CHAPTER 3 METHODS AND DATA

There is a strong tradition of using historical research in sociological studies,[1] and many have used historical comparative methods to describe periods of collective action and revolution.[2] In particular, the historical comparative approach is ideal for a study of social movements and revolutions because these events take place in a specific cultural context, involve diverse social factors, and develop over time (Thomas 1996). The methodology of historical research is similar to other social science research in that it should: 1) define a problem, 2) formulate a hypothesis, 3) collect and evaluate data, and 4) and make a judgment as to the validity of a hypothesis. One drawback of the approach concerns the availability of primary sources for the historical period studied. A lack of sources can result in a selective reading of historical periods and an over reliance on secondary accounts. Likewise, historical comparative researchers should be careful to avoid arranging historical "facts" to fit their hypothesis (see Fischer 1970).

Types of Historical Research

Skocpol (1984) has created a typology of the different types of historical research. Her typology is reproduced in table 3.1 below, with the primary research strategies used in this project integrated into the typology (see also Neuman 1997:385).

Table 3.1: Research Strategies in Historical Sociology:
The Use of Theory, Concepts and Comparisons

	Apply a General Model to Explain Historical Instances	Use Concepts to Develop a Meaningful Historical Interpretation	Analyze Casual Regularities in History
Single Case	Applies a model that uses frames, ideology and culture to describe movement development over time.	Discusses how culture, ideology and movement frames effect protest cycles.	
Multiple Cases			

Skocpol (1984) states that a theoretical outline that creates a set of "empty theoretical boxes" that are filled and refilled "with sets of facts" best "illustrate the use of a model to explain historical circumstances" (363). This project returns to the model introduced in the previous chapter concerning the interaction of culture, ideology and frames, and fills these "boxes" with the facts from late 19th and 20th century social movements in Iran. Likewise, it chronicles the development of Iranian sovereignty during each protest period. This project explores "multiple cases" in that it investigates different Iranian movements, but can also be conceived of as exploring a single case, that of Iranian social and political development in the 20th century because the movement frames used by groups during different protest periods are clearly linked together. A complaint of applying sociological models to historical events is that it places "unaesthetic sociological jargon onto arbitrarily selected and arranged historical facts" (Skocpol 1984: 366). Indeed, the concepts related to the framing process outlined by Snow and his colleagues (1986) employ considerable jargon, but this project attempts to preserves some of the aesthetic qualities of a historical narrative.

In some cases, historical comparative research does not begin with a strict articulation of a relationship between variables and employs a *grounded theoretical* approach that allows researchers to construct categories and theory simultaneously (Zaret 1978). Nonetheless, I

outlined the general interaction between culture, ideology and frames as they relate to the creation of *Iranian sovereignty* in the previous chapter.

Criticism of Historical Sociology

Critics of historical sociology claim that it fails as both as history and as sociology. Some historians believe that the selective use of historical events—not placed in a chronological order—are often marshaled together as "evidence" to make ahistorical arguments. They argue that any social theory can be proven by selectively arranging the available historical facts. In this respect, some believe historical events involve a set of circumstances which are best understood by doing meticulous historical research, usually using primary documents, so that the specifics of one historical event—inevitably unique—can be understood. By way of contrast, most sociologist assume that some human behaviors can be generalized, and are experienced, in more or less the same manner, by different societies.

Some sociologists dislike historical research because it often concentrates on a few case studies but generalizes these conditions to the world at large. Most famous is the assertion that the main problem with historical sociology is N = 1. Because most sociologist believe generalization is possible, some take issue with the specificity of some historical research (see Lieberson 1991). Another related problem associated with historical research is the comparison of units. In effect, some object to comparing different social systems that existed at different periods of time, a common strategy for those who study revolution. For example, Skocpol's (1979) study compared the revolutions that occurred in China, France and Russia.

The Advantages of Historical Comparative Research

Advocates of historical comparative research argue that all social research requires a historical context. In fact, without a historical context, no social research would be meaningful (see Tilly 1981). For example, C Wright Mills has asserted that, "Every social science—or better, every well considered social study –requires an historical scope of conception and a full use of historical materials" (1959:145). Moreover, most recognize that the descriptions of historical epochs—defined by broad civilizational norms (see Bloch 1953), or an overriding economic system (see Marx 1978)—are useful for understanding more specific social events that occurred during a historical period. In particular, the *Annales School*[3] asserts that cross-disciplinary considerations such as geography, economics, demography and culture, should all be used to describe the totality of different historical periods. Moreover, the specificity of some social research is problematic because it is often presented without an historical context that is often vital for understanding a specific event.

As a practical matter, only historical comparative research can explore broad, multi-causal events that occurred in the past. Likewise, the historical comparative approach is useful for placing the events of a specific nation, or society, into a broader context as it relates to similar, or dissimilar, events occurring throughout the world. In this respect, making comparisons is a natural part of all social science methodology, and comparisons are made in all social science research even if the object of inquiry is a very specific event or social phenomenon.

Historical Comparative Research Methodology

The Organization of the Documents

The best way to negate the drawbacks of the historical comparative research methodology is to organize historical documents into categories and then evaluate their availability and quality (Tilly 1981). In general, the primary data used in this project fell into the following types of documents produced by the Iranian government and Iranian social movements: 1) Constitutions (in the years 1907, 1980, 1989); 2) Treatises of the ideological founders of movements; 3) Interviews with movement leaders in the Iranian press; and 4) Speeches by movement leaders. Sources, arranged in these categories, are presented in a bibliography at the end of this work.

