1. **Concepts and Methodology**

1.1. **A Short Review of Some of the Existing Theories and Related Concepts**

In this study of Iranian millenarian social movements, in our analysis we have used certain conceptual devices and terms having theoretical significance. Quite a few of these terms have been introduced very recently in the Social Sciences, and they have still to achieve a degree of exactitude in their meanings and connotations. They are used by different Western social scientists in different ways.

In order to make some acquaintance of different uses and connotations of these terms as well as of the extent of variations of the related theories, a number of theories and definitions are introduced in the following pages.

As a matter of fact, these theories and definitions have been presented by some of the known scholars who followed different theoretical and methodological approaches. Therefore, it is very necessary here to bring to the attention that, except in the cases that are mentioned, the general orientation of this study should not be identified with any of the theories reproduced in this part. Thus, we reiterate that the purpose of reproducing these theories is to make the readers familiar with the concepts and the related researches. At the end of each part, we have briefly stated the scope of the meaning in which these terms are used in this work.

1.1.a) **Messianism, Millenarism or Chiliasm**

The word "Messian", the hellenized form of Hebrew "Mashiah", literally means "the anointed one", i.e. "the chosen". Originally the word "millenarian" referred to the belief, on the authority of Revelation XX 4 - 6,
that after His second coming, 1000 years before the last judgement, Christ would establish a kingdom on earth. The term millenarian is used by sociologists, anthropologists and historians to connotate universal phenomena, namely the religious movements that aimed at imminent, total, ultimate worldly collective salvation.

There has been some attempt to study Messianic movements from three major perspectives, namely typological, socio-psychological and socio-historical.

To have an idea as to what kinds of typologies have been made, we may reproduce those presented by Shepperson and Wilson.

Shepperson makes a distinction between pre-millenial and post-millenial movements. According to him most of the tribal movements are pre-millenial in the sense that they are usually pessimistic about the efficacy of human agencies with regard to bring about change in the situation. They also do not believe that the things could change gradually. They reflect a conviction that social transformation can only come about by cataclysmic means. The post-millenial are those movements which Western Judeo-Christian movements consider that the millenium will result from the efforts of agencies at present at work in the world.¹


Wilson makes a distinction between a Millenarian movement and the organized religions. According to him the Millenarian movements emphasize the ever-changing and "this worldly" aims, whereas the organized religions are conservative and "other worldly" in their orientations.

It would be instructive to present Wilson's classification of religion, which also includes Millenarian movements, to make his point clearer:

1. Collectivistic-other-worldly, like the traditional religions.
2. Individualistic-other-worldly, like Christian evangelical sects.
3. Collectivistic-this-worldly, like millenarian movements.
4. Individualistic-this-worldly, like gnostic sects.\(^1\)

Among those who studied the Messianic movements from a socio-psychological perspective Aberle and Sierksma are prominent.

Aberle, using the framework of Relative Deprivation Theories, argues that the feelings of relative deprivation which people experience are at the basis of the religious movements in general and Messianic movement in particular. These feelings of deprivation result from the discrepancy which one experiences between his legitimate expectations and unfavourable reality.

The people who feel deprived, consequently, withdraw themselves from the active productive life and

look forward for a change in the existing situation through super-natural powers.\textsuperscript{2}

Sierksma, who uses the terminology of clinical psychology, suggests "neurosis" as the cause of Messianism. While doing so, he is not using the terms like "neurosis" as "a more or less literary metaphor," but it is also "an attempt to give an exact diagnosis."\textsuperscript{2}

Sierksma emphasizes the implications of socio-psychological and socio-psychiatric factors for Messianic movement. For him "acculturation produces socially disintegrating and individually neuroticizing effects. The resulting movements of social unrest are of diverse character. One type of movement (i.e., Messianic sensu stricto) expects the end of the old and the beginning of a new world as an event that is basically independent of man, at best man can prepare its advent by religious, namely symbolic, activity."\textsuperscript{3}

Those who adopted typological approach believed that by formulating typologies they can provide better conceptual and epistemological clarifications and more knowledge of the phenomena under study. But sometimes such an exercise proves to be counterproductive.


\textsuperscript{2} R.J. Zwi Werblowsky: A New Heaven and New Earth: Considering Primitive Messianism. In: History and Religions, Vol. 5, 1965, p. 166. Cohn writes: "As one's mind ranges from the Skoptsi to the Apapokura-Guarani one is compelled, rather, to consider the psychic prerequisites for these movements, i.e., common emotional needs of those who participate in them." (Cohn, Medieval Millenarism, p. 42)

\textsuperscript{3} Zwi Werblowsky: A New Heaven and New Earth, p. 179.
because different researchers formulate different "types", "classes" and "sub-classes" of the same phenomena, based on their theoretical and methodological pre-suppositions. In that situation there is more confusion than clarity in knowing the phenomena. When one attempts typological cataloguing emphatically (Zvi Werblowsky calls it "a favourite pastime" game,\(^1\)) one is very much likely to neglect the defect or undermine certain important aspects of the movements. However, this is not to deny the analytical significance of typological exercises. The typological approach if used with certain precautions is abundantly rewarding and so we have followed it in this work to some extent.

The socio-psychological approach is also criticized for its inherent tendency to overlook the causes. In addition to that, according to McCarthy-Mayer Zald, a number of empirical researches show no or little confirmation of the relation between deprivation and social movements.\(^2\) Another problem arises with regard to the measurement of expectations. As the expectations vary from case to case, they can not be objectively and scientifically measured. Similarly personal and neurotic factors in acculturation should not be emphasized due to the fact that "not all religious movements are begun by individual founders and not all are related to acculturative phenomena".\(^3\)


The social historical approach has been very profitably used in the study of social movements by Lanternari, Cohn, Werner and others.

