5. **CONDITIONS AND PROCESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRANIAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

At the centre of Iranian movements stands dualism, resulting from conflict. That is to say that the central ideological element of the Iranian social movements has always been dualism, the genasis of which can be traced to the perennial situation of conflict that characterizes the Iranian history. Zarathustra based the whole of his religious doctrine on this dualistic perspective. According to this perspective, there is a universal division of all the cosmic powers into positive and negative, both constantly struggling with each other. In the Zarathustra’s myth, right from the beginning we are confronted with a historical man, standing between these opposing powers. He has a choice to take either of the sides. This most pervasive doctrine can be considered as just reflecting the Iranian historical reality. Even during the very early period the Iranian people had been experiencing hardships caused by natural catastrophes, unfavourable climatic conditions, wild animals, and the enmity of the aboriginal population. To add to them came the brutality of nomadic raiders. In such situation

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3. Lambton: *Landlord and Peasant...*, p. 2; Abbeg: op. cit., p. 203. Many outbursts of millenarism in different parts of the world took place against the background of disaster. Barber’s view is that deprivation is caused due to a sudden and dramatic disaster (B. Barber: *Acculturation and Messianic Movements*, In: *American Sociological Review*, Vol. VI, 1941, pp. 663 - 668). But as will be explained later the Relative Deprivation theories fail to explain the causes and development of social movements.

this duality entered into the thought-world of Zarathustra, who was the spokesman of the sedentary population, and manifested itself in his dualistic perspective. The persistence of the conflict situation contributed not only to the development and survival of dualism, but also its penetration into the other parts of the world as well as different areas of life that had more or less similar conditions. In other words one can say, that the dualism assumes significance among Iranians not only due to the conflict between the man and his unfavourable natural surroundings, but also due to the dialectics that characterized their social-economic system. An added factor was the ever lasting conflict that ensued between the sedentary population and the invading nomadic tribes. This situation caused an intensified sense of insecurity in the minds of people. The conflict between nomadic and sedentary people was caused mainly due to the scarcity of resources of livelihood and heightened due to the ever increase in population of the nomads, who through their

1 Dualism existed among some other ancient people such as the Egyptians, Indians and Chinese. Heraclitus gave a new dimension to dualism in the Greek philosophy after his journey to Iran. He saw the world as a field of continuous struggle between antagonistic phenomena. The dualistic idea has entered from the ancient cultures into the system of thought of the neighbouring simple-structured societies whose antagonistic surrounding had prepared the ground for it.

superior military prowess were able to establish their political hegemony.

Since the victims of the situation were the people of the lower layers of the social pyramid such as the peasants and artisans\textsuperscript{1} they were the ones who suffered most from feelings of anxiety and insecurity. They also experienced other types of antagonism in their life situation such as the one between popular and official religions or the antagonism between the sharply divided socio-economic classes in Iranian society. Dualism and dialecticism which tend to provide simplified and optimistic solutions to complicated problems seemed to have appeared attractive and solace-giving to this people.\textsuperscript{2} It was Zarathustra, who probably for the first time in human history, gave doctrinal expression to dualism. His dualism gave man freedom of choice and brought him almost into a partnership with Ahuramazdā,\textsuperscript{3} and opened the gate for revolutionary ideas as well as the concept of the "Perfect Man". In other words, this dualism made it possible to conceive the idea of "Perfect Man". The individual who identifies himself with the Almighty (Ahuramazdā) in His fight against the Devil (Ahriman) reaches gradually to the stage of perfection. This concept of "Perfect Man" had been later on incorporated in the theologies of different religious sects in Iran. Dualism is not an impotent, sterile ideology, it has potential to stimulate revolutionary praxis.

\textsuperscript{1}Lambton: Landlord and Peasant..., pp. 73, 75.

\textsuperscript{2}Cf. Smith: Persia, p. 53.

\textsuperscript{3}Cf. Ibid.
Subsequently when Zoroastrianism was appropriated by the upper classes in the Sassanian empire, and when orthodoxy became its main character, attempts were made to bring about changes in it. Manichaeism and Mazdakism can be said to have been the two manifestations of these attempts. Despite their opposition to Zoroastrianism they continued to emphasize this dualistic perspective. They assured the people a Utopia at the end of all these dualistic struggles, which had always brought hardships and sufferings to them. Manichaeism and Mazdakism are the archetypes of two different lines of dualistic thinking.

Mani and his Sufi descendants chose the individualistic and passive methods of protest. The dualistic principle of Mani concentrated on the antithesis between soul and matter. According to him the salvation can be achieved only through gnosis and complete rejection of the material world. Manichaeism preserved its historical feature, dividing time into past, present and future. In the past soul and matter were separated from each other, at present they are mixed and in future they will become separated again, and thus the final salvation will be in material nihilism. And now about Sufism: "In the dualism of the Magians and Manichaeans, it (Sufism) sees the typified interaction of Being and Not-Being wherefrom the phenomenal world results." Individualistic and passive resistance of the Manichaeans and the Sufis can be understood in terms of the improbability of success through active and direct confrontation with the powers

1 Taqizadeh: Mani..., p. 48.
2 Razi: Moda'iyan-e nobovat, p. 28.
that be. In case of passive movements there were two advantages or positive points, one the passive movement was defused and those against whom it was directed, found it difficult to crush it and two, through the passive movements a kind of moral pressure was generated which was exercised on the powerholders.

Although social and economic stagnation did not provide a ground for evolutionary development and helped the emergence of different types of social movements, the negative and pessimistic dualism appeared at the times, when the slightest change in the existing situation seemed to be impossible.¹

The "Virtuosenreligiosität" of the Sufis and Dervishes, giving the practical example of religiosity to the masses,² could make the hierocratic institutionalized religion more attractive to the masses. But through it the helpless and repeatedly conquered people could satisfy their emotional needs, provided by a mass religiosity mixed with pristine and indigenous beliefs, rites and symbols, and inherited Indian and Persian contemplative religiosity.³

On the other side the archetype of the positive and optimistic dualism chosen by active movements was that of Mardak. Klima makes a useful summary of this dualism as follows:

¹Under the difficult circumstances when the active movements were strongly suppressed, these movements had no chance of survival except in the remote, mountainous regions.


