

The emergence of Sufism in the North Caucasus

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Abstract: *In the article, the author tries to learn about the emergence of Islam in the North Caucasus and the emergence of Sufism in the Caucasus. The emergence of Islam in the North Caucasus is associated with the Arab campaigns of conquest, during which a new socio-cultural reality was formed, representing a symbiosis of local ethnocultural values and values of the Arab-Muslim culture. Proceeding from the fact that this symbiosis of local ethnocultural values and Muslim religious and philosophical ideas introduced by the Arabs constitutes an important, but currently little studied part of the study of Sufism, the problem of studying this issue is scientifically relevant and socially significant. The main purpose of the article is to analyze the features of the emergence of Sufism in the North Caucasus; the establishment of historical and political preconditions for the penetration of Sufi ideology into Dagestan, which was one of the first places for the spread of Sufism in the North Caucasus; considering the connection between the North Caucasian muridism and tariqah, identifying their points of contact and differences.*

Keywords : *Caucasus, Islam, Sufism , Derbent , Spiritual culture*

I. Introduction. The emergence of Sufism in the North Caucasus and its subsequent modifications are associated with the beginning of the spread and establishment of Islam and the Muslim culture based on it in this region. Before the Arab conquests to the Caucasus, there were several state formations , such as: Armenia, Georgia, Caucasian Albania - with their borders, socio-political structure, economic, spiritual and cultural life. The multi-tribal and multilingual Caucasus presented a motley ethno-confessional picture. The peoples of the region professed ancient pagan beliefs, including Zoroastrianism, although by this time in Armenia and Georgia there were bearers of monotheism: Judaism and Christianity.

In the 7th century, Christianity occupies a strong position in Armenia and Georgia, although local pagan cults played an important role in the socio-cultural life of the Caucasian ethnic groups. In addition, in the presence of elements of pagan beliefs, as well as the existence of the noted forms of monotheism, Christian heretical movements began to penetrate into this region . With the dominant role of paganism in this period among the peoples of the North Caucasus, the role of Christianity is increasing. The spread of Christianity among the individual peoples of the North Caucasus is explained by the growing influence of Armenia and Georgia, who adopted Christianity in the 4th century AD. The peoples of the North Caucasus (Avars, Lezgins, Laks) were in extensive economic, political and cultural contacts with the Transcaucasian state formations. In turn, Armenia and Georgia politically and culturally gravitated towards Christian Byzantium. As the Soviet academician N. Ya. Marr : “Armenians and Georgians, in spite of their different languages, constituted one integral world in the early era of Christianity” [1]. By the time of the invasion of

the Arabs in Caucasian Albania, a mosaic confessional picture had developed. Local pagan beliefs, the sects of Christianity and Zoroastrianism, the sects of the Manichaeans and Mazdakites coexist here . This diversity of the religious situation was reflected in the spiritual world of the peoples of the North Caucasus, who were in close contacts with the ethnoculturally close peoples of the Transcaucasus. Given the confessional situation, it is necessary to take into account the rather ancient presence of Judaism here. According to some reports, Judaism appeared in Georgia in the 1st century AD.

The Jews who emigrated to the North Caucasus settled in the vacant lands located between the Terek and Sulak. In the area between the Terek and Sulak rivers, a meeting of Jewish migrants and pagan Khazars took place, which played a leading role in the emergence of the militarily aggressive state of Khazaria. The emergence of Khazaria - this kind of Khazar- Jewish spiritual, cultural and military-political formation - still remains one of the insufficiently studied problems of the medieval history of the North Caucasus.

