

# Investigation of Jangal movement dependence on Islam alliance party

## Investigación de la dependencia del movimiento Jangal en el partido de la Alianza Islam

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to evaluate the Islam Alliance Party (IAP) and the influence it had on Islam Alliance Party of Gilan as known as Jangal Movement (JM). This study uses an analytical approach and reliable references. This is conceptual research with an analytical-descriptive approach which focuses on the literature as relevant evidence. Thus, a conceptual discussion about the influence of IAP on JM and an analytical and targeted review of related researches is presented. Historical background of IAP in the Islamic world and the history of JM. According to the related literature, it seems that many researchers believe that there isn't any strong relationship between IAP and JM; although they were established under the same title and many Mirza Kuchik Khan's beliefs about decolonization and independence were aligned with Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī. In this study, we tried to delineate the relationship, considering reliable sources.

**Keywords:** Islam Alliance Party, Jangal Movement, Iran

### RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio es evaluar el Partido de la Alianza Islam (IAP) y la influencia que tuvo en el Partido de la Alianza Islam de Gilan, conocido como Movimiento Jangal (JM). Este estudio utiliza un enfoque analítico y referencias confiables. Esta es una investigación conceptual con un enfoque analítico-descriptivo que se enfoca en la literatura como evidencia relevante. Por lo tanto, se presenta una discusión conceptual sobre la influencia de IAP en JM y una revisión analítica y dirigida de investigaciones relacionadas. Antecedentes históricos de IAP en el mundo islámico y la historia de JM. Según la literatura relacionada, parece que muchos investigadores creen que no existe una relación sólida entre IAP y JM; aunque se establecieron con el mismo título y muchas de las creencias de Mirza Kuchik Khan sobre la descolonización y la independencia se alinearon con Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī. En este estudio, intentamos delinear la relación, considerando fuentes confiables.

**Palabras clave:** Partido de la Alianza del Islam, Movimiento Jangal, Irán

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## Introduction

However the Islamic unity or harmony during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was rooted in the previous constructive efforts and benefited from their notions, motivations, and achievements, it can be argued that, in general, it had a more or less different origin and construction. Islamic Unity Movement or Pan-Islamism is known as Islam Alliance.

From the establishment of Safavid dynasty to the beginning of Qajar reign, it almost took three centuries for the Shia clergy to codify and present the theory of fiqh-sharia government as an alternative to the monarchy theory. In addition, Muhammad Baqir Behbahani provided the necessary focus by creating a hierarchical structure in the principled clergy. Here was the starting point of authentication of the clergy through the leadership of Sheikh Morteza Ansari as an adversary to the monarchy.

Islamic movement began with the tension between Qajar government and clergymen and the objection of the clergy to some changes in the education, administrative and judicial systems, to Western-modernity-based reforms, their interference in internal affairs, some common heresies, and threats made to the authority of the clergy. Pan-Islamic ideas of religious forces such as Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī encouraged this tension.

IAP was founded in 1915 coincided with the foundation of JM. Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī was of the very first individuals who played an important role in IAP and believed that progress of Muslims relies on the unity and returning to the early instructions of Islam.

The center and mastermind of JM was consisted of IAP people who were members of the clergy, except for one or two members. Foreigners who were aware of the domestic movements (such as the commander of British forces, General Dunsterville) knew that the JM was led by IAP.

## Research Background

Plenty of books and paper have been dedicated to IAP and JA. However, there isn't any book about the subject of our study. This study is based on previous documents and books related to JA and IAP. In his famous book, *Sardar Jangal*, Fakhraie introduces the IAP and many other researchers and writers such as Qajar prince, Abol-Hassan Mirza (known as Sheikh al-Rais) in a paper titled *Islam Alliance*, Mohammad-Ali Gilak in a book titled *History of the Gilan Revolution* have written about it.

## Historical Background

Mirza Kuchik Khan was a passionate theology student who traveled to Mazandaran along with Mirza Ali Khan Divsalar. In late 1915, he formed an organization called Islam Alliance near Talesh and passionate people of Gilan and Mazandaran helped him. He started many battles and thus, the Iranian government lost the authority in Northern Iran.

His ideas were inspired by leaders of Islamic movements in the last century such as Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī and his goal was to lead the rebellion in the form of an Islamic organization and prevent it from failure. Thus, he insisted on Islamic principles and religious foundations as the mastermind of JM.

