

SCTCMG 2019
**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural
Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»**

**RELIGIOUS FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING IN
DAGESTAN**

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Abstract

The invention of writing was a monumental event in terms of its historical importance and consequences. In comparison with speech writing is a fundamentally new means of communication allowing recording, storing and transmitting speech information through descriptive signs. Written signs are material intermediary objects in the communication. Unlike direct verbal communication writing is able to overcome spatial boundaries and timeframes of human communication, to expand beyond direct interaction of subjects, to develop the content of communication in space and time. There are a lot of secrets, mysteries and unexplained pages in the history of writing. Science does not fully explain all details of this long process. It is not surprising: writing was formed for centuries (perhaps, since the Upper Paleolithic). Nevertheless, main stages of this process are already described in details, studied and now raise almost doubts. The paper focuses on the invention of writing and its features in Dagestan. The invention of writing in Dagestan is connected with the penetration of Islam, which in the considered period plays the ever increasing role in all spheres of life of the people of the North Caucasus. Islamization of the people of Dagestan is a process, which was slowly made throughout several centuries. Over this period, we are able to trace the existence of Sunni (Arabs, Turks) and Shiite influences in the Caucasus, in particular, and in Dagestan. The main purpose is to study stages of development of writing in Dagestan and the role of the religious factor in this process.

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Keywords: Islam, Arab-Muslim culture, eastern literature, Arabic, Dagestan.



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1. Introduction

In the 16-18th centuries the penetration of Turkey and Iran to the Caucasus and considerable expansion of the influence of some Caucasian feudal states (such as Tarkovskoye or Kabarda shamkhals) strengthened Islamization in the region. The paganism was only maintained in the heart of the mountains giving place to Islamism on a plane and in some mountain areas (Shikhsaidov, 1984).

The role of Arab-Muslim cultural and philosophical traditions was amplified with consolidation of Islam. The Arab culture and the Arab hand-written book were more widely adopted than the habitat of the Arabs or the area of their military and political supremacy.

According to Krachkovsky (1960), the first wave of the Arab culture made it soon after the early conquests, which in parallel were bringing Islamization and Arabization of the region.

2. Problem Statement

The problem resides in the complex study of the influence of religious, socioeconomic and political factors on the development of writing in Dagestan in the context of the influence of the Arab-Muslim East on the destiny of national culture and creative work of the people of Dagestan.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the study covers a religious factor, which, in our opinion, is key in the development of writing in Dagestan and which is considered in the context of interaction between external (influence of the Arab-Muslim East) and internal (development of Dagestan writing) factors influencing this process.

Complex study of a religious factor in the development of writing is dictated by ever increasing interest in the history and culture of the region of not only scientists, but also the ordinary citizens seeking to supplement their knowledge in these field.

4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose is to study the stages of development of writing in Dagestan and the role of the religious factor in this process. This purpose addresses a few tasks – to describe the beginning of the development of writing in Dagestan, to demonstrate the influence of the Arab-Muslim East on this process, to consider the main stages of Dagestan writing.

5. Research Methods

The paper is written using analysis and classification of writing development stages in Dagestan.

It considers the evolutionary development of writing in Dagestan with the analysis of sources and literature on this matter. This process is analyzed through the method of comparative characteristics.

6. Findings

The Kufic inscriptions, which remained until now, demonstrate the distribution of the Arab writing in Dagestan in the 9-10th centuries. In the subsequent 11-15th centuries the value of Arabic language is increased, which is confirmed by epigraphic monuments found in Derbent, Tabasaran, Akhtakh, Rutula, Tpig, Tsudakhar, Kumukh, Hunzakh (Shikhsaidov, 1984). According to Bartold (1996), Arabic language was the only language of the Muslim people that became international.

Such outstanding compositions as *Akhty-name* (10th century), *History of Abu Muslim* (beginning of 10th century), *History of Shirvan and Derbent* describing the events since the end of the 8th century up to 1075, *Tarikh Dagestan* (14th century), *Derbend-name al-Aktashi* (16th century) have been created since the 10th century. The aul chronicles were also created during that period: *History of Tsakhur* (13th century), *History of Karakaytaga* (end of 10th – beginning of 16th centuries), *History of Kurkli aul* (15th century) (Shikhsaidov, 2007).

Due to accumulation of rich Arabic literature since 16-17th centuries more and more libraries appear in mosques, schools attached to mosques and houses of Arabic scholars in Dagestan, which, according to Krachkovsky (1960), were considered the recognized authority by the representatives of the entire Muslim world in general. A famous Yemen Arabic scholar ash-Shaukani, who at the end of the 18th century visited Dagestan, wrote with delight about one Dagestani: "... I have never seen such a person with the same ability to express himself, use clean language, avoid vulgarisms, speak perfectly. When I was listening to his words I was so delighted and happy that I even started trembling" (Pokrovsky, 2000, p. 73).

The level of knowledge in general and Arabic language in particular was very high since getting their education in the cities of the Arab caliphate many Dagestanis maintained contacts with scientists of the Middle East and the Central Asia. Not only samples of al-Maari and al-Farabi sophistry, or Muslim doctrines of Egypt, but also the treatises of Aristotle and Platon got here, apparently to the most remote wilderness (Gadzhiev & Shikhsaidov, 2002).

The most important factor of beneficial influence of the Arab culture is the invention of local writing on the basis to Arab graphics and its distribution across the population.

