The Process of Leading Change in the Kurdistan Islamic Movement – Iraq
(Emergence, Factors and Trends)
Sabah Mofidi
PhD Candidate in Political Science

Abstract: This article studies the process of emergence of the Islamic Movement in South of Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan) and follows its internal changes. It explains how the Islamic organizations emerged; and, in the process, provides answers to questions such as: What have the effective factors been in the emergence of this movement and its internal changes? What is the deference between this and other Islamic movements? What has the effect of other Islamic movements been? Which ideological-intellectual trends have existed within it? Mentioning the effect of other Islamic Movements and also the special situation of Kurdistan on it, its trends, parties and ideological-intellectual relations with others have been studied. Indeed, by far, the reasons of the uprising of this movement, its relation with Kurdish nationalism and also its influence and function in autonomous region of Kurdistan have been explained. It has been tried to clarify which internal trend could be maintained in the Kurdistan political arena.

Key words: Islamic Movements, Islamic Movement of Kurdistan, Kurdistan Jamaat-i-Islami, Kurdistan Islamic Union, Jund Al-Islam, Ansar Al-Islam.

Introduction

In history of the Islamic communities, some movements have exited which under the name of Islam opposed the undesired status quo. The Islamic movements have included the mass movements with the various religious leadership and with emphasizing on religious principles for changing the status quo specially social and political that sometime they have succeeded and sometime not. The new type of these movements are the contemporary Islamic movements that has been emerged specially against the Software and Hardware West (modernity and colonialism) as the external reasons of these movements along with the internal potential of Islam as the religious internal reasons such as some concepts like Jihad, martyrdom, justice and so on (Khorramshad, 2005). Such movements have existed in most of Muslim countries and in different dimensions. They gradually converted to various parties and trends that have organizationally activated to reach their aims. The Iraqi Kurdistan also is one of these communities that during recent decades has been under the effect of contemporary Islamic movements and Islamist waves.

The Kurdistan Islamic Movement in Iraq also has been a reflection of new Islamic movements in the Islam world and of its questions has also been the reviving of Islam and opposing the non-Islamic parties; although, they fought against the Baath regime as well. Its history is full of the fluctuations and it is not comparable with none of the other Islamic movements. These fluctuations from uniting to splintering; from war and Jihad to form Islamic government to legal contesting; covering the most radical fundamentalists to very quiet Islamic parties; and so on, have given this movement the special characteristics. In this study, mentioning the contemporary main political and Islamic trends in Iraq shortly, this movement with its splinters and parties are examined.

Contemporary Main Political and Islamic trends in Iraq

Iraq covers three geographical areas with different communities. The central area includes Sunni Arab with about 20% population, south is for Shiite Arab with about 55% population and north is under the Kurdish authority with about 20% population. There are also a few percent of other small ethnicities (Saifzadeh, 2001, 69).

Apart from the ruling Baath party, before 2003 three kinds of main trends or political parties have existed in contemporary political history of Iraq: the religious parties and trends; Left parties include communist party, socialist party and so on; regional parties in Kurdistan. The contemporary religious trends in Iraq generally include three brunches: Shiite Islamic trend, Sunni Islamic trend and the Kurdistan Islamic trend. Because of their impact on the Kurdistan Islamic movement, it is necessary to have a glance on Shiite, Sunni, and regional movements in Iraq.

Shiite Islamic Movement:

The first phase of Islamic movement in Iraq is related to the years between 1914 to revolution of 1920 against British colonial especially among Shiite. After Second World War until 1957 that the greatest and most organized Islamic party i.e. Shiite Dawa Party was established, several Islamic parties constituted which Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Tahrir Al-Islami were Sunni and Muslim Youth
Movement was Shiite. The Shiite movement has been vast and it includes the various stages and trends up to now. Here just two cases of alliances within this movement related to Kurdistan Islamic movement are shortly mentioned:

1- Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council; that in the middle of year 1983 enounced itself as the sole official representative of the Iraq Islamic movement. The important parties and groups of SIIC were Islamic Dawa Party, Islamic Action Organization, Movement of Iraqi Mujahidin and so on (Nazimyan, 2003, 87).

2- Alkotla Al-Islami; this group was an alliance of the Islamic Movement (Sheikh Jawad Khalsi), Al-Fath Al-Islami Movements (Sheikh Nadim Alhatami), Islamic revolution army (Abu Osamah) and so on (ibid., 91).

It should be mentioned that after Saddam regime, the Council including Dawa Party have had most influence in the political arena of Iraq and the Shiites have obtained the highest proportion in central government.