Since we have found social historical approach quite useful for the study of Iranian Social Movements, we have adopted it in this study.

Moreover, the social historical approach can be supplemented by other two approaches mentioned earlier. We have also, to a very limited extent, used typological and socio-psychological investigation methods as supplementary devices.

Now we would like to focus our attention on the meaning and connotation of the term Millenarian, as well as the factors contributing to the emergence of millenarian movements.

Cohn defines millenarian as any religious movement inspired by the phantasy of a salvation. He enumerates the ideas which are involved in the concept of millenium. According to him, a millenium is:

a) Collective, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a group
b) Terrestrial, in the sense that it is to be realised on this earth and not in some other-worldly heaven
c) Imminent, in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly
d) Total, in the sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth, so that the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present but perfection itself
e) Accomplished by agencies which are consciously regarded as supernatural.¹

¹Cohn: Medieval Millenarism, p. 31.
Some authors tend to make distinction between millenary cults and religious movements. However, Mair does not believe that a sharp distinction should be made either between millenary cults and religious movements which do not promise the immediate coming of the millennium or between them and the cults which limit their activities to healing and the detection of witches. In any culture area millenary, healing and witchfinding cults will be found to have common elements of miracle, revelation and ritual.\(^1\)

It is generally taken as granted by people, including many social scientists, that the millenium is the creation of the phantasy of the leader of these movements alone. But this is a mistaken view, because the leader cannot translate his ideas into a movement unless he finds supporters for them among the people. The people support or accept those ideas which are in correspondence with their needs and desires.

Mair rightly observes: "The ideal world must be what most people desire, and the explanation must be in line with current explanations of misfortune and disappointments".\(^2\)

We have already stated that millenium is a reflection of the desires of the people who participate in millenarian movement. It would mean that the leaders of these movements do not paint the millenium according to their phantasy. Then a very important question arises as to what role do the leaders play.


\(^2\) Mair: op. cit., p. 124.
There is a disagreement among the scholars about the significance of the leaders in the creation or in the development of Millenarian movements. Some lay a great emphasis on the need for a talented leader and argue that such leaders play a crucial role. Others are of the opinion that it is the socio-economic factors which determine the destiny of these movements. For example, Mead draws our attention to the importance of leaders' role in these movements, although she does not totally undermine the significance of socio-economic conditions and the appropriate historical situation in this regard.¹

A disagreement exists also between Cohn and Werner over this point. In Cohn's view the formation of millenial movements depends on more or less psychopathic individuals, who can sense in advance the approaching tension in society and seize the opportunity to utilise the situation as leaders.² This view is rejected by Werner who believes that it is an appropriate socio-economic situation which makes it possible for the leaders to emerge.³ However, both Cohn and Werner see social and economic factors as the main causes of millenarian movements.

Cohn, in his study of millenarism in medieval Europe concludes that the formation of such movements

follows the accumulating tension arising due to certain social and economic causes.\textsuperscript{1} The same view is upheld by Werner who adds that wherever these Millenarian movements developed, their aims and objectives were not always Chiliasm. That is to say that some of these movements aimed at the realistic destruction of the existing order, without having millenarian expectations.\textsuperscript{2} He thus emphasizes that Chiliasm was not the only ideology of the late medieval time.\textsuperscript{3}

The references made here to the studies of the medieval millenarian movements in Europe assumes a special significance for us because of the similarities which exist between these movements and those which emerged in Islamic societies.\textsuperscript{4}

According to Hobabawm millenarian movements in Europe have three main characteristics:

1. A profound and total rejection of the present, supposedly evil world and a passionate longing for another and better one, in a word, revolutionism,

2. A fairly standardized "ideology" of the Chiliastic type,

\begin{enumerate}
\item Cohn: The Pursuit of the Millennium, p. 26ff.
\item Werner: Popular Ideologies in Late Medieval Europe, p. 361. Werner gives the example of the Ciompi in Florence in 1378, in which no element of the Chiliastic expectations existed, and no religious ideology. "And yet prophecies were current in Florence for telling the destruction of tyrants and traitors by the popolo minuto".
\item Ibid., p. 362
\end{enumerate}
3. They share a fundamental vagueness about the actual way in which the new society will be brought about.¹

It is true that no millenarian movement would be able to succeed to achieve all its aims and objectives. However, in history there were instances of millenarian movements materializing at least some of their objectives.

One important observation that can be made here is that the millenarian movements which completely failed in realizing their objectives ended up in assuming different forms such as the Creation of Millenarian Cults, withdrawal of the followers from their original way of life and the like.

Mair for example states:

"After a period of extravagant collective expectation people lower their sights and return to pre-occupation with personal problems of sickness or failure in their own enterprises; or as their understanding of their situation increases, they see it in more realistic terms, and look to solutions in which supernatural intervention plays a smaller part or no part at all."²


Similarly in the case of each unsuccessful millenarian movement a kind of explanation is produced for the failure of the movement.

