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**SUFISM IN SPIRITUAL CULTURE OF THE PEOPLES OF THE**  
**NORTH CAUCASUS**

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**Abstract**

Sufism in the North Caucasus has a long, contradictory history, which is associated with the spread and establishment of Islam. It formed new social relations, an appropriate type of worldview that differs from the pagan values prevailing in the region, which were predominant for many centuries. Only the establishment of Islam in culture of the peoples of Dagestan and Chechnya formed a new way of life and mental characteristics. In contrast to pagan, syncretic elements inherent in the worldview of the peoples of the region, Islam gave their worldview a more orderly, systemic, holistic character. Islam forms spiritual, cultural, moral and humanistic values that correspond to provisions of the Koran, aiming believers at a qualitatively different solution to everyday, spiritual and social problems. Sufi values among the peoples of Dagestan, and later the peoples of Chechnya, are formed episodically, starting from the 11th century. It was associated with the city of Derbent, which was considered a city of Sufis. However, such Sufi tariqas such as Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya arose in Dagestan and Chechnya at the beginning and then at the end of the Caucasian War. These tariqas were associated with the activity of Shamil's movement, its fading, and appearance of Kunta-Khadzhi Kishiev, who opposed the ghazavat, for ending the war of the mountaineers with tsarism. The militant Naqshbandiyyatariqat, which received the name of Muridism, adhered to by Shamil himself and his closest supporters, is giving way to the Qadiriyyatariqat, which was considered a peaceful, anti-war doctrine, preached by Kunta-Haji.

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## 1. Introduction

The emergence and spread of Sufism (tasawwuf) among the Muslim peoples of the North Caucasus is a long historical process associated with the Arab conquests, the gradual adoption of Islam, its spiritual values, and the culture based on this monotheistic religion. Sufism is interpreted as an ascetic, mystical and pantheistic trend in Islam, which was formed over six centuries in various regions of the world, considering local conditions, ethnic, linguistic, spiritual and cultural characteristics. According to the Caucasian mystic, the spiritual teacher of the peoples of Dagestan and Chechnya, Jamaluddin Kazikumukhsky, there are many ways (tariqas) in Islam, but the main more famous of them are four: Naqshbandi, Qadiri, Jashturian, and the fourth comes from the Caliph, “the lion of God” and the winner – Ali (Kazikumukhsky, 1986). The name of this path is not reported by this author.

According to English orientalist Trimmingham, 12 Sufi schools, tariqas were formed in regions such as Mesopotamia, Maghreb and Egypt, Iran, Central Asia, India, starting from the 18th century. The most famous are Suhrawardiyya, Rafaiya, Qadiriyya, Kubraviyya, Yasaviyya, Mavlaviya, Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya, Chishtiyya (Trimingham, 1989). Some of them have spread to the Caucasus, the Volga region, and such are Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya, Yasaviya, Shaziliya. They have their own ideological, dogmatic, religious and philosophical foundations, corresponding religious practices, rituals, dress codes, etc.

The penetration of the Naqshbandiyya tariqa into the Caucasus presumably took place in the 19th century, during the campaign of Tamerlane. It acquires a pronounced religious and political specificity much later, transforming into Caucasian muridism. He gets this name in the studies of the Soviet Caucasian expert Smirnov, who wrote the work “Caucasian Muridism” (Smirnov, 1963). In the early 1920s, the Naqshbandiyya tariqa was known in the region in two forms – mysticism and muridism. A bright representative of Caucasian mysticism was the murshid – the teacher of Sufism Jamaletdin Kazikumukhsky, who called his students (murids) to a peaceful life, spiritual perfection, continuous performance of prayers (dhikrs) dedicated to the glorification of the Almighty. However, while strengthening the aggressive policy of tsarism, the young alims of Dagestan – Gazimhammad, Shamil, are inclined to the need to implement ghazavat (holy war against tsarism). Thus, the political direction of the Caucasian Sufism, which received the name Muridism, was formed. This position was supported by the first murshid of Dagestan, Muhammad Yaragsky, who received initiation into the Naqshbandiyya-khalidiyyatariqat in the early 20s of the 19th centuries from Ismail Kurdamir, a resident of Shirvan. He was a follower of the Sufi Khalid al-Baghdadi of the city of Sulaimaniyah, a Muslim theologian and mystic who lived and taught disciples in Baghdad for many years. Naqshbandiyya-khalidiyya acquired an acute political orientation during the resistance of the mountaineers during the Caucasian war in Dagestan.