Sunni Islamic Movement:

In 1946 through returning Sheikh Mohammad Mahmood Al-Sawaf from Egypt, who went there for education and set relation with Muslim Brotherhood, the Muslim Brotherhood Movement entered into Iraq and Muslim Brotherhood Jamaat under the religious leadership of Sheikh Amjad Al-Zahawi was constituted in 1948. Since the Muslim Brotherhood in Iraq was a brunch of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, they naturally followed their thought and action method and promoted the newspapers and books of that movement. The early years of Muslim Brotherhood Jamaat was allocated to creating organization and internal issues. Since this movement was Sunni, often influenced the Sunni circles and in getting important audiences experienced failure in Shiite area (ibid., 38).

There were other Sunni groups in smaller dimensions such as Al-Jamaa Al-Islami under Sheikh Badri that it was in Islamic Alkotla alliance with Shiite Groups. After Saddam, some other Sunni groups and parties emerged in political arena of Iraq. It should be noted that Sunni trends because of their ruling sect, while they are minority, and fear of Shiite majority, until collapse of Baath regime did not have effective political activities against regime.

Regional Movement:

Another political movement in Iraq was on the basis of ethnicity or in other word nationality (as the Kurds are called a stateless Nation) in Kurdistan, north of Iraq. In different parts of Kurdistan including this part in Iraq, there has been a long-time fighting (more than a century) to gain their national rights. Apart from traditional movements, the Kurds in Iraq have fought under modern parties especially Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) founded in 1946 and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) founded in 1975 up to now. The Kurdish Nationalists have been secular. But, from the 1980s, gradually religious movement also emerged. The Kurdish national movement in Iraq, eventually, after 1991 succeeded to establish an autonomous government under the support of United Nations and superpowers. And after 2003 with collapsing Saddam regime, they participated in central government of Iraq.

---

a) A totality of political trends in Iraq

---

Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies, 2(4) April, 2014
The Process of Leading Change in the Kurdistan Islamic Movement – Iraq (Emergence, Factors and Trends)

Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies, 2(4) April, 2014

167

b) A totality of Islamic Movement in Iraq

Kurdistan Islamic Movement

Although most of the Kurdish uprisings and their national movements have been under the leadership of religious figures like Sheikh Abdulsalam and other Barzan’s Sheikhs, Sheikh Mahmood and so on but indeed, their movements were for gaining their own ethnic rights, not Islamic. On the other hand, they shared the same religion with Iraq’s government and they didn’t have religious problem. So, indeed before 1980 practically there was not Islamist trend in Kurdistan. It is only after the death of Mala (Mullah) Mustafa Barzani, the national leader of Kurdish Movement, in 1979 and after 1980 that under the effect of Islamic government in Iran and the Iran-Iraq War the Islamic Movement was emerged. With the start of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980, Iran founded and armed Islamic groups and Iranian backed Islamic groups began emerging in Iraqi Kurdistan (Kakei, 2013). Totally, one can divide the emergence of Kurdistan Islamic movement into two stages: first, the foundation of affiliated small initial groups and second, the foundation of principal parties.

A) Affiliated Small initial Groups

In 1952 Sheikh Mohammad Sawaf went to Sulaimani (Sulaymaniyah) and Halabja and created a relation with Mala Othman Abdul-Aziz (1922-1997) and Mala Mohammad Baha Addin. Meanwhile, the thought of Muslim Brotherhood came to Kurdistan and especially in Halabja was extended (Mardokhi, 2004). Hereafter, someone like Mala Othman, Abdul Aziz Prazani and Umar Rashawi have been in the leadership of the Islamic party of Iraq from 1950s until mid 1980s.

In early 1980s, some of the Kurdish youths and the religious figures under the leadership of Mala Othman, that in this time he was Imam in Halabja and of the influential figures in Kurdistan, were grouped under the name of Kurdistan Islamic Movement. It provided a ground for splitting the leadership of the Islamic party of Iraq because of conflict between the MB’s pan-Arab Islamic unity ideology and the Kurdish nationalist view for the recognition of Kurdish rights within a post-Baathist Islamic state of Iraq and also the combine of Kurdistan Islamic movement with the military groups. After this conflict, Mala Othman left the ranks of the MB and eventually, along with some of his close associates, he escaped to Iran (Jamal, 2004). However, though in mid 1980s the relation between Baghdad and Sulaimani and Halabja was started again, in 1987 with the setup of a law by Baath regime the memberships of Muslim Brotherhood were pressed and some of its leaders were arrested and a numbers of them including a large numbers of Kurds escaped to abroad especially Iran (Mardokhi, 2004).
Hence, the intellectual origin of Islamic trend in Kurdistan was the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood especially the thought and teaching of Hasan Al-Banna (Jamal, 2004). Although, afterwards especially in 1990s, some others belong to other tendencies and Islamic fundamentalists’ group including Salafist, Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan and Jihadist in Afghanistan were joined them.