II. Discussion. By the time of the Arab conquests in the Caucasus, the Jewish religion dominated in Khazaria, which is confirmed by the works of authoritative researchers [2]. At the time of the formation of Khazaria on the territory of the North Caucasus, there were actually Caucasian state formations: Caucasian Albania (covering part of South Dagestan, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Alania, Serir , which had close trade, political and cultural contacts with Georgia, Armenia, Iran, as well as with Byzantium ... The relationship of the Caucasian state formations with Khazaria was initially hostile. For several centuries the autochthonous peoples of the Caucasus were in hostile relations with the Khazars, who

claimed their freedom. But in this confrontation, as reported in the Georgian historical chronicles, the Khazars are victorious. The Khazar kings attracted representatives of the Caucasian ethnic groups to military service, who held high military posts in the Khazar troops. The relationship of Khazaria with local state formations, based on trade, military-political and spiritual-cultural ties, was generally stable. Khazar troops often successfully attacked the Persian garrisons in the Transcaucasus, made campaigns against Byzantium, and levied tribute to Kievan Rus.

The relatively peaceful development of the confessional picture in the North Caucasus is undergoing a radical change in connection with the aggressive campaigns of the Arabs in the first half of the 7th century. In the Caucasus, the trade and geopolitical interests of three world powers collide: Persia, Byzantium and the Arab Caliphate. In addition, Khazaria dominated in the North Caucasus in military-political and economic terms, disturbing Persia and Byzantium with raids. It was against the warlike Khazaria that the most famous Arab commanders fought for several centuries. The Arabs first appeared in the North Caucasus in 642, when, having conquered Georgia and Armenia, they found themselves at the walls of the southern Dagestan medieval city of Derbent, which was part of the Persian Empire. Derbent was founded in the 4th century by the Persian Shah Anushirvan to prevent the penetration of warlike nomads from the North into Transcaucasia. The Persian garrison of the Derbent fortress, with the conquest of Iran by the Arabs and the significant Islamization of the Persians, surrenders it and converts to Islam. Having conquered Derbent, the Arabs begin a war with the Khazars, who became an obstacle to their northern conquests. The Arab-Khazar wars for two centuries proceeded with varying success. The invasion of Arabs in the North Caucasus was opposed by the united troops of the Khazars, Avars, Lezgins, Laks, Nakhs, etc. For these pagan peoples, the Arabs with their religion remained conquerors for a long time, encroaching on their lives and spiritual values.

In the wars against the Arabs, the Khazars and the highlanders often managed not only to successfully resist, but also to achieve the defeat of their forward detachments. But the Arabs, who well understood the strategic importance of the North Caucasus for their geopolitics, persisted in conquering it, and sought to draw this region into the vast expanse of their empire. The final implementation of these plans was hampered by internal strife in the Arab Caliphate, frequent uprisings of the conquered peoples.

The Arabs several times defeated the troops of the Khazars, forced their rulers to accept Islam, built mosques on the conquered territories, in which Arabic-

language schools were created at the mosque, which turned into centers of spiritual enlightenment for Muslims. In relation to the pagan mountaineers, the Arabs carried out a violent policy of Islamization, and those who resisted were severely punished. The conquerors resettled tens of thousands of Arabs and the peoples they conquered to the territory of present-day Dagestan. They spread Islam, introduced spiritual values based on the doctrine of monotheism into the cultural life of the Caucasian ethnic groups.

In general, the Arab-Muslim culture does not represent a uniform system due to the various ethnocultural foundations that formed it. Nevertheless, it contributed to the enrichment of aboriginal cultures in the North Caucasus, expanding their spiritual horizons, and formed a universal perception of the world among peoples who previously professed paganism. But the Arab-Muslim culture, as an innovation, contributed to the enrichment of the traditional cultures of the Caucasian highlanders, made it more meaningful, spiritually oriented. The Islamized Caucasian peoples became a support for the Arabs in the conquest and Islamization of peoples who adhered to traditional religious beliefs.