Hobsbawm has said that defeat of the millenarian movements "produces a body of doctrine to explain why the millennium has not come and the old world can therefore expect to go on for a while".1

Finally, it is necessary to mention again that in this study though the abovementioned terms are only originally Christian and all are used as general terms connotating similar phenomena in any other culture. Therefore, by the term "Messiah" we mean any supernatural personality who is expected to appear on the earth. "Messianic movements" are those in which this expectation plays a considerable role. "Millenium" is the period of the rule of the Saviour, who after his return defeats the oppressors and establishes a new order and rules for a certain period of time. Although among different movements this period is believed to be about one thousand years, we do not take it as granted, so it is usually supposed that the period of millenium ends on the Day of Resurrection. The term "Chiliasm" and other words derived from it, are the Greek versions of the term millenarianism, and so both the terms are used synonymously.

1Hobsbawm: Primitive Rebels, p. 63.
Nationalism and Nativism

As we will see later on, the orientation of the Iranian social movements has been predominantly millenaristic. Similarly, nationalism and nativism have also been more or less significant elements in the ideologies of these movements. There has been a great deal of confusion over the connotative differences between these two terms.

As the term nationalism is quite familiar, we do not intend to reproduce its definitions. However, even the term "nationalism" which has been so frequently used has also become controversial. For example, Kohn who has done scholarly work in the field of nationalism and has devoted his entire life to this subject, defines nationalism as:

"a state of mind, permeating the large majority of a people, and claiming to permeat all its members; it recognizes the nation-state as the ideal form of political organization and the nationality as the source of all creative cultural energy and economic well-being. The supreme loyalty of man is therefore due to his nationality, as his own life is supposedly rooted in and made possible by its welfare."\(^1\)

This definition of nationalism is not obviously apt for the phenomenon of nationalism in the ex-colonial third world countries. This is mainly because the notion of nationalism there is not an indigenous one but the one imported by their Westernized elite classes. The idea of nationalism has not permeated through the large majority of their people. Even today, the supreme loyalty in these regions is not nationalistic but of religion, kinship, etc.

We would like to give here the meaning of the term "nationalism" as is used by us.

\(^{1}\)Hans Kohn: The idea of Nationalism. A Study in Its Origins and Background, New York, 1948, p. 16.
Contrary to the primitive feelings of the man for his natural surroundings and for family which Nietzsche calls as "Nachstenliebe", Fernstenliebe\(^1\) or nationalism is the product of historical factors. Some of the historical factors integrate people together by developing a social process that brings a certain group of people under the banner of "we" feeling among them as distinguishable and opposed to the "others".

Mühlmann, making similar definition goes a little further and points out that this level of "we" feeling reaches such a level as to promote aggression against the "others". Mühlmann defines nationalism as:

"die dogmatisch begründete Horizon-Verengung einer Gruppe, die sich durch einen Volksmythos in einer bestimmten 'Wir'-Einstellung verbunden fühlt, mit dem Korrelat der Bereitschaft zur Aggression gegen die "Anderen", die ausserhalb dieses Horizontes befindlichen Gruppen"\(^2\).

Mühlmann also considers nativism to be a forerunner of this nationalism.

The findings of Balandier seems to be a proof to Mühlmann's statement. Balandier has observed that many nativistic movements born in colonial societies have formed the basis for the first nationalist parties in the post-colonial periods.\(^3\) But as we will see later on, there are examples which both proved and disproved this assertion made by Mühlmann. Therefore, we can only state that some of the nativistic movements may become the forerunners of nationalistic movements.

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\(^1\)Friedrich Nietzsche: Also sprach Zarathustra, Stuttgart, 1941, pp. 64 – 66.


As against "nationalism" the term "Nativism" is of recent origin. The Term "nativism" was first suggested by Ralph Linton to indicate all kinds of socio-religious movement in traditional societies.¹

Linton defines a nativistic movement as "Any conscious, organized attempt on the part of society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture."² He divides nativistic movements according to their nature. A movement may be revivalistic or perpetuative:
a) Revivalistic nativism is a movement which attempts to revive extinct or at least moribund elements of a culture.
b) Perpetuative nativism is a movement which attempts to perpetuate the status quo.

These two are not mutually exclusive. Each includes some elements of the other. Therefore, the distinction between the two depends on what out of these aspects is emphasised.³ These are further divided into:
1. Revivalistic-magical
2. Revivalistic-rational
3. Perpetuative-magical
4. Perpetuative-rational⁴

Magical nativism is comparable in many respects with Messianic movements.

"In such movements moribund elements of culture are not revived for their own sake or in anticipation of practical advantages from the element themselves. Their revival is part of

² Ibid. p. 230
³ Ibid. p. 231
⁴ ...
a magical formula designed to modify the society's environment in ways which will be favourable to it.  

In contrast, rational nativism contains more rational elements. Magical nativistic movements differ from ordinary Messianic and millennial movements in only two respects: 

a) Magical nativism is oriented towards the past and the symbols are more or less familiar. 

b) In the case of Messianic movements the millenial condition is presented as something new and unique and the symbols manipulated to bring it about are new and unfamiliar.

Kobben criticises Linton's abovementioned fourfold typology as being "completely impracticable". He also points out that a large number of movements fall outside these four types.

For Linton, the cause of nativistic movements commonly found is generally the situation of cultural inequality between the societies that have come in contact. He further adds that "such inequality may derive either from the attitudes of the societies involved or from actual situation of dominance and submission." Accordingly, where this contact involves political dominance the following contact groups are possible:

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1 Ralph Linton: Nativistic Movements, p. 232.