Besides, there were some other groups that were constituted from the beginning of 1980s and often under the effect of Islamic revolution of Iran and by support of Liberation Movements Office belonging to "Pasdaran Army" (Iranian Revolutionary Guards) that they were not well-known and afterwards were mostly dissolved or joined Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK) especially Sunnis. These include following groups:

1- Kurdish Islamic Army; that they were Sunni and its Founder was Abbas Shahin (Abu Osama). This group was in the above-mentioned Alkotla Al-Islami Alliance.

2- Islamic Fayli Kurdish Organization; this organization was belong to Shiite Kurds that itself included three groups that each one had its special view: Muslim Kurdish Movement under leadership of Hussein Fayli, Islamic Fayli Kurdish Association that in 1982 was constituted in Tehran, Islamic Fayli Kurdish Movement under leadership of Jalil Fayli that its activities were confined to some scattered missionary works.

3- Hizbullah of Kurdistan in Iraq; this party was related to Sunni Kurds that in 1983 emerged in Iran, Sheikh Mohammad Khalid Barzani was its leader. This party was in the above-mentioned Shiite Supreme Council alliance. After the 1991 Gulf War, Hizbullah of Kurdistan dissolved itself encouraging its members to join the KDP under the leadership of Massoud Barzani - current President of Kurdistan Region in Iraq (ibid). It should be noted that Adham Barzani, Sheikh Mohammad Khalid’s nephew, because of different view separated from his uncle and constituted another party under Kurdistan Revolutionary Hizbullah (KRH) in 1988. KRH couldn’t success in attracting forces and after collapse of Saddam regime, announced its dissolution in 2004 claiming it had reached its aims.

4- Muslim Association; this trend also belonged to Sunni Kurds that in years between 1979-1981 was constituted and its founders were Sheikh Albarzanji and Sheikh Ahmad Khanagha. They had a close relation with Islamic Republic of Iran. They had also relation with Supreme Council of Iraq Islamic revolution and they had a representative in the Council. One of the disputes of this group with Muslim Brotherhood was their relation with Iran.

5- "Islamic Relation" (Paywandi Islami); it was also established in 1980s under leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Barzanji that then they joined Islamic Movement of Kurdistan in 1987.

6- Kurdistan Mujahidin movement; that it was also belonged to Sunni Kurds and was constituted by Sheikh Abutalib BarzANJI.

The above-mentioned small groups, indeed, did not have the support of people and most of religious figures in Kurdistan. Apart from some individuals in Muslim Association, most of their memberships had the low level of literacy in religious knowledge or they were from traditional Sheikhs that had no more important influence in region. And they nominally and mostly under the relation with Iran existed, so couldn’t have a success in Kurdistan. Almost one of the reason to create and their maintaining was the use of the Iranian Liberation Movements Office. And they mostly had relation with Shiite groups and the Supreme Council. Albeit it does not mean that the other Islamic or secular groups didn’t use the aids of Iran, but they didn’t get their existence from Iran and their relations with Iran had mostly political aspect (Nazimyan, 2003, 269 - 75).

However, what has been well-known as the main Islamic trend in Kurdistan is the continuation of Muslim Brotherhood that under Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (Harakat Al-Islami) and its splinters have widely had activity and effect in Kurdistan political arena.

B) Principal Islamic Parties in Kurdistan: Islamic Movement of Kurdistan and its splinters

In 1987 after the immigration of some of Muslim Brotherhood, figures and people of Halabja and its suburbs to Iranian Kurdistan, as mentioned above, in Seryas camp and then in Sina (Sanandaj), Islamic Movement in Kurdistan (IMK), including Islamic Relation group and other groups, an military-political organization under the leadership of Mala Othman Abdul Aziz and some other figures and personalities was formally constituted (Mardokhi, 2004). From the beginning, IMK placed the fighting with Baath regime for collapse it clearly in its blueprint and by a Jihadist approach, anticipated and prompted army branch as an outstanding field of its activity (Nik Anjam, 2003). So, in the midst of intensive fighting between the Kurdish Peshmarga (freedom fighters) forces and the Iraqi military units, the Iranian regime began training and arming members of them (Kakei, 2013). Nevertheless, after USA attack to Iraq in 1991, gradually and practically, a principal section of this movement stands against the Kurdish secular trend.

Following the recognition of Kurdistan as a no-fly zone after the Gulf war and the retreat of
Iraqi government from three provinces of Kurdistan in 1991, Kurdish forces controlled them and after that, many of oppositions of Iraqi Government transferred some of their activities to this region. The principal Islamic political forces also that exclusively are Sunni within the framework of IMK party return to Kurdistan-Iraq. They started activity, propagation and incitation so that in mid 1990s, after KDP and PUK, IMK was third military-political influential force in Kurdistan and they had war and tension with other political parties during this decade. So, IMK’s military arm found an internal function so that from the beginning a heavy armed clash with the forces of PUK in 1992 in Kefri and Kalar occurred. However, with signing a ceasefire agreement, the armed clashes ended, although because of the ideological and intellectual distance, tensions at various levels between two parties remained (Nik Anjam, 2003).