It was said that the central office of IAP was located in Istanbul and it was established by some religious leaders such as Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī, Sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, Rashid Reza and Sheikh Mohammad Abdeh to gather and unite the Muslims of the world in order to fight against colonialism and create a political point of strength in the Islamic world.

IAP organization was established in Iran, following the path of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī and took broad and intense actions which led to him joining the organization.

Members of IAP took an oath to expel all the foreign invaders from Iran's land and they wouldn't shave their heads and henna their beards until the duty is done. Accordingly, they were referred to as "Jangali" (meaning "wild") as an insult. His followers were about 3,000 people but his influence was extraordinary. Undoubtedly, his sense of patriotism was the stimulus that drove him. He strongly believed that he couldn't consider himself as an elite. On the contrary, he considered him as the scum of society. He had no hesitation about harassing the Iranian government.

Gilan Islamic Alliance Party (GIAP) was led by a group of noble, sublime, people-oriented, committed to Islamic attributes individuals and prominent scholars and vigilant intellectuals each of whom were accepted and appreciated by people. GIAP popularity soared very soon and it played an important role in the social interactions and expanded its power throughout Northern Iran and beyond. It was mentioned in government documents that "almost a year ago and especially since few months ago, the influence and power of IAP in Gilan was so high that if

a government agent wanted to be able to perform his duties, he would have to make some connections with IAP.”

IAP organized a commission to deal with the government and judicial affairs, inspect and investigate brokerage codes, coping with bribery in government offices (such as arresting the chief justice of Gilan for bribery), the establishment of research courts throughout Gilan, Tonekabon, Astara, Khalkhal, Taromat and etc.

All of these shows the authority and influence of IAP in Gilan and suburbs. IAP was expanded throughout Gilan and beyond (Gorgan in the east, Zanjan in the west, Astara and Ardabil in the north, Tarom Sofla in the south) and people came under the umbrella of IAP.

Kuchik Khan talks about how IAP expanded in Iran: “Under the supervision of some Iranian, participation of Turkey and Germany representatives and consent of some powerful people in Tehran and Najaf, this organization gradually become more powerful than others and its goal was to persuade all Iranians toward Islam and Shia. Many secret circles were formed all over the country which involved as many as 150,000 individuals.

### **Jangal Movement Objectives**

There were two wings to JA: a non-religious-radical (left) wing based on the ideas of the social democratic party (Ehsan Allah Khan and Heydar Khan Amo-oghli) and a religious- landowner wing based on religious and patriotic ideas (Mirza Kuchik Khan, Haj Ahmad Kasmaie, and Dr. Ebrahim Heshmat).

Apparently, the two wings wanted the same thing in general but their interpretation and explanation were different. They demanded independence and territorial integrity, the expulsion of foreign forces, security, justice and campaign against autocracy and despotism. These goals are explained below:

**Independence and Territorial Integrity:** Mirza Kuchik Khan didn't support compromising with colonial countries. It was mentioned in the Jangal newspaper that “. . . first of all, we support the independence of our country . . . JA members believe that the government should be reformed without the involvement of neighboring countries.” Their interpretation of independence is that “in every sense of the word, independence means no involvement of any foreign countries in the country's affair, whether they are a neighboring country or not.”

They explicitly expressed their fight for independence: “Any country who send troops over to our country and violates our neutrality is considered as an aggressor, whether it's Russia, Britain, Ottoman or Germany.”

In the 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of Jangal newspaper, there was an important article in which the main reason behind JA is expressed to be Iran's weakness and looting of Iran by British and Russian forces during World War I. They believe that the cause of these problems is the people who didn't cut off the hand of aggressors and JA was founded to do so: “Almost half the country is in ruins and people are wandering. Despite Iran's neutrality, we suffered more than fighting countries. . . Today, a movement called Jangal in Iran is a national movement. What is that we're looking for? A simple word: Independence and prosperity of Iranian people.”

**Social Justice:** JA members demanded to end foreign abuse and development of industry, railways, and factories. After achieving independence and establishing a national government, JA members wanted the lands of great landlords to be divided between farmers and free education for all people.

The major idea of JA was to eliminate injustices and especially the ones due to the master- villein or owner-peasant system.

Upon the victory of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, Lenin read a statement known as a land command. In addition, an order was attached to the command in which the right to private ownership of any land was permanently denied and the land was owned by the public. The lands were not divided between people, but rather owned by the government and the government replaced the private owner. The non-religious-radical wing which was ideologically dependent on Russian theorists put the land issue as one of their priorities.