"Gegeneinander stehen am Anfang zwei Wesen, das Licht (Gott), dessen Haupteigenschaften und Waffen vernunftige, zweckmässige Zielstrebigkeit und freie Willensentscheidung gewesen sind, und die Dunkelheit, der bosen Erzdaemon, dessen Wesenszüge samtlich negativ sind. Er ist dumm und blind, seine Tätigkeit beruht lediglich in unsinnigen, sturmischen Angriffen, in ununterbrochenem Kampf mit der guten Welt, in der Unterstützung gewaltiger Tyrannen und Unterdrucker, in planloser Raserei. Er ist also Gründer aller bosen Massregeln und Beschützer aller bosen Kreaturen. Er ist der Geist der Vernichtung. Nachdem er nach der Zoroastrischen Tradition infolge eines Angriffs seiner Dämonen das Böse in die gute Welt hineingeführt hatte, horte der erste vollkommene Zustand (bundahism) auf und trat eine Epoche der Mischung der beiden Ursubstanzen (gumazism, mizaj) ein. In diesem Zustand wird die Welt bis zur Vernichtung des Bösen sein, dann wird eine Voneinander trennung der beiden Prinzipien und die Reinigung der Welt kommen (vicarism). Die Mazdaikiten folgten einer abgeänderten Meinung: das Ende des gumazism ist zugleich der Sieg des guten Prinzips, die Rettung der guten, sich nach Gerechtigkeit sehenden Unterdrückten, Erniedrigten und Ausgebeuteten."

There is a direct way from the belief in the positive end of dualistic struggle to the belief in a saviour who helps to bring about this end.

It was a branch of Mazdaism, called Mahâniyeh, that brought together the ideas of dualism and Messianism. Klima quotes Pehlîrist that the followers of this movement believed: "...der Ausgleicher zwischen dem Licht und der Finsternis sei der Messias."2

Dualism thus became one of the features of Messianic movements throughout centuries. The Isma'ilis for example,

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1Klima: Beiträge..., pp. 33 - 34.
2Idem: Mazdak..., p. 338.
were accused of a Magian dualist origin of their two principles 'Aql and Nafs, according to which with the coming of Messiah (Qā'em) "the Nafs al-kull will finally return to unity with the 'Aql-al-kull."\(^2\)

It was through the same channel that dualism was connected to the idea of re-incarnation and metempsychosis. The charismatic leaders were deified and were expected to play the role of a living Messiah. In any case, whether latent or evident, this dualism is characterized by its historicity.

Among the Ahl-e Haqq, the historicity of dualism is manifested in a dualistic picture in which at the opposite side of the divinities stand the "Commanders of the Darkness" who were such historical persons as Umayyad Caliphs and the three orthodox Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Osman and Omar.\(^3\)

The dualism is marked by a historical period of struggle between the antagonistic powers which ends with the triumph of the power of good and the beginning of a meta-historical period of happiness in the Utopian world, which is achieved with the help of the Great Saviour. Thus the hope is built around a being who is believed to be able to bring about the historical "Endzeit" and the Utopian "Urzeit". A real person may be "set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with the supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities,"\(^4\) i.e. a charismatic leader. "Some of the

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\(^1\) Hodgson: The Order of Assassins..., p. 123.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 154.

\(^3\) Jayhuné Midi: Sháhnáme-ye Haqqíqát, p. 195.

leaders are in fact pale and insignificant. Their
elevation to such a position seems to be accidental — they
happened to be there and fulfilled an urgent need for a
prophet. That the function of leadership is sometimes
primarily symbolic is clearly seen in the cases of
movements with absent leaders."¹

However, a climate of uncertainty and unpredict-
ability is a breeding ground for the emergence of

¹Talmon: Millenarian..., p. 170; also Peter Worsley: Die
Posaune wird erschallen. Cargo-Kulte in Melanesien,
of Messianic movements and a correlation of the Messiah's
initiative with the prevailing social atmosphere, seems
to indicate that the individual is member of a class and
the vehicle of a higher purpose which envelops his
individual and unique efforts. Whether this purpose is
 imparted to him by the group of which he is a part or for
whose salvation he strives, is another question. The
individual is reacting to his environment and that environ-
ment may be different from the environment of the group.
How, then, shall we answer that much asked question, Is
this individual initiative or social compulsion?
We create an unreal difficulty when we consider individual
initiative and social law as mutually exclusive or as, when
referred to the same act, incompatible concepts. Both
concepts are referable to the same act, just as the genius
in his accomplishment may be both the most indebted man
and the greatest contributor of his age. In fact, one might al-
most say that he is the one because he is the other.
Individual initiative may properly describe an act which is,
at the same time, the forwarding of a group purpose. The
same act may be designed to serve both the individual and
his group; both aims may be co-ordinated in the individual...
Men is part of the gravitational, part of the biological
and no less a part of the social system. But he not only is
a part of them, he has a part in them." (W.D. Wallis:
charismatic leadership.\textsuperscript{1}

Charismatic persons are able to communicate a sense of continuity between themselves and their mission and the legendary heroes and their mission,\textsuperscript{2} through the existing myth which validates their authority.\textsuperscript{3} The followers of a charismatic leader believe and also claim that they only know the truth and they get themselves separated from others forming a "closed system",\textsuperscript{4} and this community becomes a charismatic community, whose membership implies salvation.\textsuperscript{5}

In Islam conceptions of both charismatic leader and charismatic community did develop. The Kharijites and Sunnis also uphold the idea of charismatic community. In case of the latter, "one might probably wonder whether the main body had assimilated the idea or whether it had been captured by it."\textsuperscript{6}


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 201.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 209.

\textsuperscript{4}Mühlmann: Chiliasmus und Nativismus..., p. 377.