In the Kurdistan Parliament elections 1992, IMK won only 5.1 percent of the total votes. Such a low percentage of votes was not enough to pass the 7 percent threshold needed to get a seat in the Kurdish Parliament. While the leaderships of the KDP and the PUK began cooperating to govern the region, the IMK leadership instigated violence in order to destabilize the Kurdish coalition government. Iran stepped in arming the militant wings of the IMK especially several branches within which in 1980s had fought in Afghanistan. These wings included “the Islamic fundamentalists” group under the leadership of Ali Bapir and the Jihadists group led by Mala Krekar - a former jihadist returned to Kurdistan in 1992 with extensive trainings he gained while in Afghanistan” (Kakei, 2013).

IMK extended its activity out of the framework of Kurdish common administration under ruling PDK and PUK and established a separate administrative, political and military infrastructure in the region under its control especially Hawraman and Sharazur neighboring the regions controlled by PUK. In December 1993, the military clashes between PUK and IMK in some parts of Sulaimani province and Karkuk Peaked and IMK was forced to retreat to the border of Iran. The leadership of Movement left the region and for several months was under the guardian of KDP in Salah Aldin countryside. When the tension between PDK and PUK were worsened and in May 1994 converted to Military war, most of the IMK’s forces along with PDK’s forces fought against PUK. Eventually the leadership of IMK could return to its centre and constituted its own headquarter in Halabja (The report of HRW, 2002). In this time, the militant wings of the IMK, the two above-mentioned pro-Iranian Islamic fundamentalist groups remained in Iran throughout 1994 and 1995 (Kakei, 2013). Indeed, during the war between PDK and PUK, because of the supporting PUK by Iran, these radical groups didn’t fight against PUK.

**Offshoots of IMK**

In its history, IMK has experienced many fluctuations that of them can mention the splits that occurred on the axis of first, some groups of the Muslim Brotherhood and second, Salafists and Jihadists.

1. **Offshoots related to Muslim Brotherhood**

There have been two splinters within IMK that they attributed themselves to Muslim Brotherhood. These two are as following:

a) **Uprising Movement**

In the same years that IMK was constituted, 1987, Mala Othman’s brother, Mala Sediq Abdul Aziz, along with some others constituted Alnehza that called themselves as Muslim Brotherhood. Although they partially agreed with use of weapons and military but they often had missionary invitation. This group afterwards under the name Uprising Movement (Bzutnaway Raparin) continued. In 1999-2000, they united with IMK and called themselves “Bzutnaway yakbun” (Unity Movement).

b) **Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU)**

In 1994, another group of Muslim Brotherhood separated from IMK and under Kurdistan Islamic Union (Yekgirtûy islâmî Kurdis), announced itself that gradually converted to the biggest Islamic organization in Kurdistan-Iraq. They represent themselves as the real representative of Muslim Brotherhood in Kurdistan. KIU have been affected by Intellectual foundations of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood founders, but because of special situation of Kurdistan, they have organizationally and even intellectually in some fields activated out of the Islamic party of Iraq, that is representative of Muslim Brotherhood this country.

From the beginning, they have emphasized on reformation and inviting and started with three axis slogans; freedom, fraternity and justice. Salahaddin Muhammad Bahaddin was elected as Secretary General at its first general conference in 1994. This group in contrary to the common approach in Kurdistan in that period, in its statement of being, negated the military activity and armed fighting and in its organizational chart didn’t define the military arm. With adopting a political, cultural and voluntary strategy in region such as building mosque, clinic, some plans for villages where they had more followers and so on and with the support of Saudi Islamic organizations, it could to convert to one of the political effective forces in Kurdistan arena very
soon. Indeed, one of the reasons for the success of this party in gaining the early social position, was the focus on humanitarian measures such as building and management of orphanages for children without family and covering the families without heads (without discrimination between them, either Islamic or secular) in the period that internal war between Kurdish parties, went to destroy the political gains of long-time fighting of Kurdish nation (Nik Anjam, 2003; Jamal, 2004).

Simultaneously and along with above-mention measures, the activity of this party in political and cultural aspects was extended. The leaders of party believed that the position of region needed more democratic and political fighting. For them democracy and elections were the ways to reach political power, so they did not believe to any violence (Nik Anjam, 2013). Culturally, this party by understanding the special situation of Kurdistan and identify spectrum of its audiences, constituted some organizations such as "Kurdistan Muslim authors association" and in press arena, issued some presses with different approaches. While the "Yekgirtû" weekly as its formal organ has issued with news, politics and analytical Policy (Yakgrtu weekly, 2014), "Payami Rasti" the organ of Kurdistan Muslim authors association, has had a literary and cultural approach (371 formal newspapers..., 2014). Beside these, "Hajan" quarterly has worked on theoretical and intellectual debates, and has propagated and explained the religious teachings in a discourse compatible with the intellectual space of Kurdistan. Totally, the approach of these presses has been on the line of modification of the space of religious discourse in Kurdistan and they have tried to set the spirit of tolerance. They also have paid attention to Mainstream media and have gained a proportional success in the free and competitive space of media in Kurdistan (Nik Anjam, 2003).

