393; E. A. Allworth, Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule, New York/London: Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 280.


\(^{29}\) The tribute was paid in kind, but after the Tsarist control it was paid in cash: Susan J. Buck, Gregory Gleason, “Legal and Institutional Change in Irrigation Systems of Soviet central Asia,” Paper presented at the Second Annual Convention of the International Association for the Study of Common Property, Winnipeg: Canada September 28, 1991, pp. 4-5.

\(^{30}\) Central Asia: Pre-Historic to Pre-Modern Times, Vol. 2, p. 393; The Peoples of Central Asia, p. 94.

Besides, there were miriie lands which included uncultivated and unused (mavot) areas. According to Muslim law, the latter could become the property (mulk/milki) of whoever brought it into use: “Land Reform in Turkestan,” The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 51, No. 124, p. 429.

in Bukhara 12.2% land was personal property of the Khan/Amir (khasa); 55.8% amlok (state land); 24.2% waqf, and just 7.8% was the milki, the personal property of commoners.32 [Fig.3.1] In Khiva, 2/3rd of the total irrigated and fertile land belonged to the Khans (overlords) and other lords; 1/7th was the waqf and amlok (state land) and only 1/10th of the total land belonged to the peasants (dehkans) as milki (private property).33

Given the large estates,34 the assignees, at will, sub-divided them among their subordinates leading to the sub-infeudation of the estates.35 Ultimately a system of vassalage surfaced with a chain of potentates organized in hierarchical order. At the base of the structure, was a soldier with a tankhoh plot of one family on it, a qaravul-begi with a plot of six families, onboshi with 10 horsemen,36 a mirakhur with thirteen families,37 yuzboshi (100 horsemen)38 to a mongboshi (commander of 1,000 troops).39

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38 Travels into Bukhara together with a Narrative of a Voyage on the Indus, p. 336.
Fig. 3.2: The distribution pattern suffices decentralization of imperial power under the Khanates as was the case in classical feudalism. It also indicates varying estates and the rights of their holders in relation to their obligations vis-à-vis the Khans. The rights of some were absolute in terms of proprietorship whereas others had simply a right on revenue. On top of it, the revenue assignees were bound to deliver a considerable share of their revenue (wasilat) to their overlord (Khan/Amir). The said share was usually paid out of the rent and the personal share of the produce delivered by the peasants for the use of assignees land. By this arrangement, the peasants/tenants were under the double economic obligation: on the one hand, they paid rent to the grantee, and on the other, paid certain share of his produce to the over-lord. By and large, the assigned plots of land were “inclusive.” In the 16th century, Abdullah Sultan and Shighai Khan were granted Saghraj and Khujand (in Uzbekistan), and Asfandiyar was assigned the Vilayats of Farghana from Khojand to Oash and Andijan in modern Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan respectively. Similarly,
Shah Nazar Bi Qarluq enjoyed the *syurgul* of Khujakat. These grants together comprised rights on land, water channels, water mills (*asiyaha*), mines, gardens etc. and the revenue accruing there from. Since these grants were quite large in extent, these were redistributed among the common masses for cultivation on rent bases. For instance, *Rauz-at-ur-Rizwan* refers to a Mirak who had assigned his estate to one or two *barzgars* (subordinate cultivators) to work for him under the title- *ki az barai ishan kar mai kunand*. The following fiscal reports of Khokand Khanate also refers to similar type of rent-based lord-tenant relationship:

“...The civil servants and the headmen of the villages (*aminan wa oqsoqolan*) report that the foundation of the locality of Gurg Tipa can be traced back to 120 years ago. Since then, [people] have been installed (*mutawattin*) [in that area]. For 90 years, as the estate was waste land (*mayyitbudan-i-zamin*), they were engaged in agriculture as

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45 *Medieval Central Asia: Polity, Economy and Military Organization (fourteenth to sixteenth centuries)*, p. 410.
46 *Medieval Central Asia: Polity, Economy and Military Organization (fourteenth to sixteenth centuries)*, pp. 400-410.