\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 86.
In any case they came to regard the body of Muslims as not merely a community simpliciter but as a charismatic community.¹

The idea of being somebody "particular" as the followers of charismatic leader or the members of charismatic community has dominated most of the Iranian millenarian movements, as was the case of the Ahl-e Haqq. For the Ahl-e Haqq, in the exoteric sense the "Dida'ars" (some of the Ahl-e Haqq angels) in the absence of a manifestation are the substitute of God on earth. But in the esoteric sense the whole community together constitutes the representation of God on earth.²

Contrary to the Kharijites and Sunnis, the Shi'ites accepted the idea of charismatic leader. "Looking to one leader as the source of true guidance was appropriate to the rebellious sects, just as the more individual approach of personal discipline and contemplation as the path to inner truth, often with the guidance of a local leader, was appropriate to the more quietist Sufis."³

The widespread esoteric notion among Muslim communities in Iran and elsewhere was that of so-called

¹Watt: The Conception..., p. 38. The Kharijites spoke of themselves as "the believers" or "the people of Paradise" and the non-Kharijites were regarded as "unbelievers" or "the people of Hell". Their interpretation of the Last Day implied that the membership of the community would lead to salvation, provided a man showed a modicum of diligence in observing the rules of the community (Ibid., p. 102).

²Mokri: Cinquante-deux versets..., p. 393.

³Keddie: Symbols and Sincerity..., p. 53.
"Ensān al-Kāmel" or "The Perfect Man". The term "perfect man" was probably first used by the Andalusian Sufi philosopher Ibn 'Arabi (vivabat 1164 - 1240), although the notion underlying it is almost as old as Sufism. The term was used to refer to the supposedly exceptionally gifted individuals believed to be appearing periodically on earth, through their mystical revelation, have direct access to divine knowledge, and thus are qualified to act as the mediators between God and men. ¹

The Perfect Man or microcosm, who repeats the rhythm of the cosmos, has all knowledge, and is the mediator between this plane and higher ones. ²

This notion which was influenced by the humanism that dominated Iranian cultural and philosophical spheres during the critical period between ninth and fifteenth centuries, ³ prepared the ground for the appearance of a widespread charismatism, among the incarnationists and deificationists as well as the notion of the hidden Messiah.


²Keddie: Symbol and Sincerity...., p. 53.

Therefore some groups such as "Moshabaheh" created a myth according to which man's appearance exactly resembles that of the God, as at the time of creation He looked into the mirror and created man similar to Himself.\(^1\) The rebellious groups went farther by claiming divinity in the leaders. Al-Moqana\(^1\), the veiled prophet of Khoresan, claimed himself to be the only God.\(^2\) Halâj, even during his brutal execution was loudly repeating a similar claim.\(^3\) Al-Barbari declared that Mohammad b. al-Hanafiye was God and he himself was the prophet.\(^4\)

After the death of the Safavid Jonayd, who was accused of claiming divinity on himself, his followers gathered around his corpse and in his praise they said: "He is the Living One, there is no God but he.\(^5\) Horufis, who were influenced by the pantheism of the Sufis considered Fazlollah to be divine. Even during the nineteenth century, the followers of the Báb considered him as a manifestation of the Divinity.\(^6\)

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1 Sayyed Mortezâ b. Dâ'i Hasani Râzi: Tabserat ol-avâm fi ma'rajat maqâlât ol-anam, ed. by 'Abbâs Eqbâl, Tehran, 1313 A.H., p. 76.

2 Narshakhi: Târikh-e Bokhârâ, pp. 77 - 93. According to Shahrestânî some groups such as "Mobayazeh", "Razâmiyeh" and "Abu Moslemiyeh" believed in the divine incarnation of Abu Moslem, and therefore he was able to destroy the Umayyad dynasty (Shahrestânî: Al-Mâlî, va'n-nehâl, p. 18).


5 Khunji: Persia..., p. 65.

6 Browne: A Year amongst the Persians, p. 434.
It may be the case that some psychological factors were involved,\(^1\) that some people became deificationists, but the fact that except for a few trivial taboos and negligible peculiarities, they did not differ from the members of the orthodoxy cannot be lost sight of.\(^2\) There is nothing psychologically abnormal with those who are involved in deification. Deification is akin to the notion of leadership and the need of human beings to have a leader is as old as human society.\(^3\) Deification is also akin to the pantheism which existed in many old cultures and particularly that of Greek. Deification is supported by myth and its causality. Claude Levi Strauss has even gone so far to say that "the causality of this myth is as rigorous as that of modern science and that the difference lies not in the quality of the intell-

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\(^1\)Some scholars like Sieckmann exaggerate the importance of psychological factors especially when they try to make a clinical treatment of this phenomenon (Cf. Zwi Werblowsky: A New Heaven..., p. 165ff.).

\(^2\)Ivanow: The Alleged Founder..., p. 133.

ectual process, but in the nature of the things to which it is applied."¹ In addition to that it becomes necessary to attribute super-natural power to the leader who was expected to guide the people to both transcendental world (paradise) and in the earthly matters (heaven on earth).

As charisma also may function as a great revolutionary force,² "such power is looked for in particular individuals."³ They promote the movements which are escape from present. They also intend to start a renewal of the world which will be realized in an eschatological perspective as a return to a primordial and paradisiacal age,⁴ a world free from imperfection and suffering,⁵ i.e. Utopia. The envisaged Utopia is not the creation of the free play of the charismatic leader's fantasy. Rather it is a reflection of what the people cherish and desire,⁶ and they desire what they most need.⁷

The landscape of the millennium that is painted by the desires of underprivileged and oppressed people is dominated by the colours of abundance and egalitarianism. In the Zoroastrian Utopia the realm

²Weber: Economy and Society, p. 245.
⁴Lantermari: Messianism..., p. 70.
⁵Kohn: The idea of Nationalism..., p. 43.
⁷Bloch: Zur Originalgeschichte..., p. 199.
of the first King Yema in "Urzeit", "is not excessively cold nor excessively hot, but gladdening in spirit. There is no pain nor old age there, no hunger, thirst nor anything disagreeable. There is no misery or fatigue, nor any perversity. All desires are fulfilled there, those which are divine and those which are human. The food and drink are full of flavour and abundant."