Yandarov (1976) carried out a thorough analysis of the role of Sufism, Muridism and Gazavat in the liberation struggle of the highlanders of the North Caucasus. Mukhadin Kandur (1996) also adheres to the same position, believing that Muhammad Yaragsky and Jamaletdin Kazikumukhsky opened the principles of muridism to Gazimhammad (Mukhadin, 1996), or rather politically oriented muridism, which relied on ghazavat, which required the highlanders to take up arms, defending themselves against

invaders. However, Kazikumukhsky, a supporter of mystical Sufism, forbade his murids to participate in ghazavat. As Mukhadin Kandur notes, Kazikumukhsky directed the mystical side of Sufism primarily to achieve the main goal – the victory of the soul over the mortal flesh (Mukhadin, 1996). In the conditions of the Caucasian War, this task was practically insoluble, because by mystical practices it was impossible to resist the conquerors. There were no appropriate conditions for denying violence, evil, achieving spiritual perfection, moral formation during this period.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The study analyzes some regional features of the emergence and spread of Sufism in the spiritual culture of the peoples of the North Caucasus, which is a complex, ambiguous phenomenon. Sufi ideas penetrated the Caucasus through Muslim preachers who disseminated ascetic and mystical practices that were occasionally mastered in Islamic culture. The consolidation of Sufi values among the peoples of the region is a long, drawn-out process, coupled with various kinds of social factors that formed their corresponding way of life, spiritual and cultural values.

## **3. Research Questions**

The formation of Sufism in the North Caucasus is a poorly studied problem; it has not received a thorough and consistent coverage in the research of scientists, although such attempts were made by Abdullaev (2003) and others. There is still no comprehensive work that has covered in detail the problem posed.

The emergence and spread of Sufism in Dagestan, and then in Chechnya, is considered in this publication in the context of such important events as the conquest of the Arabs of the North Caucasus, and the penetration into the region of Sufism took place in Derbent in the 11th century, but its spread and establishment for many centuries were diffuse.

It took more than 8 centuries for the Sufi tariqas in Dagestan and Chechnya to acquire a pronounced consistent, systematic character, which was associated with the beginning and end of the Caucasian War, as well as the beginning of the 20th century. All this has acquired a special form of the specificity of the spread of Islam in the region.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the publication is to identify some of the features of the formation of Sufism among the peoples of the North Caucasus during their spiritual development, coupled with Islam, which fundamentally affected their way of life, the moral and humanistic scale of values.

## **5. Research Methods**

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research being carried out is the dialectical understanding of complex, contradictory spiritual and cultural processes caused by complex social, cultural and military-political processes that took place during the Arab conquests in the Caucasus, as

well as during the period of Russia's colonial policy in the Caucasus. A systematic analysis of social and cultural processes makes it possible to identify structural and functional ties in various spheres of peoples' life, establishing close cultural, spiritual and ideological relations.

## 6. Findings

The ideology and practice of Islam in the North Caucasus was established during the Arab campaigns of conquest, which began in 643 and continued until the 11th century. During this period there was the conquest of indigenous peoples, who adhered mainly to pagan values. Islam forced them to choose a new way of life and ideological attitudes. Alikberov (2003) talks about the penetration of Sufism among the peoples of Dagestan who admits that “from the 21st century Sufism began to conquer the spiritual space, crushing or absorbing and adapting other movements of Islam” (p. 29). The details of this phenomenon in the North Caucasus have not been sufficiently studied. Sufism, which is now widespread in the region, is represented by such tariqs as Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya and Shaziliya. Sufism in the Muslim world is multifaceted spiritually and culturally and it has its own regional characteristics associated with relevant religious practices, ideological foundations, and cultural symbols.