In comparison with other Islamic parties, this party has had a more Kurdish nationalist stance. So that during the USA attack, responding the critics of some persons and parties in Muslim world including the parties with common intellectual approach like Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, and issued "Fatwa" against the groups that cooperate with Allied forces, Salahaddin Mohammad Baha the leader and the General Secretary of party in that time mentioned that: "The opinion of any clergy is respected, but the competency of issued Fatwa about issues that occurred in our land, in the first level is with ourselves. Maybe being away from this space and the lack of understanding leads them astray fatwa" (Nik Anjam, 2003) Besides, they have had important debates on the lack of conflict between nationalism with religion. In this regard, Abubakr Ali one of its leaders has had a serious discussions on nationalism and its relevance in the domain of the thought of a Muslim people, a debate that has preoccupied a part of the political and intellectual elites of Kurdistan for years.

The special characteristics of this party have set this party in different stance from other Islamic parties in Kurdistan. Salahaddin Muhammad Baha was one of the five Kurdish leaders in the Iraqi Governing Council after Saddam. Abdul-Rahman Sidiq Kareem another leader of this party was minister of environment in the cabinet of this government. Moreover, in the committee of drafting constitution of Iraq that was 25 persons, 5 persons of them were Kurdish that one of them was from KIU. It has always had some representative in Iraqi Parliament. And during recent years it has also been in forth level after PDK, PUK and Goran.

Briefly, as Nik Anjam (2003) has mentioned, the reflection of actions and functions of this party represents that considering the alternatives with flexible trends and compatible with the conditions of society and new situations is one of the solutions for inhibition of religious extremist tendencies.

2- Offshoots related to Salafists and Jihadists

The IMK continued its activities under its leader Mala Othman until his death in 1997 and after that under his brother Mala Ali Abdul Aziz. As mentioned, in 1999-2000 Bzutnaway Rararin also joined them and they continued under IMK-Unity (Bzutnaway yakbun). So, from 1994 to 2001 there was no formal split. During this period, IMK interacted with two principal parties of Kurdistan in different shapes, from Military confrontation to participate in local cabinet having minister in the cabinets under dominate of PDK and PUK. But in 2001, because of internal problems in Tawela congress, IMK-Unity once again divided into some splinters as following: Islamic movement in Kurdistan under leadership of Mala Ali Abdul Aziz; Jamaat-i- Islami under Mala Ali Bapir; Aleslah (Reformist) group under Mala Krekar; and, some small radical groups such as Altawhid, Alhamas and Soran forces.

In examining the splits in Islamic movement in Kurdistan, according to Nik Anjam (2003), some reasons have been mentioned such as "unclear in process of organizational management of party, closed leadership system, various views of Islam and intellectual and spiritual inability of its leaders for satisfying the body of party." Of these, the important reason was that "the members of the IMK had diverse ideological concepts and backgrounds such as Muslim Brotherhoods, Pro-Turkish Islamists, Salafist fundamentalists, and Jihadist Kurds who had ties with the al-Qaeda organization in Afghanistan" (Kakei, 2013). However, finally, of the survivors of IMK-Unity, two parties including Jamaat and IMK remained
that after explaining Ansar Al-Islam, these two are briefly examined:

### a) Ansar Al-Islam

As mentioned above, some smaller factions of IMK in order to have different view gradually separated. They had an extremist view and followed the more radical Islamic ideology. Some of these groups opposed with any cooperation with secular political parties and they opposed the decision of IMK in 1997 to participate in PUK Local government. They believed to fight against all others to remove them. They also wanted to perform the Islamic Law precisely and completely in the areas under control of IMK (Mahmoudi, 2005).

As first group, some of the Kurdish Islamist veterans in Afghanistan under leadership of Najmadin Faraj Ahmad known as Mala Fateh Krekar, of the long-time members of IMK and familiar with the Islamic Jihad and Mujahidin in Afghanistan, were separated and formed Aleslah group. Second, Al-Hamass group under the commander of Mala Umar Baziani and Hassan Sofi was formed and began promoting a Salafist view. This group also opposed with IMK’s measure to participate in PUK local government. Third group was Soran under commander of Abu Habiba, the military arm of movement and strongest among these brunches. This group covered hundreds of armed including non-Iraqi Arab that some of them had fought in Afghanistan. Forth group was Altawhid (Islamic Unification Movement or IUM), most radical separated brunch. This group of 30-40 persons for a period was settled in Balek in the Qandil Mountains near the Haji Omran and Border of Iran (Mahmoudi, 2005; Kakei, 2013).