This Utopia is identified with "Behesht-Gang" i.e. Paradise "Gang" in Iranian national epic. It is in the direction of the east, where in peace, joy and abundance, no sickness exists.

In the description of the city of "Jabarres", where the Messiah (Mahdi) dwells and which is located in the remotest region of the East, a Shi'ite version goes as follows: The buildings are equal in height, so that none of them may overlook another, and that none may shut out the air from another. They have no King or judge among them as they are just one to another and give what is due to themselves wherefore they need no one to deal out justice in their midst. They all sow and all reap and every man among them takes what suffices him and leaves what remains for his brother. There is no sickness and the wild beasts and reptiles pass them by without hurting them.

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2 Ibid., p. 65.
The Iranian epic, Shāhnāmeh, presents a dream-like blending of the Utopian city Kangdez of the heroic song-cycles and "Kangdez" of the apocalyptic tradition.¹

Ferdausi, the compiler of Iranian epic was a Shi'ite and a follower of the nationalistic movement of the Sho'ubi. For the Sho'ubi, the "Urzeit" was the period before the Arab conquest. The Sho'ubiyyeh movement had a limited following among the old Iranian land nobility and administrators. During the Arab domination, the Iranian land nobility lost some of its significance and was humiliated by being forced to pay some taxes which previously they considered as a sign of inferior status.² The secretaries lost their importance and security after al-Hajjāj, the Governor of Iraq, decided to stop using Persian as the language of official business and to use Arabic instead.³

In addition to that, when the studies of Arabic grammar and lexicography were initiated, the position of the Persian secretaries was threatened by another group of men with a different culture.⁴ For the Iranian principalities which had achieved some level of independence from the Arab rulers, the Sho'ubiyyeh

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¹Boycz: On the Antiquity.... p. 65.
²Bennett: Conversion.... p. 15.
³Watt: Islam and Integration.... p. 119.
⁴Ibid., p. 121.
could provide moral support and legitimation to their political endeavours by reviving memories of the past. In any case, although the Sho'ubiyyeh movement did not directly win over support of the common people, it assumed many features of Iranian millenarian movements. The Utopian "Urzeit" was supposed to have existed in the pre-Islamic period and the same dualism, i.e. the antagonism between settled population and the invading nomadic elements, preserved its significance.

During the millenarian movements the in-group feeling was increased and sustained as long as outsiders were identified with the oppressors. However they did not develop the notion of "nation" nor did they make nationalism an absolute principle. Although it has been suggested that nativism is the forerunner of nationalism, the Iranian millenarian movements show little direct connection between ethnical in-group feeling and Messianism.

It is clear that "the visible presence of foreign conquerors and rulers help to crystallize discontent and hostility against outsiders."  

1 Watt: Islam and Integration..., p. 123.


3 Muhlmann connects Mahdism to nationalism through nativism and points out: "Die Beziehung zum Nationalismus ist dadurch gegeben, dass die Nativismen gleichsam als unentwickelte Keime des Nationalismus erscheinen, als Vorboten oder Vorläufer". (Wilhelm E. Muhlmann, Rassen, Ethnien, Kulturen; Modern Ethnologie, Neuwied/Berlin, 1964, p. 324.

In addition to a general dislike for the foreign invaders and rulers, nativism of the millenarian movements in Iran manifested itself in the language of their religious scriptures: the Assassins used Persian or some like Morufis and Ahl-e Haqq used dialects. We also observe manifestations of nativism among millenarian movements. In the late Zoroastrian millenarianism the return of the last Sassanian king Vahrám as a Messiah, who would emancipate the Iranian people from the Arab Yoke, was predicted. After the death of Abu Moslem, who was made an Iranian hero by several movements, a man called Ishaq declared Abu Moslem as a prophet sent by Zoroaster, who still lived and would come back again. Another group called Yazidiyeh prophesied that God would send a Persian prophet who would bring a book through which other religious books would be removed.

Despite all of this, the doctrines of these millenarian movements did not know, any ethnical frontiers, and different ethnic groups joined together to fight the oppressors. For example, Shi'ism emerged in an Arabian atmosphere and most of its early followers were Yemenites, but it could easily spread among the non-Arabs and particularly Iranians. Isma'ilies were active in North Africa,

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1 Tavedia: A Rhymed Ballad..., p. 31.


Iran and Syria. Barghā'ī was an Iranian of probably Arab origin whose followers were the Black Slaves and the non-Arab Mavlās. ¹ The Horufis, whose religious book was written in a Persian dialect penetrated into the Bektāshis of Anatolia and Albania. ² And finally the Ahl-e Haqq has its followers among Kurds, Turks and Persians.

As a matter of fact the flame of millenarian desire arises with the continuation of a condition characterized by insecurity of all kinds often caused by socio-economic conflicts and consequent economic exploitation and social oppression of the defeated and submitted group.

The millenarian desires may find their expression in different rituals. These rituals on the one hand, make the existing situation tolerable for a while and on the other hand preserve the intensity of the Utopian desires.

But as time goes on and the favourable ground is prepared, and,

"wenn sich das Jenseits auf die Erde stürzen will und die Inwendigkeit in die Auswendigkeit, dann freilich entsteht, statt des Opiums, im subjektiven Faktor ein Sprengmittel, ohnegleichen, ein Mille zum Himmel auf Erden." ³

¹ Noldeke: Ein Sklavenkrieg.... p. 156; Halm: Die Traditionen.... p. 43ff; idem: Review.... p. 24ff. Halm believes that the Zanj slave movement represented the Mavlās as well.
² Birge: The Bektashi Order.... p. 58ff.
³ Bloch: Zur Originalgeschichte.... p. 199.
The majority of the movements until the sixteenth century followed a process of revolutionization of the peasants and artisans,¹ who constituted a large part of their followers. But they failed to achieve political power due to their main weakness namely military incapability.