In Indian context of feudalism, the grantee was assigned inclusive rights on land including mines: R. S. Sharma, “How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?” *The Feudalism Debate*, Harbans Mukhia, (ed.), pp. 94-97. Similarly in Mongolia in a letter sent by the administrative office of the hoshun of Urjinjav, a *jasag* of Sainnoen Aimag, dated I877, reveals: “the grass and water of a territory may be managed and assigned only by the ruler and *jasag* of the said land”: Proceedings of the hoshun of Prince Urinjav of Sain-Noen Khan *aimag*, for the year 1877; *State Archives*, 1-I3-40 and I-I3-19: Cf. “The Economic Basis of Feudalism in Mongolia,” *Modern Asian Studies*, p. 267.
48 In many cases, the *waqf* establishment were so broad that the establishment in Bukhara included lands in the Samarkand region and vice versa: Niccolo Pianciola, “*Waqf* in Turkestan: The Colonial Legacy and the Fate of an Islamic Institution in Early Soviet Central Asia, 1917-1924,” *Central Asian Survey*, Volume 26, Issue 4, December 2007, fn. 26, pp. 475-498. (accessed: 10/01/2012)

In Mongolia, the dependent cultivators were called *arat*. The feudal lords, called *jasags*, were the owners, with full rights, of the territory of *hoshuns*, and could at any time appropriate any part of it for their personal use: “The Economic Basis of Feudalism in Mongolia,” *Modern Asian Studies*, p. 268.
tenant farmers (*karanda*), thus rendering past sovereigns one-third of their produce…”

Lord-tenant mutual agreement was ceremonised with an oath on Qur’an. One Malla Beg did so in Osh with the tenants of Otuz-oghul, Tait and Ichkilik clans in presence of two witnesses of Alim Bek Dadkhah and Syed Bek Dadkhah during the reign of Khudyar Khan (1845-1858) of the Khokand. This sort of sub-infeudation of the estates gave way to sets of land rights, one belonging to the privileged class and other to tillers. Under the said agreement, the tenants (*karanda*), being the private property (of the lord), were debarred to leave the fief/village without the permission of his lord. Any violation thereof subjected the guilty to punishments like flogging and captivity. If they repeated such a fault second time, they were publicly nailed by an ear to a wooden post or to the house-door, and left as such for three days without food or drink. Moreover, they had no right to complaint whatsoever in any

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52 Dadkhah, literally “a petitioner of justice” was an honorary title of middle rank in the Khokand Khanate.


54 In India there too existed different rights over a same piece of land: R. S. Sharma, “How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?” *The Feudalism Debate*, p. 94.

55 The serfs in Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine were called *fallah*: A. N. Poliak, *Feudalism in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the Lebanon*, 1250 – 1900, London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1939, p. 64.


legal or administrative court. Their personal enslavement was such that they could not afford any marriage without the permission of their lords. Similarly, for any seditious act against the lord, they were tied hand and foot and held aloof in a room swarming with noxious flies whose stings caused death to them on the third or fourth day. These instances suffice to prove the fact that the tillers (karandas) were attached to the soil as serfs despite the revocable nature of estates or land grants.

The feudal tendencies were not far to seek in the lands granted by the state to the indigent families and religious or educational institutions for maintenance. Such grants, termed waqf (charitable endowments) were directly manned and monitored by a particular institution without any interference from the state. These combined landed property, water mills, orchards, and vineyards. Though their extent varied (59,991 tanop were reserved for waqf in Samarkand), yet these endowments were

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58 In 1521 AD, when the peasants of the Rizqa requested the Egyptian Governor-General to ask the lords to levy reasonable rent on them, the lords replied that nobody is empowered to come between them and their serfs: *Feudalism in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the Lebanon, 1250-1900*, p. 64.

59 In Mongolia as per the set principles, the tiller could migrate within the limits of the grant (hoshun in Mongolia) and make use of the pastures of the grants but could not move outside the bounds of the hoshun. “The Economic Basis of Feudalism in Mongolia,” *Modern Asian Studies*, p. 268; James Hutton, *Central Asia from the Aryan to the Cossacks*, New Delhi: Manas Publications, 1875, reproduced 2005, p. 278.