**Authoritarianism and Liberation:** Mirza Kuchik Khan demanded liberty, welfare, and human rights and anyone who thought differently was a traitor in his opinion. He believed that the only way to save Iran from poverty and corruption is establishing a republican and socialist government.

### **Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī's Objectives**

Formation of IAP was one of the most important intellectual solutions proposed by Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī to control and save the Islamic nation from existing harms and abnormalities. During the European military and economic attack against Muslims, he raised the issue of forming an Islamic community. He considered different

goals, principles, and methods to form the IAP. The most important of those are:

- Unity of nation to reform their sociopolitical system.
- Accepting a powerful Islamic country as the resistance center against foreign countries which unites all Islamic nations against colonialism.
- Denouncing racism as a great plague to Muslims' alliance. Thus, not only he condemned religious fanaticism and racism in his speech, but he showed his commitment to unite Islamic society in practice and introduced himself sometimes as an Iranian, Afghan or Hejazi.
- Praise for Muslim's intolerance against foreign enemy and colonialism: He believed that sectarian prejudice of Muslims would lead to their disintegration and failure. Thus, he asked the followers of different Islamic branches to be patient and tolerate each other. Sometimes he angrily talked out that it seems that Muslims are united not to be united, while if they unite and use their fury against the foreigners, no power can resist them. He was committed to his agenda and sometimes called himself Twelver and sometimes Hanafi. His emphasis on the words like the nation of Mohammad, Islamic province and prosperity and best interests of people is a sign of deep belief to Islamic unity and avoiding disunity.

### Dependence of JA to IAP

Between 1951 and 1954 due to implications of the Anglo-Russian Convention, Iran was unwittingly involved in World War I and the consequent invasion of Northern Iran by British and Russian forces created many problems.

In such circumstances, some scholars and politicians such as Sayyid Mohammad Kare'i, Soleyman Mohsen Eskandari, Sayyid Mohammad Reza Mosaverat, Sayyid Yahya Nademani, Mirza Taher Tonekaboni, Sayyid Hassan Modarres and Adib al-Saltaneh Sami'i argued that the only way out of colonialism was a united Islamic nation and through promoting this idea, they were trying to liberate Iran from this disaster.

At that time, Mirza Kuchik Khan who was familiar with the ideas of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī and made some connections with people like Sayyid Hassan Modarres believed in and defended the idea of Islam unity. He holds that if there was a center to lead and policy-making, scattered fights would be avoided, the pressure on people would be reduced and it would create a stronghold against the interference of foreigners.

Therefore, IAP was founded by Mirza in Gilan. The name was chosen because the objectives of Mirza and his organization was similar to Sayyid Jamāl's.

Mirza spoke out many times about the unity of Muslims against foreigners: "My dear brothers! Such disastrous circumstances which are the result of foreigners' interference and the increasing pressures of northern and southern neighbors compels us and every proud Iranian to unite and end this disgraceful life . . . We follow the path of early Mujahideen of Islam i.e. Husayn ibn Ali; albeit the power and authority of Yazid and the Umayyad government was not much less than the tsarist government. Although Husayn ibn Ali was defeated in the battlefield, but his name and reputation always lights up the path for freedom."

After defeating the Cossack forces, Mirza states: "Dear brothers! You just saw the result of unity and met the angle of victory. . . I always told you and I tell you now: As long as we don't deviate from the truth and justice and we don't turn our back to unity, God will not leave us high and dry."

This movement which was formed through unity was expanded to Shahsevan Khans of Khalkhal. Mirza believed that unity is the solution and stated in his speech in Khalkhal: "People gathered here know about the last 12 years of disaster and you know how foreigners have invaded this land due to lack of unity and alliance and overwhelmed our 6,000 years old independence and rights. It was because of our disunity and disagreement that our nation is fighting and incensing each other. The foreigners take advantage of this situation and made our government weak so much that it can't even deal with the internal affairs. Those who arose in the recent years to fight for independence and national reforms knew that unity is the only solution but wasn't able to achieve it . . . but IAP which was founded 2 years ago in Gilan, like a qualified physician, diagnosed the illness of our country and prescribed unity of Iranian people as the solution. Internal security and independence wouldn't be achieved unless through creating a sincere unity of all groups of people including nomads, villagers, urbanites and so on. For a while, this innocent purpose was limited to Gilan, due to conflicting with foreigners' benefits. Since the obstacles were overcome, IAP, in all seriousness, has taken action and delivered this message near and far."