The majority of these movements were suppressed before their followers could achieve the political independence which they were looking for. Even the direct confrontation of the Khoramdis, though creating serious danger for the Caliphate for three decades, failed to bear any fruit. Still through some of these movements, the people could obtain political power and territorial independence for quite a long period of time. Among them were the Assassins and the Qarmatians whose movements passed through similar stages of development and decline after achieving power. In the initial stage of the movements the main goal was the universal annihilation of the existing order. When the people failed to achieve this goal, they retreated to their own limited sphere and tried to materialize their Utopian ideals there. For example, the Assassins first tried to bring about total destruction of the Saljuq Turkish empire by the way of direct confrontation which failed. Then they adopted the strategy of political assassin-

¹The main reason for the entrance of the artisans in the oppositional movements despite an existing guild system, was that the guilds were under closed control of the state (Cf. Solomon Dob Goitein: Studies in Islamic History and Institutions, Leiden, 1968 (*1966), pp. 267 – 270; S.M. Stern: The Constitution of the Islamic City, In: A.H. Hourani and S.M. Stern (eds): The Islamic City, Oxford, 1970, p. 36ff.)
ation of the key figures. This could only weaken and not destroy the system of patrimonial powerholding of the Saljuq empire. Similarly Qarmations engaged themselves in total wars with their Arab opponents which also failed. Thereafter Assassins tried to bring about an egalitarian social order within a limited sphere and likewise Qarmatian too attempted the same thing. Despite the changes brought about in the social and economic situation of Alamut and the adjacent areas, it seems that the Qarmatians were more successful.

The interesting description of Lahsā by Nāser Khosrow (already cited) provides us the example of a serious attempt to creat an egalitarian state by the Qarmatians.

The failure of the Assassins can be attributed to the geographical disadvantages of their domain. In their mountainous abode as against the coasts of Persian Gulf where the Qarmatians were operating, they had no scope for diversified economic activities.

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1 Watt thinks that turning to assassination by the Nezaris instead of raising an army, from a sociological stand point "is in keeping with the absence of political programme" (Watt: Islam and Integration..., p. 7). But as a matter of fact "band of rough adventurers" under the leadership of "an intellectual" (as Watt calls the Nezaris and their leader Hasan-e Sabbāh) could in no way afford a direct confrontation with the Saljuqs or Mongols. And even if they did raise an army, they had to face the destiny of the previous movements (Cf. Ibid., p. 69.)

2 See p. 146.
They were dependent on agriculture where scarcity of agricultural land existed. And in that situation the creation of a welfare state as in Qarmatian Lahsa was not possible. This explains the declaration made by the Assassin leader of the beginning of an esoteric millennium, and the removal of the exemption of the religious law from obligation.¹

Many other smaller movements failed even before reaching this level, and had to enter into the period of quietism.

One of the most important events in the history of Iranian millenarism is the penetration of Messianism into the nomadic societies, which brought about an essential change in the character and potentiality of such movements. The Mosha'isha'i and Safavid movements provide us with the examples of such nomadic millenarism which unlike other millenarian movement is characterized by extensive successful use of military power and aggressive militancy, which has a great deal to do with their nomadic culture.

Generally nomadic societies are not easily accessible to millenarian beliefs. It has been stated that the religion and culture of the nomads mirror their way of life which is marked by a continuous struggle.² It has been also pointed out by several

¹ Cf. Hodgson: The Order of Assassins..., pp. 148 - 151. According to Turner there were two main reasons for the failure of the Assassins: a) The secularization of the movement after Hasan-e Sabbāh died, b) the triumph of Sufism (Turner: Weber and Islam, p. 89). The failure of the Qarmatian state surviving longer, is attributed by Khan to the following factors: a)Vagueness of their ideas and plans, b)their extreme violence which antagonized the masses against them, c)their ideas were too advanced for their time (Khan: Muslim Political Theories..., p. 44).

scholars that the members of nomadic tribes enjoy more freedom than the people of settled communities. However, great variations are found in the hierarchical differences and the amounts of freedom the people have in different nomadic areas.\(^1\) As Ibn Khaldun had already pointed out, that, contrary to the nomads, the sedentary population easily submits to force and domination.\(^2\) In general, it can be concluded that the difference between the forms of political domination, along with the mode of production, brings about changes in the character of religiosity as well as social behaviour of people.

The idea that man needs an intermediary between God and himself is endemic in Iranian world view.\(^3\) where a long sedentary tradition exists. This is, as a matter of fact, the counterpart of the tradition of the people being ruled by the rulers whom they could never see and with whom they could keep contact only through their agents. However, any attempts to identify

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\(^1\) As Gellner shows the Berber nomadic tribes follow a relatively democratic method of electing chieftancy. Their political system enables them to escape harsh tyranny (Gellner: Doctors and Saints, pp. 311 – 312). Planhol writes: “On the whole nothing comparable to the egalitarian style of the Berbers seems to exist in the Middle East except perhaps in certain areas which are almost completely isolated such as the Kafir of the Hindu Kush” (Planhol: Regional Diversification..., p. 108).


Sunnism with nomadic life and Shi'ism with settled life can not be realistic. This is because except in Kurdistan, the majority of Iranian nomads elsewhere are Shi'ites, whereas the majority of the sedentary population of the neighbouring countries are Sunnites of one or the other affiliation. Actually what matters is not the nominal affiliation, but the difference in the degree of religiosity of these two groups. A case narrated by Barth, provides an example, on a small scale of the difference between the religiosity of the half-nomadic Hamavand tribes of South Kurdistan and the Meskin agricultural caste, and also between the privileged and under-privileged.

Barth reports:

"The Meskin,... are accused of manipulating the religious brotherhood of Derwishes for political purposes, so as to organize all the Meskin of the neighbouring villages in a movement of resistance. To counteract this influence, the Hamavand Agha 3 is at pains to expose the derwishes as fraudulent, and attempts to enhance the position of the local mullah, the recognized leader of the local mosque."