61 As a rule, there were two types of waqf: public (khayri) and familial (ahlī). The first were endowments denoted for charitable institutions such as schools, mosques and hospitals. The second were endowments bequeathed by a person to his descendants.


strong economic units. Since, most of waqf grants were in the land-form, their value, as such, skyrocketed thereby demanding security and non-interference of state. Their curators, the clergy, enjoyed great political influence over the medieval state and the case of Jubari Sheikhs offers the typical example to this effect. They virtually functioned as princes. Since, these grants were essentially meant for the maintenance of the religious institutions, the madrassas, mosques, shrines, their pupils and the allied staff, were, as such, called waqfkhayri (the charitable grants). However, the curators apportioned a greater part of their revenue for their own families, of course with the consent of the state; hence, termed waqfiahli (family waqf). For instance, Khawaja Ahrar, a sufī saint held 35,000 hectares of agricultural land in the Samarkand region. Similarly, Khawaja Said (1531-1589), a disciple of Khawaja Islam (1493-1563), held huge landed estate in Samarkand with substantial revenue in cash, which he bequeathed to his primogeniture. As a result, his eldest son, Taj-ud-din Hasan (1547-1646), received a share of 14,000 ashrāfī whereas his second son, Abdul Rahim, received 4,000 ashrāfī. Besides, they held large estates

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66 Mughal India and Central Asia, p. 98.

67 Asrāfī was a golden coin and its value changed from time to time. One ashrāfī during the Sultan Abbas II (1642-66) of Persia was of the value of 114 grains, which reduced to 114 and 84 grains during Sultan Husayn (1694-1722): S. Moosvi, “The Monetary System in Safavid Persia,” History of Civilizations of Central Asia, Part V, p. 454.

68 Mughal India and Central Asia, pp. 98-99.
yielding 40,000 Khansis as average income,\textsuperscript{69} large number of residential assets and 400 slaves apart. The third son of Abu Sa’eed, Abdul Karim, also possessed large landed estates along with irrigation channels and textile production centres.\textsuperscript{70} Consequently, the religious elite assumed the status of privileged nobility with substantial influence on the overall socio-economic and political fabric of the Khanates during the late medieval period.\textsuperscript{71} The waqf grants so held by them passed on from one generation to another.\textsuperscript{72} Being the custodians (mutawalis) of these grants, they exercised wide range of powers from within the religious estates: their administration, income and expenses, of course while keeping regard to their own interests.\textsuperscript{73} Nevertheless, the Khans had set rules of accountability for the grantees so as to protect the interests of the basic producers. The waqf and revenue documents of the period under reference amply suggest that repeated warnings were issued to erring mutawalis, and who, at times, were replaced by the pious ones.\textsuperscript{74} Thus they

\textsuperscript{69} Khans also termed tanga/tenghe, was worth 1/3rd of a rupee by 1605-27, which devalued to 1/5th by 1633: Audrey Burton, \textit{The Bukharans: A Dynastic, Diplomatic and Commercial History (1550-1702)}, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997, p. 87.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Mughal India and Central Asia}, p. 99.


\textsuperscript{73} The Kabul waqafnama reads, “When he (custodian) imbibes the wine of death..., the one among His Excellency's children, will be the custodian of this waqf, and males will be preferred over females... . If they are equal in relationship, then the eldest shall be the custodian.” “The Ahrārī Waqf in Kābul in the Year 1546 and the Mughūl Naqshbandiyyah,” \textit{Journal of the American Oriental Society}, p. 229.

\textsuperscript{74} In 1868 in Tashkent, Abdul-Qasim Khan Ishan Tura Khan, a mutwalli of a madrasa presented a petition to the Chancellery of the City Commandant (nachal'nik goroda) complaining that merchants who used plots of waqf on Sundays refused the rent stipulated under the terms of a waqf deed. A commission of Muslim administrators qualified in Islamic property rights was established to collect all the documents relating to waqf: \textit{Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan}, f. R-36, op. 1, d. 455, ll. 2-3ob: Cf. “Waqf in Turkestan: The Colonial Legacy and the Fate of an Islamic Institution in Early Soviet Central Asia, 1917-1924”, \textit{Central Asian Survey}, p. 479.
were required to conduct themselves properly keeping in view the underlying spirit of the endowments and the interests of the allied tenants/agriculturists.\textsuperscript{75} It is worth mentioning that the custodians of these endowments did not cultivate the land themselves, but employed a hoard of cultivators for the purpose. The land holding varied in size and the requirement of the related families. The term “ketmans of labour” in vogue in Central Asia and Sinkiang explained a triangular worker-land-water relationship.\textsuperscript{76} In a way, the term ketman defined the quantum of the work and the proportionate wages that a labour was entitled for digging a canal. It also defined a unit of weight and measurement: on digging a “ketman” of land, a worker was entitled to a “ketman of water” which sufficed irrigation of six to fourteen acres of land.\textsuperscript{77} Under the circumstances, water disputes were not ruled out between the estate holders and land tillers, of which details are deficient for the Khanates. However, beyond Khanates, say in Sinkiang (Xinxiang), the water disputes between the cultivators of Yarkand and Merket lasted for 25 years in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{78}