3 Ralph Linton, op. cit., p. 234.
1. Politically dominant and Culturally superior
2. Politically dominant and Culturally inferior
3. Politically dominated and Culturally superior
4. Politically dominated and Culturally inferior

When these four groups come together, four different contact situations are created. Each case will have a different consequence. It may lead to a nativistic movement among both dominant and dominated, or it may result in assimilation. In addition to these it is possible that both politically dominant and dominated consider themselves culturally superior or inferior. It is necessary to mention here that the feelings of both superiority and inferiority are the states of mind and do not need to have any material basis. Again, two groups may come into contact without there being a political domination. "Thus the Japanese during the early period of European contact acquiesced in the European's estimate of his own superiority and borrowed European culture elements eagerly and indiscriminately although maintaining national independence."

Laternari takes issue with Linton's concept of nativistic movements. He accuses Linton for emphasizing the conservative role of nativistic movements and for seeing them as attempts to preserve group's socio-cultural identity. He argues: "By emphasizing backward looking aspects of the movements Linton overlooked their regenerative, transformative components." He further points out that Linton while in "breaking down the movements' unity and classifying some of their components,"

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1Linton, Nativistic Movement, p. 235.
2Laternari: Nativistic and Socio-religious Movements, p. 469.
missed their diachronic and polyvalent nature.\textsuperscript{1}

Kobben, who rejects Linton's fourfold classification, distinguishes the types of prophetic movements according to their contents and forms in the following way:

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<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Eschatological-nativistic</td>
<td>a) Syncretic</td>
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<td>2. Eschatological-adoptive</td>
<td>b) Ecstatic</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Against (foreign) domination</td>
<td>c) Immonoclastic</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Against witchcraft, sorcery (sickness)</td>
<td>d) Led by prophet and/or organised</td>
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<td>5. Separatistic</td>
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The major difference between nativistic and adoptive movements, according to Kobben, is that the former is based on a passionate longing for life as it was before the invasion, with the expectation that this will be miraculously restored, and the latter, in contrast, expresses an ardent desire for the new culture or at least its material aspects.\textsuperscript{2}

In his analysis of a nativistic movement in Western Siberia, Krader states that nativism "is never a primary response: it necessarily occurs late in the history of contact and invasion."\textsuperscript{3} Accordingly "nativism is generally Messianic; the mystical nativisms are always so, and the more realistic ones often. All nativisms are cults, whether Messianic or not, mystical or not. It is only in the Messianic-mystical that the element of cult achieves a deeper function than in the realistic."\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}Lenternari: Nativistic and Socio-religion Movements, p. 489.

\textsuperscript{2}Kobben: Prophetic Movements..., p. 118.


\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 290.
There has been also attempt to study nativistic movement from a socio-psychological perspective. For example, Nash makes a hypothesis in the field of Relative Deprivation Theories. He regards nativistic movements as people's reactions against psychological deprivation. This occurs in a situation in which one is neither satisfied with the traditional culture nor gains any satisfaction from accepting the new culture. The important factor in creating such a situation is not the rejection of the alien culture, but the failure of this new culture to fulfil the aroused expectations.  

Laternari points out that nativistic elements appear from the situations of acculturation, colonialism, oppression, discrimination, social conflicts, etc.  

The general characteristics of the nativistic movements as observed by Lanterari are also found in the Messianic movements. According to Lanterari, eschatology, salvationism, communitarianism and mystic enthusiasm are some of the characteristics which are often found in the nativistic movements of tribal societies. The same are also evident in the medieval and modern Millenarisms and Messianisms of Europe and the U.S.A.  

In the study of Iranian social movements we require the concepts of nationalism and nativism as


2Lanterari: Nativistic and Socio-religious Movements, p. 487.

3Ibid., p. 488
analytical tools. By nationalism here we do not mean the ideology imported by the Westernized elite classes of the contemporary underdeveloped societies. The sense in which we use this term for the study of Iranian movements refers to feelings of unity among a group of people bound together through common language, history, culture and above all, common political and economic interests. These people share the same destiny at a peculiar historical time which made them absolutize the "we" concept against "others". These "others" at that point of time were not only of alien culture, but also were posing direct danger to the vested interests. Therefore, we understand nationalism as a tool of a group of people who attempt to recruit members to their rank by emphasizing some common and widespread aspects of culture. These aspects are used to create basis for the ideology and moral strength of the group and also to increase their struggle potentiality in order to be able to retain or achieve power and advantages. This is the case both in racist nationalism or anti-colonial freedom fights.

By "nativism" we mean in-group feelings similar to nationalism. Here too, "we" aims at the destruction of "others" in order to achieve power and advantages. For us a main difference between these two is that "nationalism" is secular or at least pretends to be secular, but "nativism" is a part of Millenarism. At least in the case of Iranian movement, nativism did not independently exist. Another main difference between these two is that among nativistic movements, the final loyalty which bound the people together was not ethnic or cultural but was derived from a common belief in the establishment of "a heaven on earth" with the help of "a supernatural being."
Therefore, nativism could cross ethnic and cultural boundaries and we can claim that its horizons were much wider than those of nationalism by being able to incorporate different people. These nativist movements also shared "hatred" toward "others" when these "others" were identified as the oppressors.

A main characteristic of nativism is, as Linton puts it, the attempts by the members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of the culture.

But we should add to Linton's definition the point that the revival of a selected aspects of the culture is an effective method to create a closed society more clearly distinguished from "others". It is through this channel that in the Iranian case the concept of nativism was connected to the concept of Charismatic community. They considered themselves different not only internally by way of their knowledge or access to "the ultimate truth" or through the charismatic leader, but also externally due to their cultural peculiarities.
Revolution and Rebellion

When we concern ourselves with the study of Millenarian movements, we are required to think in term of revolution.