The examples of the Ahl-e Haqq and other movements show that the peasantry is more vulnerable to the esoteric tendencies, 4 whereas the belief in the earthly

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1. It is a suggestion made by al-Haidari (idem: Zur Soziologie..., p. 103).

2. i.e. a title for the tribal chiefs who are landlords as well.


4. In Turner's view, while the peasants may be concerned with the magical manipulation of nature, they do not become the carriers of an ethical religion and do not foster the systematization of religious beliefs. Accordingly a rural peasantry becomes actively involved in ethical and prophetic religion when its whole social existence is threatened by pauperization or enslavement (Turner: Weber and Islam, p. 89).
presence of Divinity appears to be acceptable to nomadic societies.

During the periods of crisis, Messianism which was popular among the settled people became acceptable to the nomadic mentality. With obtaining nomadic followings, millenarism gained not only more militancy, as compared to millenarism among the peasants and artisans, but also the military qualities, the absence of which was the main weakness of the sedentary population. The belief in the earthly presence of the Divinity, could only strengthen the leader-cult which has been an inseparable part of nomadic life. The limitless devotion to the leader is a part of nomadic life, which, as increased by millenarian beliefs and fanaticism, ruthless nomadic enthusiasm and bravery creates a gigantic force required for any adventurous undertaking.¹ Therefore the advent of the Safavids may be seen even as a new conquest. The tribes that became the followers of Shah Isma'il were simply a new grouping of the same Turkoman tribes which the Qara-goyunlu and Ag-goyunlu had used in order to occupy Iran.² The crisis these tribes were facing show similarities to those which

¹ Some scholars think that the devotion shown by the Turkoman followers of the Safavid Isma'il had its roots in the Anatolian tradition (Cf. Glassen: Sah Isma'il..., p. 65f.)

² Minorsky: Iran: Opposition..., p. 194.
in previous periods encouraged the Central Asian nomads to invade Iran. For example, Changiz Khan’s prophetic role which brought several Mongol and Turkish tribes together, as well as the expansionist tendency of these tribes and the excesses that they committed during their conquest, all have parallels in the Safavid movement.¹ The Turks began to consider themselves as a chosen people of God who had the mission to dominate the world. Shamans of both the Mongol Changiz Khan and the Turk Oghuz Khan had prophesied that they had received from God the permission to dominate the world.²

There is a reason to believe that there were many ideological similarities between the early Safavid and other movements such as Horufis, Bektashis and the forerunners of the Ahi-e Haqq. It has even been suggested that these groups were actually behind the Safavid rise and they had ideological influence on the Safavid movement.³ But as soon as the process of nomadization of the Safavid movement began, it assumed a new form. During its course of development and decline

¹There are also some similarities between this type of nomadic millenarism and the early European colonialism.

²Osman Turan: The Ideal of World Domination among the Medieval Turk. In: Studia Islamica, Vol. IV, 1955, p. 78. The Mongols who urged the rulers of the neighbouring countries, sent them letters containing expressions such as "Word of God" emphasizing their prophetic mission (cf. ibid., p. 84).

³Keddie: The Roots..., p. 217.
the Safavid movement underwent several changes. Therefore one notices that the religious philosophy and practices which Safavid began to profess after they came to power were different from those which they professed while they were in the process of conquering the territories.¹ Now to retain their power they needed cooperation not from the nomadic extremists, but from the cooperation with the conservative and property owning classes.² This provides us a basis for another theoretical proposition that once the leaders of a social movement could get hold of power, the process of decadence of the progressive aspects of the movement sets in.³

However the cases of the Qarmatians and, to a limited extent of the Assassins, indicate that power-holding alone is not the main cause of regressive process. Even the case of Safavids shows that even though the regressive trend enters into the movement once it reaches the point of capturing power, the trend does not continue unabated. It halts at a point which is definitely at the higher level than the one at which the movement began.⁴ Mayreder comments:

¹Keddie: The Roots..., p. 218.
²Cf. ibid., p. 221. The Ismā'īlis of Egypt had already come to the same end. They remained anti-feudal so long as they were out of power. But as soon as they came to power, their passion for social justice subsided. (Cf. Khan: Mediaeval Muslim..., p. 42).
³Rosa Mayreder: Der typische Verlauf sozialer Bewegungen, Wien/Leipzig, 1925, p. 36ff.
⁴Cf. Minorsky: Iran: Opposition..., p. 196. Despite of the Fatemids' oppressive policies towards their former supporters, who were mostly peasants and artisans, they continued their patronage of trade guilds as well as science. In general the Fatemid was the most progressive regime of the Egyptian Islamic History (cf. Khan: op. cit.).
"Die Einrichtungen, die in der organisatorischen Phase der Bewegung auf Grund der Ideologie erobert wurden, bleiben ja als dauernder sozialer Fortschritt erhalten, wenn auch nur so weit, als sie sich mit den Bedingungen der Machtbehauptung vereinigen lassen."

Although power-gaining would mean the destruction of a movement, the opposite of this also compelled many movements to change, modify or give up their original forms. For example the continued persecution of the Horufis and Noqtavis brought their movements to an end in Iran, and only a number of their followers, who took refuge among the Bektashis of Anatolia, could revive a part of their doctrine. However they could not retain the progressive features of their movement.

The movements which professed ideologies diagonally opposite to the existing ones met with premature death, not only due to the aggressive persecution of the ruling class, but also because these ideologies could not attract a large number of followers.

In general we can make three observations with regard to, as to how different Iranian social movements met their ends:

a) Some of these movements were extinguished after a long or short period of struggle without gaining any tangible results.

b) Some of these movements that lacked in or gave up their progressive and sophisticated ideologies entered into the period of quietism and survived themselves in the forms of cults or communities

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1Mayreder: Der typische Verlauf..., p. 47.
focussing on millenarian hopes depending on mass religiosity.

c) Some of the movements which failed to actualize their millenarian goal or had to give it up after achieving power, consolidated themselves into new institutionalized religions.