There were many attempts to adapt Arabic to the needs of local languages (approximately since 15-16th centuries). However, most fully and reasonably we can talk about the creation of Adzham writing since the 18th century. Adzham, adzhamia (Arab عجمية) – writing at some non-Arab people based on Arab alphabet. It was used until 1928 when the writing on the basis of the Latin alphabet was introduced within the project on latinization, and in 10 years, in 1938, based on the Cyrillic alphabet within cyrillization. The invention of Adzham writing is bound to the first literary monuments of the Dagestan people written in their native languages (Malamagomedov, 2009). Gradual formation and development of Adzham writing fostered the creation of a considerable cultural heritage in languages of the people of Dagestan representing the works of fiction, historical chronicles, medical reference books bi- and multilingual dictionaries, various calendars, manuals, etc., as well as triggered the development of publishing business and periodical press (Malamagomedov, 2018).

Since 13-15th centuries in parallel with the development of the Dagestan Arabic-language literature writing in Dagestan languages has been gradually appearing. The first attempts to write in native languages were spontaneous staying within the quantitative framework of Arabic letters, i.e. without changes and

additions to the Arab alphabet. To some extent it was facilitated by the abundance of similar and comparable sounds in the phonetic structure of Arabic and Dagestan languages (Isaev, 2008).

The manuscript *Kitab al-Kifayat* by Salih, the son of Anas al-Hashnavi, rewritten by some Mahomed, the son of Abu-Hamid in 643/1243 is kept in the Fund of Eastern Manuscripts of the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Dagestan Scientific Center of RAS, which was brought from the Kubachi village. The margins of this manuscript contain about two hundred words, expressions and sentences in Dargin language. The graphic analysis of letters of these records shows that in their structure there are no letters used in the 15th century for transfer specific Dargin sounds in writing, i.e. all sounds of Dargin language in these records are transmitted in writing staying within the quantitative framework of the Arab alphabet; there are no attempts to adapt the Arab alphabet to phonetic features of Dargin language (Isaev, 2008).

But in the early part of the 16th century Dargins made first attempts to adapt the Arab graphics to local writing. In 1959 a famous orientalist M.-S. Saidov found the manuscript *Ikhyat 'ulum ad-din* (Revival of sciences on belief) written by Arab philosopher Mahomed al-Gazali, which in 913/1507 was rewritten by Idris b. Ahmad Al-Akushi (Shikhsaidov & Khalidov, 1997). The margins of this book contain inscriptions, notes and even the whole sentences in Dargin. It is one of the most ancient monuments of the Dargin writing, which remained until now.

It shall be noted that in the 10-12th centuries some regions of Dagestan were affected by Christianization, which is associated with the penetration of the Georgian writing into Dagestan. According to Abdullaev (2008), by now more than fifty Georgian inscriptions have been revealed in the territory of Mountain Dagestan, mainly in the area of the former Hunzakhsky nutsal. They are found in Hunzakha, Urada, Tidib, Tindi, Kvanad, Hushtad, Rugudzha, Chokh, etc.

According to their content, all memorial and construction inscriptions are also made in calligraphically old fonts “asomtavruli” and “nuskhakhutsuri” in Georgian. Some of them are bilingual – in Georgian and Avar languages (bilinguals) (Takhnaeva, 2004).

The Georgian graphic inscriptions in Dagestan that date back to the 10-14th centuries serve the documentary evidence of attempts to adapt the Georgian alphabet to one of the Dagestan languages – Avar. It is natural that such attempts to create the Avar writing on the basis of Georgian could be successful in case of wide circulation of Georgian language and Georgian writing in Dagestan (Abdullaev, 2008).

In the second half of the 18th century multiple attempts to create the Avar writing dating back to the 11th century (at the beginning based on Georgian and later on Arab graphics) were continued by Dibir-kadi Hunzakhsky, who completed the work on the adaptation of the Arab alphabet to phonetic features of the Avar language (Alibekova, 2009). As Saidov (1948) notes, “the Avars used Dibir-kadi alphabet without special change and reform up to the revolution” (p. 133).

It shall be noted that the work of Dibir-kadi in the field of bilingual and trilingual dictionaries laid the foundation for lexicography as a science in Dagestan (Alibekova, 2009).

The old written monuments, which remained until now, show that in the 16-18th centuries the process of further gradual development of writing traditions in the Dagestan languages is still continues. If until the 16th century the majority of famous written monuments in Dagestan languages represent the records of separate words, expressions, phrases, sentences and rarely complete texts, then the 17-18th century is

marked by the appearance of quite significant amount of letters, wills, donative letters, medical reference books, bilingual dictionaries, poetic works, translations of works of eastern authors into Dagestan languages, etc.

7. Conclusion

In the 18-19th centuries all major treatises of medieval medicine of the East were widespread in Dagestan, many of which were translated into local languages. The translations of the Avicenna book into Lak language and the Arab treatise *Tukhfat al-mu'minin* into Kumyk language belong to the 18th century. Memorial lists of *Derbend-name* are found in Dargin, Lak, Kumyk languages (Malamagomedov, 2011).

Thus, the Arab-Muslim East made an enormous difference in the destiny of national cultures and creative work of the people of Dagestan.

Acknowledgments

The paper is prepared under financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research No. 18-09-00024 “Archeographic study in Dagestan (private and mosque hand-written collections)”.

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