Are the Millenarian movements revolutionary movements? Millenarian movements generally aim at destroying the existing social order and introducing a new one. Can we claim that these movements tend to create revolution? We can answer this question only when we know what a revolution is, and consequently we have to deal with the problem of definitions.

For Marx, "revolution in general - the overthrow of the existing political and the dissolution of existing social relations - is a political act", and revolution "requires this political act as it needs the overthrow and the dissolution."¹

Whilst some writers have used the term "revolution" in the limited sense of a political event, others have extended its usage to refer to the events in the field of religion, economics, industry and the like.

For Le Bon, political revolution is the least important and the true revolutions are "those which transform the destinies of people."²

Le Bon, in his classic book on the psychology of revolution, pays his attention not to the external changes but to such abstract states of mind as ideas and


beliefs. He defines revolution as "all sudden transformations, or transformations apparently sudden, whether of beliefs, ideas, or doctrines." Moreover, in this definition, Le Bon puts emphasis on the suddenness of the happening. This suddenness in the happening of the events is also made a distinguishing feature of revolution by Fairchild. He defines revolution as "a sweeping, sudden change in the societal structure, or in some important features of it." To the suddenness Hyndman adds violence. He believes that in a revolution, sudden change is accompanied by, more or less, violence. Thus he sees revolution as a sudden and more or less violent change involving all aspects of life. However, he puts a greater emphasis on economic change as well as its mental appreciation by the people. In his view, "revolution, in its complete sense, means a thorough economic, social, and political change in any great community." On the contrary, Yoder considers revolution as a process which occurs far below the surface of social life. In his view, "the real revolution is the change in the social attitude and values basic to the traditional institutional order."

4Ibid., p. 12.
Therefore, we can observe that there are many differences in opinion as to where the change should occur. In general, revolution can be viewed both as cause and as effect. Even though the dynamic implications of revolution for a society are often emphasized, it must be stated that no revolution can bring about changes in all the aspects of human life. Again, even though it is repeatedly argued that the revolutionary events take place in an exploding manner, all of a sudden and within a short period of time, it must be remembered that the chain of events leading to this explosion is in the process since long before the actual explosion takes place.

Revolution should make its maximum effect on basic aspects of life and should cover a wide spectrum of societies' population.

Social life is a process of continual change. If the change is hindered, either due to outside factors or deliberately by a group of privileged people whose interests lie in maintaining the status quo, the pressures are accumulated and the change takes place in a violent and revolutionary form. It may be of much sociological significance to realize that the aims of millenarian movements are revolutionary in nature. Most of the definitions of revolution fit in the framework of millenarian movements. The millenarian movements envisage to bring about a new world by changing all aspects of human life. That is to say that the change is basic, total, material and spiritual. The change is envisaged as being sudden and violent.
e) Religion

Millenarian movements have religious context. There exist several points which connect millenarian movements to religion. Their ideologies are usually the offshoots and modifications of established religions, and because of that they are opposed by the orthodoxy. In some cases orthodoxy legitimizes and supports the existing order which the millenarian movements want to destroy. Moreover, there may be transformation or development of millenarian movements into religious cults, sects and even an orthodox religion.

Therefore, it seems necessary to pay some attention to a scientific discussion of religion and the course of its development in order to increase our understanding of this very important aspect of human life. It need not be emphasized that there was a great deal of identity between religion and magic in the primitive societies. Religion then played an all-pervasive role, touching different aspects of man's life. Magic was used for many social and practical purposes. For instance, "the belief in black magic (might) exert some influence in re-pressing anti-social attitudes and activities."¹ The extensive use of some kind of sorcery was directed at socially beneficial ends.² Among the simple constructed societies "the medicine man and shaman use the magical ceremonies as well as the beliefs as therapeutic measures in treatment of various ailments."³

²Ibid.
³Ibid., pp. 500 – 501.
From the early stages man has believed that there is a power which exists everywhere and in everything. According to Ogburn and Nimkoff this was a common belief among most of the primitive tribes. But different tribes gave different names to this power. Some called it "mana"\(^1\) and the Eastern Algonquins called it "manitou", while some of the plains tribes referred to it as "wakan".\(^2\) This is different from "animism" according to which all natural objects and phenomena such as trees and rocks are alive i.e. animated and which has a more specific nature than "mana".

Radin points out that all the great historical religions show definite indication of having passed through the stage of "animism".\(^3\) Both polytheism and monotheism exist among pre-literate people, while among some of them there is a hierarchy of lesser gods headed by an All-Father, others such as the Amazulus of South Africa, and the Kagaba of South America have actual monotheism.\(^4\)

Ogburn and Nimkoff state: "Perplexed and sore beset because of a world he does not understand, man in his quest for certainty turns to religion, a complex of beliefs, emotional attitudes, and practices regarding the ultimate meaning of life."\(^5\)

\(^1\)This is a name given to the super-natural power by Melanesians and Polynesians.


\(^4\)Ibid., pp. 351 - 357.

Durkheim, who reacted against the utilitarian, individualistic and rationalist orientation of the earlier social scientists, put an emphasis on the moral dimension of society. For him religion is a force that brings about moral integration. Accordingly it is through the religious rites that the solidarity of society is ensured. The rituals in primitive religions fulfill the need of the community for integration and promote a feeling of solidarity which otherwise is weakened by the particular way of life led by primitive people.\(^1\)

The social function of religion is highly important. It includes the provision of goals and means for promoting group survival and stability, and enforces social norms and the sense of community.\(^2\)

In the view of Spiro, religion is "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated super-human beings",\(^3\) by "super-human beings", he means "any beings believed to possess power greater than man, who can work good or evil on man."\(^4\) And Bellah defines religion as "a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate condition of existence."\(^5\) Accordingly, religion has followed an evolutionary development.