A new institutionalized religion subsequently became the official religion sponsored by the power-holders and it came into conflict with the popular movements. Thus the religion which was once a part of a popular movement became antithetical to the existing popular socio-religious movements, after becoming an elite sponsored official religion. Antagonism also remained to exist between the official religion and those movements that in the form of cult and community were passing through a period of quietism, that is the abovementioned group "b". This is because the official religions "formed an important ideological underpinning of the rulers, needed to justify submission to existing landlords and government agents. They thus helped to perpetuate the hierarchical and traditional order of things by teaching submission even to unjust rulers and maintaining that the hierarchical social order was both natural and good."¹ They tried to assert themselves the only

¹Keddie: Scholars, Saints and Sufis, p. 13. To illustrate the above statements we can refer to another interesting example of the unity of the official religion and some of the Sufi mystics with the ruling class. In a description of a civil and military review in Fars in 1476, by the theologian Davānī about the march of the priests and the heads of the Sufi orders, he writes: "By virtue of the saying that RELIGION AND KINGSHIP ARE TWINS, it occurred to the King that the spiritual army of inmates of colleges and Râshâqâh and wearers of turbans should appear on the muster ground, namely the great Sayyids, great doctors (Ulâmâ) shayâkhs, and Zealots (arbâb-i qulub) proud of their poverty, so that their blessings should reach the army." (Vladimir Minorsky: A Civil and Military Review in Fars in 381/1476 (Ard-nâma, by Jalâl al-dîn Muhammad b. As'âd). In: Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, Vol. X, Part I, p. 150).
authority to define legitimisation and decide what was a bad government.¹ The religious jurists being allies of the ruling class, did not want revolt and anarchy which could endanger the status quo. The account by an author of the fifteenth century shows that the clergy and jurists even violently opposed a pious vazir (minister) who wanted to restore ways of primitive Islam that could, to some extent, benefit the poor.² Therefore a situation is created "that while a Khalifah may legally be deposed, there is no legal means of deposing him."³

The tradition of finding a divine element in the ruler or of identifying the ruler, with the divine authority had been deeply implanted among the Iranians by the ruling classes. For example the Sunni Seljuq statesman Nezam ol-Molk, who thought of reviving the Sassanid governmental system, advocated the idea that the ruler was supposed to have been appointed by God, and thus, even if he proved to be wicked and unjust

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¹ Lewis shows that as against the Western doctrine of the right to resist a bad government, there is a doctrine of the duty to resist impious government. Although in theory this principle looks like a basis for doctrines both of limited government and of justified revolution, in practice it meant depending on the jurists to define what a bad government may be. (Cf. Bernard Lewis: Islamic Concepts of Revolution, In: P.J. Vatikiotis: Revolution in the Middle East, London, 1972, p. 33).


the subjects should not rebel, because it would mean the betrayal of the will of God.¹

But nevertheless all this could not put an end to the millenarian desires. "When the millenarian movement suffers a reverse it goes under cover. It remains underground until it sees a better chance for its struggle, repeatedly hiding or coming out into the open, but always retaining its radical millenarism."² When it goes underground it takes resort to several methods to survive. Among them rituals and symbolism are of outstanding significance. The followers of the movement then withdraw into a passionate inner life of the movement and intensify their esoteric rituals. Then they love to live their life in the imaginary world of their existing mythologies. During this period they also may attempt to create new myths or modify the existing ones.

Although symbolism performs several functions in all the phases of the millenarian movements, its importance increases especially after the failure of the movement when it is manipulated to actualize its millenarian dreams. This would happen even after the achievement of political power. As said earlier the Iranian movements made intensive use of letters, numbers, dots and colours for this purpose. The

¹Nasr ol-Volk: Siyasat-namaeh, pp. 5 - 6. As Lanternari points out it was a universal phenomenon that the pressures and oppression came upon the people and especially upon the popular movements simultaneously from two sides, the militant hierarchy of the church and the authoritarian power of the state (Lanternari: The Religions of the Oppressed..., p. 316).

²Talmon: Millenarian Movements, p. 172.
preference for the use of letters and dots is due to the importance given to the scripture in Islamic culture. "Every letter and line of the Qur'an (which always remains the model and prototype of a Revealed Book, even amongst those sects who claim that it has been abrogated by a newer Revelation) is supposed to be fraught with unutterable mystery and filled with unfathomable truth." ¹ The letters and dots and their numerical values were not only used symbolically for the calculation of the manifestation but also for healing and other utilitarian purposes. ²

"Ritual is... often a symbolic dramatization of the fundamental needs... Mythology is the rationalization of these same needs, whether they are expressed in overt ceremonial or not. (...) Ceremonials tend to portray a symbolic resolution of the conflicts which, external environment, historical experience and selective distribution of personality types, have caused to be characteristic in the society." ³

But in case of the millenarian movements, ceremonies also facilitate the sustenance and survival of the community. The unity of the community as well

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¹Browne: Some Notes..., p. 89.

²It is, for example, stated by ʿAmoli that, if someone on a very hot day recites one of the names of God which begins with the letter (H) such as (Hay) the heat would not affect him. Accordingly, it is through this method, that the dervishes sit or go on the fire and play with the glowing coal without being burnt. (Shams o-Din Mohammad ʿAmoli: Nafayes al-Fonun fi ʿaraʾes al-Gyun. In: Safai: Tarikh adabiyat dar Iran, Vol. III, p. 176).

as in-group feeling among the members are encouraged and the group morale heighten. The members are reminded about their common problem and common sources of their sufferings. Rituals and ceremonies do not only make the existing situation tolerable, but they even prepare and solidify the community to oppose it when the time is ripe. They generate a sense of moral obligation for the individual members to remain with the community so that they do not desert it when it is in danger or crisis.

While the rituals and ceremonies offer outlets to the accumulated feelings of frustration and anxiety etc., they also germinate the seeds of the desire for change, for a new world, in the minds of the members.