Internal strife, civil strife in the Arab Caliphate itself did not allow the Arabs to overcome the resistance of the unconquered peoples of the Caucasus. At the same time, individual peoples of Dagestan, subjected to Islamization, have shown themselves to be talented students of their spiritual mentors. The Arab-Muslim culture, which has taken root in the cultural traditions of the peoples of the Caucasus, gives rich shoots. A number of Dagestanis are becoming recognized authorities in the field of Sharia in the Muslim world, some of them were thrown by fate in such scientific and cultural centers of the Arab Caliphate as Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, where they were glorified as outstanding Muslim theologians. In this regard, the pre-revolutionary researcher of Islam Mirza Kazem-Bek reports: "In the nomenclature of Eastern scholars, more than fifty high-profile names belong to Dagestan; there were, as it is now, excellent (according to Muslim estimates) philologists, philosophers and lawyers" [3].

For the Arabs, the North Caucasus was a strategically important region. The conquest of the region continued for 2 centuries. The Arab did not manage to completely conquer the North Caucasus, and because of the stubborn resistance of the local peoples and the Khazar Kaganate. The main center of the Arabs and all Islam in the North Caucasus is the city of Derbent, the local peoples who converted to Islam become the main support of the caliphate in the region.

The penetration of Sufism into the Caucasus is associated with the activities of Islamized non-Arab

ethnic groups, primarily the Persians, who gave Islam features that stemmed from their rich spiritual and cultural heritage. From ancient times, the Persians were distinguished by their deep religiosity and an extraordinary tendency to speculative thinking. By adopting Islam without much resistance, they give it a greater philosophical focus than the Arabs themselves gave it. Unlike other Muslims, the Persians were remarkable mystics who took great liberties in the allegorical interpretation of the dogmatic tenets of Islam.

Mirza Kazem- Bek, trying to trace the beginning of the emergence of Sufism, reports: "Even in the early days of Islam, even during the life of the Prophet Mohammad , there were some good-natured, pious people who, by vocation or as a result of communication with Christian monks, completely retired from the world, indulged in prayer and self-annihilation . These God-loving people subsequently formed a brotherhood very similar to Christian monasticism " [4] . P od this brotherhood, fraternity refers to the Sufis.

According to M. Kazem- Bek, the prophet Muhammad was not opposed to tariqah , he argued that " tariqat are my deeds," but the prophet rejected monasticism, because it opposed marriage and therefore declared that there is no monasticism in Islam [5] . The birthplace of Sufism M. Kazem- Bek connects with Persia, where traces of Buddhism and Zoroastrianism are found, rooted in popular beliefs and formed the foundation of their worldview. On the basis of Persian influence, Islam underwent a certain modification. According to M. Kazem- Bek, there are "thirty-five orders of monasticism", the first of which arose in Jeddah in 149 AH (or in 766 from the birth of Christ) [6] .

Sufism, according to the statements of some researchers of Islam in the Caucasus, appeared much earlier than it is stated in the numerous literature devoted to the study of Islam in the North Caucasus. Apparently, the first carriers of Sufism appeared in southern Dagestan, in Derbent, at least as far back as the 10th century. Here poetic, philosophical, Sufi ideas, nurtured on the basis of Islam, were mastered and developed . Naturally, these ideas were brought to the Caucasus by the conquering Arabs, the Islamized Persians and the Syrians resettled from the countries conquered by the Arabs.

In the 10th century, Arab travelers in Transcaucasia recorded traces of the existence of Sufi schools. The Arab traveler al- Maqdisi wrote in 975 that there is "a khanaka (Sufi monastery - VA) in Dabil (Dvin is the capital of medieval Armenia), whose inhabitants, the Gnostics (arif) of the tasawwuf system, live in voluntary poverty ." [7]

As you can see, in the 10th century, when the Arabs established their dominion in the

Transcaucasus, a Sufi brotherhood, adhering to an ascetic lifestyle, was functioning in the mountains of Armenia . "The Arab conquerors brought various kinds of Tariq teachings to the Caucasus mountains along with Islam, " [8] , asserts E. Weidenbaum .