The small splinter groups of IMK gradually integrated together. In July 2001, Altawhid and Alhamas integrated and constituted Islamic Unity Front (IUF). After one month the Soran forces also joined them and they settled in Tawela and Biyara. On the fist September 2001, IUF was dissolved and the three above groups formally announced Jund Al-Islam under leadership of Abu Abdulla Shafiei. The group promptly announced Jihad against secular political parties in Kurdistan, as in their opinion, this parties have deviated from the “true path of Islam.” The military war within which PUK failed Jund Al-Islam, led to dissolve of this group in December 2001. After that, Abu Abdulla Shafiei and the rest of group united with Aleslah group and under the name Ansar Al-Islam (the supporter of Islam in Kurdistan) continued to activity. Mala Krekar became the leader (Amir) of this group (The Report of HRW, 2002; Mardokhi, 2004). The centre of this group also was in the villages of Tawela and Biyara belong to Halabja district in Sulaimani province near the border of Iran (The Report of HRW, 2002). As mentioned, Jund and Ansar Al-Islam covered even some people of other nationalities.

These groups had lots in common with radical fundamentalist movement that their origin came from Saudi Arabia. They emphasized on the common principles come out from literal interpretation of the Quran and return to the initial pure Islamic community. Jund Al-Islam had announced that they want to stop the control and interference of secularist on Islamic lands. One of the aims of this group was to disseminate duty of “enjoining good and forbid the evil” and to extend the Islam Law and “jihad against renegade seculars” (ibid.).

The Human Rights Watch during visiting region in a mission in September 2002 describes the actions of Jund Al-Islam as following:

On September 8, 2001, one week after it came into being, Jund al-Islam issued decrees, including: the obligatory closure of offices and businesses during prayer time and enforced attendance by workers and proprietors at the mosque during those times; the veiling of women by wearing the traditional 'abayah; obligatory beards for men; segregation of the sexes; barring women from education and employment; the removal of any photographs of women on packaged goods brought into the region; the confiscation of musical instruments and the banning of music both in public and private; and the banning of satellite receivers and televisions. Jund al-Islam also announced that it would apply Islamic punishments of amputation, flogging and stoning to death for offenses such as theft, the consumption of alcohol and adultery.

It should be noted that following the dissolution of Jund al-Islam and its reconstitution under the name of Ansar al-Islam in December 2001, the group announced a ceasefire. Negotiations were held with the PUK, aimed at arriving at a political agreement, but the assassination attempt on April 2, 2002 against Barham Salih, chief minister of the PUK regional government, led to their suspension. In June 2002, relations between the two sides deteriorated further as the PUK held Ansar al-Islam responsible for attempting to perpetrate more acts of sabotage (ibid). Besides, though Mala Krekar after arresting in Tehran airport and return to Netherlands in 2002 denied any relation with al-Qaeda and Saddam and also the ability of making chemical weapons by his groups, Kalin Pawil in February 2003 had told to Security Council of UN that Ansar Al-Islam plays a key role to relate Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network with Iraqi government. After Kalin’s speech USA promptly and formally announced the Ansar Al-Islam as a terrorist group (Kurdish Islamic Movement, 2003). However,
some wars between Ansar and PUK were occurred. Finally, after USA attack in 2003, the PUK forces destroyed this group and they lost the area under their control. Then, the rest of this group and other militant groups started secret and scattered activities and related with Al-Qaeda that sometimes they have had terrorist operation in Kurdistan.

b) Kurdistan Jamaat-i-Islami (Komal)

By the emergence of some conflicts and crisis in the internal elections of IMK-Unity first congress in 2000, a group including some of the members of leadership council of Movement through a statement on 20/5/2001, announced their change to Jamaat-i-Islami (Komalay Islami Kurdistan) and the council association of this new party elected Mala Ali Bapir as seigneur (Amir) (Komal, Political newspaper…, 2001). After a few months, some neutral individuals during the conflicts in IMK-Unity also united with Jamaat-i-Islami that Sheikh Mohammad Barzanji became spiritual leader and Ali Bapir maintained in his own position. Bapir was a long-time military commander of IMK and after his victory in above-mentioned elections, when Mala Ali Abdul Aziz didn’t accept the results and on the line of old disputes, along with his supporters separated from IMK- Unity (Nik Anjam, 2003). After domination of USA and UK on Iraq, Bapir with three of his friends and some guards on the way to meet an American officer in 10th July 2003 were arrested by American forces and after two years on 28/2/2005 he was released. After release in an interview, he told: “With the Baathists, I was in Kruper prison, even Saddam was also there. When I was released, I didn’t sign the released letter within which I had been called as a Baathist because I have only been a person in Kurdistan who killed his brother because of being Baathist” (The news of release…, 2005).