The performance of ceremonies with a great passion heightened emotions and exuberance on the day of the Martyrdom of Hosayn and the popular repetition of the drama of Hosayn over centuries helped people to overcome the feelings of unjust sufferings in a world which they thought was ruled by a just God:¹ Here is one of the recitations at these ceremonies:

"Lasst uns weiter sprechen, denn die Scheu ist aufgehoben
Millionen Familien klagen vor Hunger!
Wo ist das Gute, wo?
Wird davon etwas uns erreichen?"²

²In a poem performed in the drama of Hosayn (Ta'ziya) translated by al-Heidari: Zur Soziologie... Gasida No. I, p. 169.
The movements which could survive over a long period of time, experienced fluctuations and changes in their stand towards materialization of their millenarian goals. The "twelver Shi'ism" before the occultation was "predominantly messianic and totalistic, expecting the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth."\(^1\) The process of institutionalization was accompanied by quietism and acceptance of the existing order, till the nomadic supporters of the Safavids, made it the state religion. But it was under the same Safavids that an idea developed according to which, in the absence of the hidden Imam all temporal governments are illegitimate.\(^2\)

Therefore, even when quietism prevails and the millenarian thought is regarded as justifying a de facto acceptance of the existing regime, simultaneously it means "that the regime is not perfect, and the way is left open for action at some future date." Such an attitude might often be politically harmless, but there lurked in it a potential danger. A change of circumstances might suggest to the adherents of the movement

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that the time for action had come.¹

The following poem illustrates the main characteristics of tendencies, revolutionary mood and millenarian desires of a movement when it is in the stage of quietism. It is a part of a verse read by the Ahl-e Haqq in their ceremony of "Jam":

"Ce bruit, 
Ce bruit n'est pas efficace. 
En (cas de) besoin, implore. 
Le Maître de Benyamin (1), Lui, ne disparaît jamais. 

Dieu est en lui (2). 
Il est l'homme de Dieu, Dieu est en lui (2) 
Mon Roi (Pādshā) est dans la dûn; nul ne connaît cette dûn. 
Quand Il se lève (3), Il est le Maître du Temps. 

C'est le Jour du Jugement (4) 
La guerre est (sur) la montagne de Sar-nil, c'est le Jour du Jugement. 
(On entend) le cri du guerre des (hommes) réputés. 
Pîr est mon Roi (Pādshā) sont les Maîtres des siècles.

¹Montgomery W. Watt: The Reappraisal of Abbasid Shi'ism. In: Makdisi: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of M.A.R. Gibb, Leiden, 1965, p. 167. As millenarian has its origin in Utopian thought, it does not find difficulty in reflecting itself in secular movements. Browne states: "As one of the most prominent and cultivated Azalis admitted to me..., the ideal of a democratic Persia developing on purely national lines seems to have inspired in the minds of no few leading Azalis the same fiery enthusiasm as did the idea of a reign of the saints on earth in the case of the early Babis." (Browne: Materials..., p. XIX).

(1) Maître (Xwājā) de Benyāmin: Dieu.
(2) Autrement dit: "Dieu habite en lui comme un hôte".
(3) C.-à-d.: "il se fait connaitre ou il apparaît".
(4) Litt.: "le jour des juges".
Vient le tumulte.
Il vient le bruit des guerriers et le tumulte.
Le monde se rassemble à Zara-zul
Ce sera la vérification du registre des hommes
et des djinns.

L'Ami s'éveillera.
A ce moment l'Ami s'éveillera.
De Wāf à Wāf, de la droite à la gauche, le monde,
tout le monde,
entendra le craquement de Zolfāqār.

Ce sera la résurrection.
La résurrection durera plusieurs jours et plusieurs
nuits.
Les têtes tomberont comme les feuilles d'automne.
Zolfāqār s'éguisera sur le crâne des traîtres.

(Il remet) Zolfāqār à sa place.
Alors, (Il remet) Zolfāqār à sa place.
Les sincères et les "doubles" seront séparés.
La pièce (frappée) au sceau du Pacte de Yārī
répandra.

Le livre du Pacte de Yārī.
Alors on lira le livre du Pacte de Yārī.
Les hommes (de bien) seront délivrés de leur fardeau.
Mon Maître (Xwaja) s'assiéra sur le trône de la
Divinité.

Le Juge souverain (rendra) la justice.
Alors le Juge souverain rendra la justice.
Il jettera au vent les jours des méchants.
Alors les serviteurs seront joyeux.

Ce sera (le jugement des) justes.
Ce jour-là, qui sera celui de jugement des justes,
sera la gloire des hommes (de bien).
Les hommes libres (de la vérité), éclateront de rire.
(La clé) de la porte de la bonté sera dans la main
du Roi des gens qui n'ont personne (Sāh-e Bī-kasān).

En poussière par le fer des talons,
Le vent emportera les montagnes réduites en
poussière par le fer des talons.
Celui qui sait tout demande le jugement.
Les serviteurs sincères passent purs(devant Lui).

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(1) Ville du Kurdestan, actuellement en Irak, dans la
plaine de laquelle les Īl-e Haqq pensent qu'aura
lieu le jugement dernier.

(2) C.-a.-d.: "le culte de Yārī se répandra".
Il se stabilise.
Ainsi le Monde se stabilise.
Le coeur des créatures, ciseau, fourmi, serpent,
sera pur comme un miroir et sans poison.

Ils polissent comme un miroir.
Ils polissent le miroir des coeurs comme un miroir.
Les hommes montent sur le Cheval gris.
Ainsi le Monde se stabilise.

Le pur, le sincère, l'existence, l'être atteindront
le désir, l'idéal, le but.
Moi, le très petit, en ce jour-là j'espère.
Je suis pécheur et le Yar est celui qui pardonne.
Moi, le très petit, en ce jour-là j'ai cet espoir:
pardonne-moi pour l'amour du chien gardien du seuil
de l'Ami.  

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1Mokri: Cinquante-deux Versets,..., pp. 401 - 404.