Followers of Sufism honor their spiritual mentors (ustaz, sheikhs), their burial places, retell their biographies, legends, passing them on from generation to generation. Often Sufi sheikhs are endowed with the ability to perform various kinds of miracles, and therefore believers, in difficult life situations, for example, during illness, visit their burial places in the hope of receiving healing from the dua performed by him.

The widespread and adoption of the Naqshbandiyyatariqat in the North Caucasus occurred in the early 20s of the 19th centuries, during the period of the conquering policy of tsarism in Dagestan. It is formed as a protest, fanatical phenomenon and is called muridism. The first murshid of Dagestan, Muhammad Yaragsky, is its founder. The imam of Chechnya and Dagestan, Sheikh Shamil, relying on this tariqa, fought against the tsarist troops for 25 years until he was captured in 1859. At the same time, there were Sufis in Dagestan who opposed the gazavat with Russia, who believed that the war with it would be lost, and the highlanders would be defeated, and Russians would come to the region. This point of view was adhered to by a supporter of mysticism, the second murshid of Dagestan Dzhemaletdin Kazikumukhsky, who forbade his disciple Gazimuhammad to declare a ghazavat to Russia and start a war with it. He motivated his position by the fact that Russia is huge, has colossal military resources, and therefore highlanders will not be able to cope with it. Shamil, later in Kaluga, wrote to the peoples of Chechnya and Dagestan “... In relation with Russians, follow my example as their deeds are justifiable and can be considered good” (Chekalin, 1998, p. 87).

The religious and philosophical views of Kazikumukhsky were anti-war in nature, the ideas of mysticism, in which moral, peacemaking, spiritual values of knowing God played an important role, were directed against violence. They aimed highlanders at spiritual perfection, cleansing from sinful deeds, immoral inclinations. Abdullaev (2003), a merchant researcher of Muslim culture, Sufi values of the peoples of the North Caucasus, made a significant contribution to their fundamental study. Several his studies are of irrelevant importance in comprehending social thought and Muslim culture of the peoples of the North Caucasus, directly related to Sufism.

A thorough historical and philosophical analysis of Sufism in the Caucasus was carried out by Yandarov. He thoroughly analyzed the emergence in the North-Eastern Caucasus of such religious and cultural traditions of Muslims as Sufism, Muridism and Zikrism, and examined the relationship between them. In his opinion: “Sufism – Muslim mysticism – is one of the most poorly studied sections not only in Soviet, but also in world Islamic studies, although the literature on this problem numbers of hundreds of titles abroad” (Yandarov, 1976). In his research, he considered Sufism, as well as its local manifestations – Muridism and Zikrism, which he characterized as an ideological factor consolidating ethnoculturally disparate Muslim peoples in the conditions of national liberation movements against the conquerors, noting their typological nature. For its time, this assessment was undoubtedly pioneering. Sufism, as well as its political component muridism – the ideology of the people's liberation movement – he revealed as a course of social thought of the peoples of Dagestan and Chechnya, the ideological direction of social thought (Yandarov, 1976).

In the exhausting Caucasian war, which annually carried away 25 thousand Russian soldiers and officers, no less mountaineers died. Having reached the age of 15, the sons of the perished went to war with the tsarist troops. At the end of the war, highlanders, including the Chechens, were on the brink of physical destruction. Kunta-Khadzhi came up with the idea of ending the resistance of perishing mountaineers. He began to call Muslims for humility, spiritual perfection, brotherhood, and assistance to those in need. This young Chechen Sufi was a follower of a new Sufi branch for the region – the qadiriyyatariqah. His sermons included the idea of humility, the establishment of peace, and the provision of fraternal assistance to those in need, which corresponded to the values of Islam and called for mercy and spiritual perfection.

The ideas of gazavat among the Muslims of Adygea were spread by Muhammad-Emin, Shamil's naib, who laid down his arms after his capture. The Circassians fought heroically and died, but they were driven out of their territories and for a long time lost the opportunity to return to their historical homeland. The study “Muridism” carried out by Adyghe Mukhadin Kandur and works of Panesh and Murat Yagan show the connection between the ancient spiritual culture of the Adyghe people and Sufism.