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\(^1\) Emile Durkheim: The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Glencoe, 1947.

\(^2\) Ogburn/Nimkoff: Sociology, p. 599.


\(^4\) Ibid., p. 98.

Bellah identifies the different stages of religious evolution as follows:

a) primitive
b) archaic
c) historic
d) early modern
e) modern

"A primitive man can only accept the world in its manifold giveness. Archaic man can through sacrifice fulfill his religious obligations and attain peace with the gods. But the historic religions promise man for the first time that he can understand the fundamental structure of reality and through salvation participate actively in it."

An important characteristic of what Bellah calls the historic religion is the religious rejection of the world and the negative evaluation of man and society. The historic religion is based on the idea of two worlds and this idea was retained in the early modern religions. But in the historic religions, it was believed that salvation could be achieved through withdrawal from this world whereas in early modern religions, salvation is believed to be realisable in the midst of worldly activity. Thus in the course of religious evolution "at each stage the freedom of personality and society has increased relative to the environing conditions."

The study made by Douglass and Brunner suggests that in contemporary industrial societies, the religious institutions perform more social functions than

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1 Bellah: Religious Evolution, p. 361.
2 Ibid., p. 367.
3 Ibid., p. 374.
spiritual. The church has been adjusting itself to the changes in society and intellectual climate.\textsuperscript{1}

Contemporary sociologists and anthropologists such as Weber, Cohn, Burridge, etc., suggest that the great religions have their origins in socio-religious movements and "they were linked to the particular conditions of crisis of the societies in which they were born".\textsuperscript{2}

To conclude this discussion we may note that religion has at least two main aspects, namely ideas and beliefs, i.e., the religious ideas and beliefs about the super-natural power, which seem to have existed since the primitive time, and secondly, the functions which it performs.

As has been suggested, the great religions are originated from millenarian movements, but it is the functional aspect of religion which may have its roots there. That is to say, religion through its functional aspect, and the latter through some kinds of social movements (e.g., Messianic), has been able to adjust itself to changing environmental conditions and socio-economic relations.

\textsuperscript{1}H. Paul Douglass and Edmund de S. Brunner: The Protestant Church as a Social Institution, New York, 1972 (\textsuperscript{1}1935).

\textsuperscript{2}Laternari: Nativistic and.... p. 483.
1.2. **Iranian Social Movements** and **Sociological Investigations**

As is the case with most of the Asian countries, the Iranian society, especially after Islam, has not been sufficiently studied by the social scientists. This is due to various reasons: The prevailing socio-political situation in the last centuries, did not provide the necessary conditions for the development of a group of native scientists in general, to perform this task.

Due to the isolation of Persian and other Iranian languages and inaccessibility of the sources to the most European scholars, the study of Iran was confined to a group of Orientalists whose main scientific instrument was some knowledge of the language, which was not sufficient for the study of the existing (and mostly unpublished) documents. Although Iran has an old documenting history and chronicle writing, because all the historians were directly paid by the rulers for the accomplishment of their books, the materials provided by them is completely one sided. However, these court history books are not found to be of less importance, when they are studied scientifically and systematically.

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1. The Pre-Islamic Iran has been to some extent subject to more scientific investigations in the last century especially by German scholars.

2. Cf. Edward W. Said: Orientalism, London, 1978. Marx and Engels recognized the inadequacies of the available Western works on Asia, which they had been using. Engels decided to learn Persian to be able to go straight to Oriental sources. But this was of minimal use as Persian sources were unavailable and those which were available were of no use to them. Cf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Briefe: Januar 1852 bis Dezember 1855, In: Werke, Vol. 28, Berlin, 1963, pp. 260 – 261.
More difficult is the study of the Millenarian movements which were viewed with prejudice and were even falsified by the court historians and chroniclers. However, the study of the available sources written by the followers of these movements or even objective scholars, is a difficult task, because both the philosophers and heterodox teachers who recorded about these movements lived under constant fear and persecution.¹

Under this situation of fear and persecution a writing technique was developed through which the writer could convey a double meaning. Moreover, "groups like the Sufis and Isma'lis used various levels of teaching, in which the least initiated were taught something differing little from orthodoxy, while at the highest level the most unorthodox ideas might be taught."²

This was the continuation of the Avicennist philosophic tradition which entered and survived twentieth century Iran.³ "An esoteric book contains two teachings: a popular teaching of an edifying character, which is in

¹ According to Leo Strauss, a glance at the biographies of the philosophers such as Avicenna and Averroes is sufficient to show that they were witnesses of, or suffered persecution. (Leo Strauss: Persecution and the Art of Writing, Glencoe, 1952, p. 33).


³ Gobineau refers to such a tradition in the nineteenth century. He notes that the Sufis of his day, would pull back from an extreme position, when they feel that their listeners are shocked, but would advance to more outrageous heresies with an apt pupil. As Keddie mentions despite Gobineau errors, he shows here the real nature of Iranian intellectual life.
the foreground, and a philosophic teaching concerning
the most important subject, which is indicated only
between the lines.\(^1\)

Despite its importance a comprehensive
sociological study of Iranian millenarian movements
is non-existent, mainly due to the abovementioned
difficulties.

1.3. Bibliographical Sources

Fortunately, since the beginning of this century,
some exploratory studies of Iranian history and society
have been undertaken, although not from purely
sociological perspective. They were of immense value
while studying the Iranian millenarian movements in
this work.