Over time, the following comparisons were made between these documents: 1) How different movement leaders represented *sovereignty* in their speeches, treatises, pamphlets and interviews; 2) How different leaders used cultural symbols to construct their social movement ideology and movement frames; 3) How tactics and symbolic action (sit-ins, hunger strikes etc…) undertaken by movement leaders and followers were used to frame social protest over time.

Historical Evidence and its Quality

This study begins with the Tobacco movement and culminates with the ongoing *2nd of Khordad* movement. I primarily used secondary sources for descriptions of social movement activity that took place before the 1963 *Moharram* protest, but some important primary sources of this period were available. These were often the texts and speeches of movement ideologues that described the position of leaders in these movements. For instance, the work of Jamal Ad-Din al-Afghani (1972)--an important Moslem theorist involved in the Tobacco protest--has been widely translated due to his importance to the Pan-Islam movement. Likewise, both pro and anti-

constitutional tracts written by leaders during the Constitutional revolution were available, such as Shaikh Fazlollah Nuri's [1908-09] refutation of constitutionalism. There are also many excellent secondary sources available. For instance, Browne ([1910] 1966) had contacts in Iran during the Constitutional revolution, and reproduces many important primary documents in his study of the Constitutional revolution.

Primary documents related to social movement activity are more widely available for recent movements. For instance, translated speeches that Ayatollah Khomeini gave during the 1963-64 Qom protests have been printed by the Iranian Ministry of Information in Tehran and also translated by Hamid Algar (1981). The Ministry of Information in Tehran, as well as other government-sponsored presses, has translated many speeches of movement leaders associated with the Iranian Revolution. Likewise, Ali Shariati (1978; 1981), a primary ideologue of the Iranian Revolution, gave lectures (1964-73) that are widely available through various presses. Currently, the Iranian Ministry of Information and the *Office of the Leader* (Ayatollah Khamenei) publishes speeches (e.g. Khamenei's address before the World Muslim Conference) that are available on government websites (Islam-pure.de/imam/speeches).

Fortunately, the Information Ministry in Iran (and related publishing houses) regards publishing speeches and treatises by leaders of the revolution as important in the preservation of the historical record. They are particularly intent on preserving speeches that were made during periods of conflict. Also, they continue to be active in preserving the historical record of current government leaders who were former revolutionaries. Of these publishers, al-Tawhid (www.al-islam.org) has a collection of high quality translations—many available on-line—of speeches and philosophical work, often the complete texts, authored by the most preeminent religious

leaders in Iran. This includes original texts and speeches by Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah

Motahhari, Ali Shariati and Ayatollah Tabataba'i.

The hypothesis of this work is that movements were enabled and constrained by frames

of sovereignty negotiated during previous protest cycles. Of particular importance is how

movement frames are constraining, and enabling, the current reform movement in Iran.

President Khatami (1997, 1998)--a primary leader of this movement--has published two texts

that have been translated into English. Many of his speeches are also available through the

Presidential website (www. President.ir/khatami). Likewise, current reformers, the most

important being Abdol Karim Soroush (2000) have also published books that have been

translated into English. In general, primary documents related to *the 2nd of Khordad* movement

are widely available. For instance, Soroush has, during the past five years, granted a series of

interviews to *Kiyan* that are available on-line at various sites (see http://www.seraj.org).

Currently, three Iranian English dailies, the *Teheran Times*, *Iran Daily* and *Iran News* are

available on the internet. The official Iranian state news agency (IRNA) also translates news

articles into English and is available online. The *Teheran Times* and *Iran News* are extensions of

this agency. Another valuable internet site, easily the most important asset as it relates to

primary sources used in this work, is NetIran (www.NetIran.com). It has a database of many

Iranian periodicals, dating back to 1988, which have been translated into English.

A staple of many Iranian periodicals, more so than in the Western press, are interviews

with government officials and movement leaders. Indeed, many independent magazines publish

interviews of reform movement leaders nearly verbatim, which are often presented in serials over

time. Moreover, current and past movement leaders produced journals that represent their ideas

to the public. Currently, movement leaders often edit periodicals that are directly connected to

the movement they endorse. Recently, there has been a crackdown on some reform journals with close to thirty being closed by the judiciary in 2001-2002 (e.g. *Kiyan* and *Khordad*).

Conclusion

This study employs a historical comparative research methodology because it investigates a series of social movements and revolution that occurred in Iran over time. Moreover, the study examines how a unique Iranian culture contributed to the development of social movement frames over time. The primary documents used in this research include: 1) Iranian Constitutions (in the years 1907, 1980, 1989); 2) Treatises; 4) Interviews with movement leaders, and 5) Speeches by movement leaders.

Over time, the following comparisons are made: 1) How different movement leaders, represented *sovereignty* in their speeches, treatises, pamphlets and interviews; 2) How different leaders used cultural symbols to construct their social movement ideology and movement frames; 3) How tactics and symbolic action (sit-ins, hunger strikes etc…) undertaken by movement leaders and followers were used to frame social protest over time.

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[1] Most of the early "founders" of sociology, such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Auguste Comte and Karl Marx investigated historical periods and regarded historical descriptions as important to understanding ongoing sociological phenomena.

[2] Skocpol (1979) and Moore (1965) conducted two well known studies of revolution using this methodology. Skocpol investigated revolutionary processes in Chinese, French and Russian revolutions. She believes that social revolutions occurred when three classes—1) property owners, 2) producers and 3) state bureaucracies—where in conflict with one another. Likewise, Moore (1965) identifies five classes, and follows their progress over time in order to identify how their interaction effects revolutionary movements.

[3] Marc Bloch, Ferdinand Braudel and Lucien Febvre were early founders of the Annales School. Immanual Wallerstein and Terrance Hopkins are contemporary proponents of the Annales approach.