In the 19th–20th centuries, the spiritual culture of the peoples of the North Caucasus was formed under the influence of Russian culture. Educational tendencies began to emerge at that time. Civilization processes taking place among the peoples of the North Caucasus had and still have their own distinctive features, with a general trend set by the state cultural policy in the country. In general, this process is positive, but ignoring ancient spiritual traditions in modern culture should be attributed to a negative phenomenon, therefore, it is important to appeal to the deep spiritual roots of the ethnos in the research plan. These roots include Sufi values as it is important to analyze the spiritual culture of the ethnos in interrelation past and present.

During its evolutionary development, local Sufism adapted to regional conditions, ethnocultural values and linguistic preferences. In Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, Sufi traditions are steadily preserved, reproduced, solving religious conflict situations and various ethnocultural problems. They are also directed against radicalism and extremism, sometimes penetrating the youth environment of the North-Eastern Caucasus.

## 7. Conclusion

Sufi culture in the North Caucasus has its own philosophical, religious and moral foundations, forming a kind of system that has not been sufficiently studied. In general, it is an integral part of the Arab-Muslim culture, which has absorbed the ethnocultural values of the peoples of the region, which impart a local-regional character to this phenomenon. In the 90s of the twentieth century, in connection with the penetration into the region of radical, extremist movements – Wahhabism and Salafism – conflicts arise between traditions and innovations, and religious and political processes are aggravated.

The ideology and practice of Wahhabism was directed against Sufi values and the secular way of life, within which cultures of the region developed. Wahhabism imposed its everyday culture – appearance, dress code, ceremonial rituals, religious and ideological attitudes the principle of tawhid. It considered the representatives of Islam a deviation from the concept of monotheism. Meanwhile, supporters of Sufism do not deny neither tawhid, nor its key role in the worldview. They pay considerable attention to the Sufi teachers through whom Islam spread in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia.

There was no denial of monotheism, supporters of Sufism pay tribute to their spiritual teachers, thanks to whom they came to an understanding of Islam. Among poorly educated Muslims there is often an excessive ascension of their spiritual teachers, appeal with prayer in cases of life troubles or tragedies. This conversion is carried out through the mention of Allah, the Prophet Muhammad, after which the name of the saint whom they revere is mentioned. For such prayers, the Salafis called for physical reprisals against traditionalists, which gave rise to conflicts, and often armed clashes.

Supporters of “pure Islam” (the so-called Wahhabis) criticized local Muslims for their excessive adherence to traditions, worship of saints, ustaz, and visiting ziyarats. Which, from their point of view, does not apply to the traditions that developed during the time of Prophet Muhammad the righteous caliphs. I. Halimov, a supporter of Wahhabism in Chechnya and Maskhadov's close associate declared that “our ideology is monotheism” in 1997 during a meeting with scientists of the Academy of Sciences of the Chechen Republic. Meanwhile, this general answer did not clarify the serious questions that arose among scientists: what kind of society does Maskhadov's government seek to build in Chechnya, how is it going to build relations with Russia, what will be the religious policy in Chechen society with its clans, tapes, virds, how the relationship between secular and religious education? Maskhadov's confidant got off with a general phrase that could be applied, answering many and other specific questions that arose among the scientists of Chechnya, who were worried about the contradictory religious innovations taking place in the society in which they lived.

The change of power in Chechnya in the early 2000s supplanted the ideology and practice of Wahhabism, while the historically established religious and Sufi traditions have become stronger in society. Nowadays, the role of representatives of the Qadiritariqat or followers of Sheikh Kunta-Khadzhi Kishiev, has significantly increased in the spiritual life in Chechnya. In Dagestan, the role of Sufism followers is significant according to Afandi Chirkeisky, a follower of the Shazilyatariqat. He died in a terrorist attack in 2012. Spiritual and political practice is active of the followers of Qadiriward Batal-Khadzhi in Ingushetia.

The spiritual and cultural situation is quite complicated in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, its formation is associated with Sufism. It is impossible to understand it without paying attention to the history of its formation and development. Sufi traditions in the region not only exist, but they transform and adapt to modernity, incorporate into modern regional political processes.

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