In the following paragraphs a brief review of
some of these studies has been made.

An important contribution has been made by
Ann Lambton, namely "Landlord and Peasant in Persia"
(London, 1953), in the field of Iranian economy. In
her richly detailed work she draws a vivid picture of
Iranian economic life and archaic survival of the

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\(^1\) Leo Strauss: Persecution and the Art of Writing, p. 36.
Simmel writes: "We must take care not to be misled, by
the ethically negative value of lying, into error
about the direct positive sociological significance of
untruthfulness, as it appears in shaping certain
concrete situations. Moreover, lying in connection with
the elementary sociological fact here in question—viz.
the limitation of the knowledge of one associate by
another — is only one of the possible means, the
positive and aggressive technique, so to speak, the
purpose of which in general is obtained through sheer
secrecy and concealment." (George Simmel: The
Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies. In: The
American Journal of Sociology, Vol. XI, 1906,
pp. 448 – 449).
system of agrarian relations across the ages.

Edward Brown's four volume work, "A Literary History of Persia" (Cambridge, 1902, 1906, 1924), is a classic historical investigation which contains documents about the Iranian millenarian movements. He also has other publications such as: "A Traveller's Narrative" (Cambridge 1891), "The Persian Revolution" (Cambridge, 1910), etc., on the theme of Iranian millenarian movements.

The investigations by the scholars of the later generation such as "Mazdak" (Prague, 1957) and "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Mazdakismus" (Prague, 1977) by Otakar Klima and a number of investigations about the new periods of Iranian history by Nikki Meddie are of special significance.

Among the classic Persian sources are Afgáal al-Dín Sádr Esfahání's translation of Abu'l Fath Sharestání's heretographical book "Al-Melal wa'n-Mehal" (Tehran, 1321 A.H.) and the Gájár's heretographer E'tegádo Saltánéh "Moda'iyan-e nobovat" (Tehran, 1343 A.H.). The former contains information about the early movements and the latter about the movements till the Gájár period. An important book "Siyyasat námeh" (Tehran, 1334 A.H.) written by the Saljuq minister Nézám ol-íslámlí provides the views of the ruling classes about these movements and another book "Sáfar námeh" (printed in Berlin, 1964) written by the famous Ismaili propagandist and philosopher, Násar Khósrou, provides a picture of the movements as seen by one of the leaders of such a movement.

Fortunately there is much more information available about the Ahi-e Haqq movement, which is taken
as a case study for research in this work, than expected at the beginning of the investigation. The community has been known to the European orientalists since 19th century, through some travellers’ accounts, and especially Rawlinson’s "Note on a March from Zohab to Khuzistan" (London, 1839). The first notable work about the Ahl-e Haqq community and their religious doctrine was by Comte Gobineau, as a part of his book "Trois ans en Asie" (Paris, 1859).

In 1902 Vladimir Minorsky found some important Ahl-e Haqq texts in Tehran which were published later under the title "Materiaux pour servir a l’Etude des Groyances de la secte perseene dite Ahle-Haqq" in Moscow in 1911. From 1902 to 1920 he was in communication with some members of the community, one of whom led a Messianic revolt in Mazandaran. The results of Minorsky’s research during this period were published in 1920 and 1921 under the title "Note sur la secte des Ahle-Haqq". Similarly, another Russian scholar, Vladimir Ivenov published some important Ahl-e Haqq texts in Bombay in 1948 and 1950 and the results of his research were published in 1953.

For the study of the Ahl-e Haqq movement almost all the available material was examined, among them the two books which were written by the leaders of the community:

a) "Shahname-ye Haqqisat" (Tehran, Paris, 1966) by Hājj Ne‘matollāh Jayhunābādī which is a traditional history of the community.

b) "Borhan ol-haqq" written by Nur Ali Elāhi and completed in 1962 (Tehran, 1343 A.H.), which is of significance to the study of the Ahl-e Haqq rituals.
1.4. Methodology and Outline

This study of Iranian social movements has been done from a social historical perspective. The material for the research was collected from variety of sources. Among these sources we can mention religious scriptures in the original languages or translations. The historical documents have been directly referred to and they have also been compared with the studies made of these documents by Western scholars. Some earlier studies about the Western regions of Iran in the fields of linguistics, geography, economic, anthropology, ethnology, etc., have been carefully studied. Travellers' reports written by European and American travellers, missionaries, as well as the native travellers also have been aptly utilized.

The millenaristic character of various Iranian movement has been studied with the help of typological devices.

A particular movement called Ahl-e Haqq has been investigated in depth as a case study. For this case study also we have referred to various sources. Among them we may mention the materials which have been collected particularly by Russian Orientalists who have also made useful interpretations of the available documents. In the recent decades several books have been written about the Ahl-e Haqq and their rites by the native scholars (which were obtained with a great difficulty) were examined. We can make a humble claim here that we have referred to almost all the available material about the Ahl-e Haqq. In addition to all these secondary literature a number of the members of the Ahl-e Haqq were personally interviewed. This
exercise was extremely useful for the examination and comparisons of the written documents. These interviews were also very useful to make us familiar with the outlook and world view of the members of such communities.

This work is divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with the research theme in general. Some of the key concepts used as analytical tools are also discussed in the first chapter. In this chapter we have described some of our bibliographical resources and explained the transliteration system which has been implied in our research.