In all cases, it is but certain that the agricultural tools, seeds, etc. were provided to the tillers by the feudatories on rent basis. In fact, the level of rent on land use, water rights, and draught animal was so exorbitant that it barely left anything with the peasants.\textsuperscript{79} They were required to pay the rent between $1/4$ to $1/2$ of the yield for land use, $2/5$ to $3/4$ for cattle and implements together, $1/2$ to $4/5$ to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[79] The cultivators/peasants operated upon the land with the help of few simple tools and implements which included ketman (hoe or spade) mola (wooden harrow), orag (sickle), amach (plough-share) and pair of oxen (gosh): E. A. Allworth, \textit{Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule} (ed.), New York/London: Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 276; \textit{Socialist Agrarian Reforms in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan}, p.21; \textit{Central Asia}, p. 211.
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for seeds and 1/4th to 1/6th of the yield on the leased capital and clothes.\textsuperscript{80} This subjected them to the option of exodus though it was punishable under the customary law.\textsuperscript{81} The cultivators who refused to till land owing to over-exactions were punished by the stoppage of water for general use. Such a practice antedated the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, whence one feudal lord namely Baqi Mohmmad of Bukhara stopped the water supply of Nasaf Canal to the restive inhabitants for irrigation of their cultivable land.\textsuperscript{82} The given example points to the seigniorial rights of lord over the tenants and their continued attachment to land in the Khanates much like their European counterparts.\textsuperscript{83} Quite precisely, the tenants were exchanged like commodities and changed hands from person to person.\textsuperscript{84} They were evicted for misconduct and refused right to land use for the feudal lord- indeed a replica of the lord-tenant relationship in English manorial villages.\textsuperscript{85}

The seigniorial powers of the feudatories also extended to the slaves estimated at 30,000-40,000 Iranian and 3,000 Russian in Khiva and Bukhara around 1813.

\textsuperscript{80} Muslim Reformist Political Thought: Revivalist, Modernist and Free Will, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{81} Besides exploitation, economic and political insecurity were important reasons that forced people to migrate. For example, following series of nomadic invasions of Qipchaqs on Samarkand in 1735, 12,000 residents moved to India: Scott C. Levi, “India, Russia, and the Eighteenth-Century transformation of Central Asian Caravan Trade,” \textit{India and Central Asia: Commerce and Culture – 1500-1800}, Scott C. Levi (ed.), New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007, fn. 84, p. 120; Ella R. Christie, \textit{Through Khiva to Golden Samarkand}, London: Seeley Service and Co. Ltd., 1925, p. 204.

The land charters, for example, of India reveal that the landed beneficiaries enjoyed general control over means and forces of production. The plots of lands were directly donated to them by the king sometimes along with the sharecroppers, weavers and sometimes along with the cultivators: R. S. Sharma, “How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?”\textit{The Feudalism Debate}, pp. 95-97.

Their strength was even estimated at 1,00,000 in Bukharan Amirate in 1860s. Like tenants, they ploughed lord’s land, maintained canals, gardens and reared livestock, made pottery and performed their many domestic activities. More than 1,000 slaves alone worked on the estates of Amir Nasrullah (1826-1860) of Bukhara. Since, the slaves were the cheap source of labour, their lords/masters were, as such, indisposed to their freedom. Alexander Burns reports about one such slave who worked for his master for long twenty-five years, but was denied freedom by his master. Similarly, a Persian slave, named Mohammad continued tending sheep of his master for eight years, with no hope of liberty. Therefore, like the serfs, the slaves were subjected to atrocities and exploitation by their masters/lords, and were, in no way, different.