This party is intellectually ascribed to Wahhabi ideology and politically to Iran (Kakei, 2013). Although, they eventually came into electoral contesting and by far turned to moderation but especially in the beginning they opposed with democracy so that they believed Islam and democracy are incompatible and for them democracy was unlawful and had not legitimacy (Jamal, 2004). However, this party recognizes itself as a Kurdish party and after Iraq war (2003) delivered its weapons to Americans and claimed that has not cooperation with some radical groups that had conflict with USA like Ansar Al-Islam. This party legally and often activates in Sulaimani and Raniye (komall.org, 2005). It has some representative in Kurdistan and Iraq Parliaments (komalnews.net, 2014).

c) Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK)

The rest of IMK-Unity with the initial same name ‘Islamic Movement of Kurdistan’ under the leadership of Mala Ali Abdul Aziz continued to their activities. Although, sometimes Mala Ali had been called as a spiritual leader for whole of Islamic movements in Kurdistan with all brunches, but for some ones, after the death of Othman Abdul Aziz in 1997, Mala Ali did not have the charismatic mode of his late brother and his approach was faced with some critics. It perhaps prepared a ground to splits (Nik Anjam, 2003).

After the fall of the Saddam regime, American forces arrested Mala Ali with 14 persons in 2003 for a while and later he was released (The News of arrest…, 2005). He passed away in 2007 and after him, his brother Sidiq Abdul Aziz, the ex-leader of Uprising Movement, has been the spiritual leader of this party. Irfan Haji Ali has also been its political leader. This party is legally active in Kurdistan political arena especially in Halabja and its environs. It has also some brunches in other areas (Kurdish Islamic Movement, 2003). Generally, the influence and function of the party in elections has been less so that in the Kurdistan assembly has had minimum seats. It has had a good relation with Iran.
d) The historical process of forming the principal Islamic trends in Kurdistan and their relation with Muslim Brotherhood. The numbers 1, 2 and 3 are the rest of this movement up to now.

Effective Factors in Emergence of the Movement

The history of Islamic movements in Iraq represents a complexity so that they are, by far, incomparable with same movements in other countries. The Islamic trends of Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish (Shiite and Sunni) in three regions have existed sometime similar and sometimes different. Totally, the main root of Islamic Movements in Iraq returned to following reasons: British colonial (especially from the view of Shiite), collapse of Islamic Caliphate (especially for Sunnis) and suppressing Shites and lack of their participation in power after 1920. Apart from above reasons, the emergence of Kurdistan Islamic Movement has also had two other reasons: First, the Islamic fighting against central government to remove the ethnic discrimination and setup of justice. Second, fighting against the growth of non-religious and secular trends in Kurdistan and so the revive of Islam. Comparing the effect of Shiite and Sunni movements, Islamic Brotherhood Movement has had important impact on Kurdistan Islamic movement, given the Shiite community is smaller in Kurdistan. The main philosophy of the Sunni

Islamic parties’ activity and Islamism in the present age has been the interest to return to Caliphate system that was failed by the secular forces. So, enforcing the Islamic law is the main subject of Islamic movement and it was the main task of its memberships including Kurdistan.

However, some different conditions made Kurdistan Islamic trends distinct from other Islamic trends in Iraq: first, the existence of different nation and a strong long-time freedom movement provided a field for development of Islamic trends too. Second, the pressure on Kurds was more than others. So, though until late 1980s the Muslim Brotherhood movement did not have separate organization in Kurdistan, after pulling out of Iraq and especially after the Halabja chemical attack by Iraqi regime in 1988, the centre of Muslim Brotherhood activity, practically in contrary with other Sunni Groups, it organized itself for military fighting against Baath government. Third, through international support since 1991 Kurdistan was free from the ruling political norm in Iraq that practically had arrested the political activity of non-Baath party. So, the Kurdish parties had activity in the region under their authority, but the other
opposition parties of Iraq activated out of their related region, in Kurdistan or other countries. Fourth, unlike the other parts of Iraq where the conflict is sectarian between Shiite and Sunni Arabs, in Kurdistan because of the growth of secularism during recent decades, Islamic parties mostly for political contest with Left and secular parties to form an Islamic government and revive Islam, came into political arena.

For some scholars, the philosophy of Kurdistan Islamic Movement is justified by the principle that all Islamic issues are summed up in five points and the aim of Islam is not anything but these five points: Keep the faith, protect life and soul, preservation of race and generation, maintaining finance and economy, and maintain wisdom.\(^{10}\) Therefore, on this line, these groups and parties partially aimed keep the faith and gaining their civic and national rights. And while they have been affected by other Islamic movements such as Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-e-Islami and Salafism, and they have also had relation and overlapped with the Sunni and Shiite trends in Iraq, they have had differences with them related to Kurdish rights, political issues and situation of Kurdistan. Indeed, other Islamic movements have not had national-identity problem, but Kurdish Islamic parties politically wanted equality with other Muslim nations, as well. It should be noted that their relation with Islamic movement outside of Iraq, often has been intellectual and ideological and their relation with Islamic movement in Iraq especially Shiite has often been political and on the line on fighting with Baath regime.