The second chapter gives a picture of socio-economic and geographical background in which the movements had developed. The socio-economic stagnation of Iran so far has been explained in terms of a set of existing theories such as Asiatic Mode of Production, Hydraulic Despotism and the absence of Protestant ethic and the like. However, we have argued in this chapter that the traditional socio-economic backwardness of Iran has been as a result of a historical vicious circle, namely nomadic invasion, establishment of foreign rules, their decline, followed by anarchy and again nomadic invasions. This vicious circle was at least partly determined by geographical and locational factors, that caused stagnation and consequently oppression and exploitation of the poor. It has been argued here that the social, economic, historical and geographical factors are at the roots of these millenarian movements and that it would not be realistic to go into their casual analysis purely with psychological perspective.
In the third chapter an attempt is made to make a classification of the Iranian social movements in general and millenarian movements in particular in the context of their salient characteristics which simultaneously came to be a periodical divisions. In addition to that the movements have been divided into religious, non-religious, active and passive and division between millenarian and nationalistic movements has been made. We have also tried to bring out some of the common features of Iranian millenarian movements in order to describe them.

The class character of these movements is examined and attention is paid to the ideological modifications and strategical changes that had taken place when these movements attracted a considerable number of the members across the class lines.

In this chapter a casual analysis of the success or failure of different movements has been attempted. It was noted that those movements the leaders of which could mobilize resources, particularly in terms of mass support or utilization of their military capacities could only succeed.

With the view to bring out the nature of millenarian movements in Iran more pinpointedly, we have also briefly discussed three movements which are types by themselves, namely the nationalistic movements of the Sho'ubis and the movements led and participated by the people who have been described as "social bandits" as well as the movements of the Sufi mystics.

The fourth chapter is a case study of the Ahl-e Haqq movement. In this chapter an attempt is made to
describe the class background and the internal organization of the Ahl-e Haqq movement as a case of Millenarian movement. The Ahl-e Haqq is seen as a movement containing many features of other Iranian social movements. Its course of development was spread over a long period of time, during which many elements of other movements were adopted. The study of this movement, provides us clues and perspectives for understanding of the movements that had disappeared, and information about whose internal organization is not available.

The Ahl-e Haqq is closely related to the Baktashi of Turkey and Albania and the Druzes of Lebanon, whose political and sociological significance has been some what recognized in recent years.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the analytical discussion of the Millenarian movements. Our efforts were directed to arrive at a comprehensive argument about Iranian millenarian movements for the first time, we have tried to explain the factors and situations that have contributed to the emergence of the movements. The discussion in this chapter centres around: Development of Utopian ideas, dualism, development of the idea of "Perfect Man", Charismatic leader, charismatic community, nativism and nationalism, rituals, egalitarianism, nomadic millenarism, etc.

The sixth chapter is devoted to a short theoretical debate about different points which we have made in the earlier chapters.
1.5. Transliteration

The system of transliteration which has been adopted in this study is a modification of that adopted by the Royal Asiatic Society.¹

This system which has been used primarily to transliterate Arabic words, can not be used, without modifying it, for Persian words. As opposed to Arabic, the letters and are all pronounced alike in Persian, for which it is preferable to use the letter "z" with various diacritical marks.

There are other Arabic letters which have a similar pronunciation to Persian, as is the case of and which are represented here by "s", and are represented by t, and by "h", all are differentiated by diacritical marks.

The letter is represented by "v" for Persian words, as in the English words "value" or "vivid", and by "w" for Kurdish and Gurani words as in the English words "water" or "warm". The letter "u" is used to represent a vowel approximating to the vowel in the English word "root" and the German word "Buch" and the vowel "o" represents the vowel approximating to the vowel in the English word "book" and German word "Sonne". The letter "e" represents a vowel approximating to the vowel in the English word "bed" and German word "neit", when "e" precedes a "silent H" at the end of the word, "h" is not to be pronounced except when mentioned.

In order to have a uniformity in the transliteration system, even the already known conventional transliteration of the names of some authors have been changed, but its conventional form is mentioned in brackets. In case of Anglicized words the diacritic marks have not been used. In the case of the names of books and authors only, those which were originally written in Persian, Arabic or Kurdish have been transliterated according to the above system. In case of the sources which were originally written in European languages the Oriental names are kept as they were used in the original. Moreover, in the quotations and abstracts the original system has been adopted here.

**Vowels**

- **ə** as the vowel in the English word "bard".
- **ɛ** approximating to the vowel in the English word "bed".
- **æ** approximating to the vowel in the English word "bed".
- **o** approximating to the vowel in the English word "book".
as in the English word "John"
ch as in the English word "church"

kh pronounced like the sound represented in
German word "Buch".

d and (j) = z

r pronounced like the sound approximating the
Spanish letter "r"
zh like the sound represented by "j" in the
French word "jour"

like the glottal stop between the English
words India Office and the German word
"Feuer-alarm".

This sound does not occur in standard English
and approximates the sound represented by "r"
in northern German.

followed by "b" in the same word should be
read as "m" e.g., "Sambad" = "Sambad".

(1) as consonant = "v" for Persian words and
"w" for Arabic and Kurdish words.
(2) a vowel = "u", approximating to the vowel in the
English word "root".
(3) a diphthong = ou approximating to
the diphthong in the English word "no".

when "h" precedes "e" at the end of a word it
is a silent "h" and is not pronounced except
in the cases mentioned.

(1) a consonant = "y" (2) a vowel = "i", approx-
imating to the vowel in the English word
"bay"; or = "ai" approximating to the diphthong
in the English word "by" (3) the ezafeh after

I = "ye".