Through the idea of Islamic unity, Mirza was trying to interrupt the power of Britain, Russia, and communists over Iran. Through a statement, he reminded people to cleverly watch out anything that is going on and do not be deceived and do not forget unity: "communists interfere in our internal affairs, committed murder and looted the

country's resources. They will pay for this as British, Iran's government and tyrants will. They came here wearing the mask of a friend and they've hurt us more than anyone. What is your responsibility? Be aware! Do not be deceived! Save yourselves from waywardness and extremism of these people under the umbrella of unity. Anyone who interferes in the country's affairs should be considered as an enemy and anyone who sincerely gave you a helping hand should be considered as a friend. Expel those who plant the seed of dissension."

Islam unity in the form of GIAP caused some researchers to consider this social group politically and organizationally dependent on the Islamic Alliance Movement led by Ottoman government and ideologically dependent on the Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī's ideas about the unity of Islamic nations. Reviewing the articles published in Jangal newspaper explains that these two hypotheses are completely wrong. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of the newspaper, the reason for using "Islam" in the name of the organization is explained: ". . . because most of the material and spiritual activities of this nation (i.e. Iran) are related to religion . . . and thus, the name reflects this mental state of people. It doesn't mean that the whole Islamic world is united to fight with . . . Christian countries . . . Islamic unity is not possible through political action . . . These days, national unity, as well as religious unity is not, is of no help unless unities of mutual interests." In explaining the definition of being an Iranian, it is said that ". . . due to the fact that we are Iranians and responsible for protecting this land, in our viewpoint, our homeland is preceded by all other countries. After successfully fulfilling all our duties as an Iranian, our Muslim brothers, as long as they fulfill their brotherly duties, have priority over others . . . any community that serves in the best interest of Iran is our brother and we part ways with groups and people who deviate from the path of Iran's prosperity . . . with the help of God, we can reach the top mountain of independence and reform and would be able to say with pride and courage that Iran belongs to Iranian and no one else."

JA interpretation of IAP is explained in Jangal newspaper: ". . . indeed, we arose in the name of IAP and we are attributed to this sacred community but it should be noted that we are supporting the slogan of "all Muslims are brothers" meaning while the disagreements between Muslims have put us in a weak position toward a common enemy, Muslims should not fight and kill each other in the name of being Shia, Sunni or other branches."

In his correspondence, Mirza Kuchik Khan frequently described his movement in support of national-religious objectives: "For a while, we've been at war with British forces and now, we are trying to defend our national and religious aspirations against their abuse and interference and we will not refrain from any effort."

Thus, the basis of JA activities was based on the idea of Islamic unity against foreign invaders and had no connection or proportion with the Ottoman Islamic Alliance.

Kasmaee denies any connection and dependence to IAP: "Because initially, the committee meetings were held once a week and Russian agents were aware of this, the committee suggested that a Rawda Khwani ceremony should be held in the house of each member as a cover because the Rawda Khwani was allowed by the government. Accordingly, it was decided to name the secret committee as IAP to publicize its activity. Therefore, the IAP founded by Mirza Kuchik Khan did not depend on any other organization or community of such name or title.

Mirza remained a believer and virtuous Muslim till his last day. Before moving to Rasht, he made some calls to people involved with IAP. After settling down in Rasht, he was a member of Rasht Islamic Alliance Party till the end of the first period of JA. This organization was dissolved at that time.

## Conclusion

Considering the nationalistic and patriotic approach in JA activities which was the result of the national-religious wing of the organization, it seems that JA was not affiliated with worldwide IAP existing in Ottoman because the dependence of Mirza Kuchik Khan on Ottomans couldn't be justified by international proponent and opponents. Choosing this name, regardless of any connections to other groups with the same name, expresses some kind of religious devotion to the aforementioned organization which plays a major role in forming the ideological basis of JA.

It was determined that JA, as far as possible, took its own path and by taking advantage of great scholar's guidance and consulting with well-known intellectuals, it made some efforts in various social situations and services such as road construction, school construction, fighting famine and providing food for people in need, fighting bribery and hoarding, building and repairing houses for the poor, organizing orphanages for the orphans and so on. These important activities were their priority. The most important one was fighting against internal and external enemies of Islam and the people. They fought heroically and mobilized people against these criminals and created a great movement and revolution. Their actions showed that they are independent and they have no support from any foreign government.

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