**Sum Up**

Studying the various parties and groups in the history of Kurdistan Islamic movement, represents three different trends with certain differences that the tendency of each one has almost been as following:

1- **Religio-national:** This tendency, by far, belongs to Kurdistan Islamic Union that it is most tolerance and compatible with democratic and modern society. This group, as mentioned, did not have military arm and did not entry into military phase. Its activity has been done in the format of civil institutes more than other parties. It is the real representative of Muslim Brotherhood in Kurdistan and it has been affected by the initial leaders of that movement especially Hasan Al-Banna.\(^{11}\) They respect to other thoughts and intellectual trends in society. Unlike other Islamic party in Kurdistan, KIU claims that they are agree with democracy and human rights and in bringing the democratic rule in Iraq, they have had important role. Theoretically, they have linked the modern institutes and thoughts as nationalism to Islam. They agreed with the USA attack and participated in Iraqi Interim Government. So, this party has considered nationality (Kurdish), democracy and peaceful electoral competition more than others. They outlined the religious issues in the framework of non-violent Jihad by missionary works. And they believe that democratic ideals supported by party are compatible with teaching of Quran and tradition (Sunnat), the two main sources of Shariat (Jamal, 2004).

2- **Islamic Radical Fundamentalists:** The certain sample of the groups with this tendency, as mentioned, was Ansar Al-Islam that in contrary with KIU almost their view was same with Talibanism and Salafism. They perfectly performed the orders same with what Talban did in Afghanistan. They sometimes were known as a bunch of Al-Qaeda. They perfectly opposed modernity and Western countries and they ordered armed Jihad not only against USA but also against the secular groups in Kurdistan. Hence, according to their interpretation of Islam, pay attention to the preservation of the faith in such groups has been more remarkable. After 2003, these groups were almost removed from Kurdistan.

3- **Traditional and Moderate Fundamentalists:** This tendency is located between the two above spectrums that it is seen in the Islamic movement of Kurdistan (IMK) and Jamaat-i-Islami. These have been affected by both Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism. On the one hand, they are close to Muslim Brotherhood after Hasan Al-Banna especially Said Qutb as IMK’s initial leaders were the memberships of the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic party of Iraq, and some groups of them like Alnehza called themselves by the same name. On the other hand, they partially have tended to Salafism and have had military arm. However, they have been neither most radical like Ansar Al-Islam nor have also had wide-spreading civil activity as KIU. And finally they accepted party rivalry.

---

**Diagram:**

- Kurdistan Islamic Movement
  - Radical Fundamentalists (Ansar Al-Islam)
  - Traditional and Moderate Fundamentalists (IMK and Jamaat)
  - Religio-National (KIU)

- e) The trends of Islamic parties and their relation with Nationality and radicalism
Comparing these three trends, the religio-national one, according to its different and positive views on socio-political issues and understanding of the situation in Kurdistan with own special characteristics, has had a better stance in Kurdish society. Gaining the high percents of votes in elections during the recent decade by KIU shows the better stance of the moderate trend in comparison with traditional and radical fundamentalist ones.

Notes:

1 In this relation, it should be noted that one of the Komal’s memberships, Fadhil Qaradaghi, in 1998 wrote a book under “Myth of democracy”.

2 Imam Shatibi in his Book ‘Almuwafiqat’ has said the aims of Islam are these five principles. The Kurdish Islamic groups that most of them have been Sunni followed this principle (See: Mardokhi, 2004).

3 Hiwa Mirza the Manager of special and general Organization of KIU has said that: “the internal program adapted by his party indeed is based on the writing of Hasan Al-Banna, Ahmad Alghanushi and other Islamic clergies” (See: Jamal, 2004).

References:


Mahmoudi, Mohsin (26 February 2005). Ansar Al-Islam, a Terrorist Group or Follower of True Islam! Aso Weekly, N. 86.


Nazimyan, Reza (2003). The Contemporary Political Trends of Iraq, the cultural institute of Karaj: Ketab and Etrat.


371 formal newspapers and magazine exist in Kurdistan region. Retrieved from http://www.chatrpress.com/ (A(gDf05BJuzgEkkAAANzJkOTE2NTU0ODMzM00OWUyLTlOTQY2E4mgYx3WYzNTYw0Dv6HBosKTCg85h_cX0GZ8xTs1)1)/Detail.aspx?id=849&LinkID=3&Asp xAutoDetectCookieSupport=1(last accessed January 15, 2014).


www.komall.org (last accessed, April 2005).

http://komalnews.net/ (last accessed January 17, 2014).