89 *Travels into Bukhara together with a Narrative of a Voyage on the Indus*, pp. 119, 136

from the servile peasants\textsuperscript{91} on feudal estates, which symbolized a multi-lateral unit of production, trade and consumption together.\textsuperscript{92}

Karl Marx denied feudal traits in Asia on the grounds of the presence of village communities, which recognized no serfdom. Instead, they upheld the principle of communal living and sharing of yield on need basis.\textsuperscript{93} But in the Khanates, these village communities called \textit{mahallas} were distinct economic and self-governing social institutions\textsuperscript{94} of security\textsuperscript{95} with \textit{oqsoqol} (village headman), \textit{arq oqsoqol} (village official in-charge of canals) as the top officials.\textsuperscript{96} Being the intermediaries between the lords and local people, these village officials acted as local lords in the villages, and subjected the villagers to \textit{hasher} (forced labour) and

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\textsuperscript{91} The basic difference between a slave and tenant under the feudal mode of production was that former (slave) worked in the fields with his master’s tools and implements, while a tenant did so on rent basis.

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various other levies. In this way, the village communities in the Khanates presented a different working than that of the Marxian model of village community; hence, a stratified social unit representing privileged and unprivileged despite the common ethnic bonds.

(C). Feudal Levies:

The serfs attached with the feudatories in the Khanates were bound to a variety of feudal levies and services: to dig new and repair the old canals, offer them certain days of unpaid services, till their personal land, work in their karkhanas (workshops), tend flocks and operate the water mills etc. In addition, each Kazak nomad delivered one among ten sheep each year to support the clergy under religious grant. Those who could not afford the same in kind, were free to pay it in terms of labour. Such a practice continued after the termination of the Khanates. For example in 1925, 58% of the tenants paid the rent through labour and only 16.2% of the middle peasants paid it in kind. The extents of the working hours a day were not the same in all types of the landed estates. However, by 1920’s, it was between fourteen to twenty hours a day on the cotton lands and in some cases, it was from dawn to dusk. During hot summers, the per-day working hours were limitless as the tenant had to ensure the irrigation of the fields amid water scarcity. The concept of holidays and weekends was non-existent under such rigorous working framework. Thus, the feudatories exacted different type of services from those tenants who hired agricultural tools, seeds, etc. from them. Doing so, ensured cheap labour to the lords,

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97 Journey to Khiva Through the Turkmon Country, p. 129.
98 The Modernization of Inner Asia, p. 88.
100 This indicates that non-economic compulsion was an inseparable part of the feudal complex: Travels into Bukhara together with a Narrative of a Voyage on the Indus, pp. 119, 136.
101 A. E. Hudson, Kazak Social Structure, New Heaven, 1938, p. 64
kulaks, a dominant feudal characteristic indeed. Termed as metayage (in Uzbekistan), such a practice subjected the weak tenants to the continued dependence on the feudal lords, the kulaks, beys/biis/begs and manaps, and, at the same time, earned great deal of dividends to the lords at the cost of sweat and blood of the tenants. This hiatus between the labour potential of the peasant family and its resources was in fact the distinctive characteristic of the feudal mode of production in the classical stage.

Little wonder to notice marked diversity in the social structure under the Khanates in Central Asia. The privileged controlled maximum forces and means of production, and the unprivileged were despoiled off due of the fruits of their labour on land. The society was, as such, characteristic of ‘the White Clans’ (the upper stratum) and ‘the Black Clans’ (the commoners) in Khiva. The distinction compounded with the Tsarist occupation of the Khanates in 1860’s: between the bednyaki (hired labourers) and izdolshchik (share croppers), seredniaks (middle peasants) and kulaks and beys/begs (land lords), and batraks (landless agricultural workers). The great deal of economic differentiation between the “exploiter” and the “exploited” was representative of another dominant feature of Khanates, often

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104 Kulak literally means ‘tight-fisted’, though in broader sense, it refers to a wealthy class of peasants in the Russian empire. They owned large farms and used hired labour. However, the origin of the term and author of the reforms of 1909 (Stolypin Reform) pointed to a group of prosperous and independent peasants who acted as a supporting structure for the vacillating Tsarist empire: Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2001; Zhores A. Medvadev, Soviet Agriculture, London, 1987, p. 14; Central Asia in Modern Times: A History from Ancient Times, p. 67.

105 Under the classical feudalism, the producer was neither completely separated from the means of production, nor was he an independent economic being. And this in fact distinguishes between the slave mode of production and the capitalist mode of production: Harbans Mukhia, “Maurice Dobb’s Explanation of the Decline of Feudalism in western Europe: A Critique”, Indian Historical Review, Vol. VI, No. 1-2, July-January, 1979-1980, pp. 154-84.


talked by Maurice Dobb as bi-polarity of European feudalism.\(^{108}\) This is amply evidenced by their material domestic possessions. While only 5.52% of kulaks in total population possessed 33.51% cattle wealth, 49.22% common peasant families possessed just 11-12% cattle wealth towards 1914.\(^{109}\)

It is a fact that feudalism was not prevalent in whole region of the Khanates as it had a big chunk of peasants holding milkiyati rights on private land.\(^{110}\) Their number was so large that land holdings (ateks) varied in size from 5 and 50 hectares under the Khivan Khanate.\(^{111}\) According to the 1909 statistical data, in Bukhara Khanate, majority of the peasantry (52%) owned irrigated land measuring 0.5-1.3 dessiatines,\(^{112}\) 33.3% between 1.3 - 3.3 dessiatines and 14% more than 3.3 dessiatines. In the Tchardjou Bekstov region (Charju) of Bukhara Amirate, an average holding measured 0.25 dessiatine.\(^{113}\) However, at certain places, the land holdings were very small.\(^{114}\) As per one estimate, in 1909 just 1% of the sown area of Farghana, Syr Daria and Samarkand oblasts was owned by private individuals, and

\(^{108}\) Studies in the Development of Capitalism, p. 35.

\(^{109}\) Central Asia in Modern Times: A History from the Early Times, p. 69.


\(^{112}\) One dessaitine was equal to 2.7 acres.

\(^{113}\) Agrarian Reforms in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan, p. 34.

\(^{114}\) Islam and Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia, p. 11.
the rest either under the *waqf* or landlords suggesting thereby the state property.\(^{115}\) Importantly, out of the total land holdings very less area was arable;\(^{116}\) hence, not in commensurate with the actual demand of the peasants. Consequently, they sold their energy and labour and toiled on feudal lands like their European feudalism.\(^{117}\) Importantly, a single *dessiatine* of cotton land hardly sufficed the minimum requirements of a peasant family.\(^{118}\) Small land holdings apart, the private peasants’ proprietors were dependent upon the landlords (*kulaks*) for want of agricultural tools: spade (*ketman*), wooden harrow (*mola*), sickle (*orag*), wooden plough (*amach*),\(^{119}\) a pair of oxen (*gosh*) and a hoe,\(^{120}\) which were simple and primitive not withstanding Tsarist reforms to replace them by metal ploughs, iron harrows and seeders by 1910.\(^{121}\) For limited access to the total means of production, the peasant proprietors and the serfs were constrained to borrow loans, seeds, implements, draught animals and other agricultural capital from the feudatories, and in lieu thereof shared 1/4\(^{th}\) of their gross produce with them under the *charikari* system:\(^{122}\) in 72% cases the sharing was done on the ½ or 2/3\(^{rd}\) basis\(^{123}\) as the rate of interest was 40-60% on the borrowed loans from the landlords though they obtained the same on the subsidized 8-9% interest rates for promoting mono-culture.\(^{124}\) At the

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116 During the 20\(^{th}\) century, just 7% of total area in Uzbekistan was arable and rest was dominated by deserts, steppes and mountains: *Republic of Uzbekistan: Biodiversity Conservation, National strategy Plan Action II*, Tashkent, Decree No., 139, 1998.


121 *Socialist Agrarian Reforms in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan*, p. 34.

122 *Central Asia in Modern Times: A History from the Early 19th Century*, p. 66.

123 *Socialist Agrarian Reforms in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan*, p. 73.

124 *Central Asia in Modern Times: A History from the Early 19\(^{th}\) Century*, p. 69.
end of it, the *milki* land holders were left with no choice but to dispose of or pawn their lands to the big land lords. By 1914, therefore, 25-54.4% peasant families were landless in Farghana, Samarkand and Bukhara, and the rest retained just one *dessiatine* of land with them; hence, fell far behind their landlord communities in material possession.\(^{125}\) This automatically ruled out the scope of their asset building under the Khanates.

Thus, whole region of Khanates was characteristic of feudalism during the 18\(^{th}\)-19\(^{th}\) century. Serfdom was its fundamental characteristic whereby tenants were attached to the land of the lord. Their exploitation by and dependence on the feudal class was but natural as was the case under the European “classical feudalism” in terms of land tenure and the right of users on means and forces of production. In a way, feudalism in the Khanates was a typical replica of European feudalism, exceptions apart.

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\(^{125}\) *Central Asia in Modern Times: A History from the Early 19\(^{th}\) Century*, p. 69.