Derbent played an important role in the emergence of Sufism in the North Caucasus, which in the 10th-11th centuries turned into the center of the spiritual and cultural life of Caucasian Muslims, as well as into the city of numerous Sufis. This is evidenced by the scientist and theologian Abu al- Faraj ad- Derbendi , a resident of this city. He wrote a treatise on Sufism entitled " Rayhan al Hakaik wa Bustan ad- Dakaik " ("Basil truths and subtleties of the garden"), the first of its translation belongs to Dagestan Arabist an MS Saidov . Subsequently, this Arabic-graphic manuscript of al- Darbandi was translated and received a thorough interpretation in the fundamental work of A. K. Alikberov [9]

The Persians played an important role in the emergence of Sufism in the North Caucasus. The first Sufis appeared in the 10th century in Southern Dagestan in the city of Derbent . In the 10th- 11th centuries the city itself became an important center of spiritual life and the center of Islamic culture in the North Caucasus , as well as the city of numerous Sufis and their followers.

This treatise provides information about the social situation of the population of Derbent, where there were papermakers , silkworm breeders, fishermen, seamstresses, drummers, coppersmiths, preachers, lecturers and representatives of other professions. The names of over fifty Sufi sheikhs who lived and worked in Derbent in the X-XI centuries are named . All of them, according to the Dagestani Arabist M.-S. Saidov , of non-Arab and non-aristocratic origin [10] . The large number of the listed Sufi sheikhs who lived in medieval Derbent allows us to recognize this city as a "city of Sufis". The treatise ad-Darbendi is remarkable in that it examines such Sufi-ethical issues as the beginning and ethical basis of the activities of people of truth (Sufis), courtesy, willpower, justice, abstinence from vices and many others. The geography of the origin of the Sufis who lived in Derbent, presented in the treatise, is extensive, some of them come from Baghdad, Balkh , Khorosan , Merv , Samarkand, Ferghana, Dinovar , as well as other regions of the huge Arab state. Many Sufis, judging by their names, are ethnic Persians. According to M.-S. Saidov , al- Faraj's work refers to moderate Sufism, namely, to the Khurasan school of Sufism, to which the Sufis belonged: Abu Abd ar-Rahman al- Sulami , Abdul- Kasim al- Qurayshi , who were the ideological predecessors of the famous Muslim theologian and Sufi Abu Hamid al- Ghazali . The treatise "Basil of

Truths and the Garden of Subtleties" is a compendium of moral and mystical sayings that a devout Muslim must be guided by. The treatise informs about the beginning of the activities of people of truth, about their moral foundations, etiquette, courtesy, willpower, sincerity in deeds, justice, abstinence from vices, payment for sins, repentance and piety, fear of God, modesty, solitude, humility, freedom, recluse, generosity and magnanimity, observation and compassion, patience and endurance, silence, truthfulness and sincerity, camaraderie, friendship, knowledge and science, poverty, chivalry, about the search for rapprochement with God, resistance to carnal whim and supervision over it, secret voice, excitement and ecstasy, deep conviction.

In the treatise of al-Faraj, various definitions of Sufism are given. Here are some of them: Sufism is the acceptance of noble morals; Sufism is competition in pious deeds and the satisfaction of a person with the highest morals; Sufism - adherence to faithfulness and rejection of callousness. Of course, these definitions are not limited to Sufism, but they are the most characteristic. The work of ad-Darbendi contains many instructive moral and philosophical maxims. Some of them are as follows: 1. The Great Allah closes the gates of fortune to some of his slaves for one of six reasons: he received knowledge, but did not act on it; enjoyed prosperity, accompanied kind people, but did not follow their examples; committed sins but did not repent; buried the dead, did not learn a lesson from this; received an inheritance, but did not prepare for the afterlife.

2. Science is comprehended only by teaching, meekness is achieved by a certain patience; there is little benefit from those who did not study, and from those who do not seek to be gentle, patient.

3. Give up envy - you will get rid of grief; give up sweet pleasure - you will get rid of sins.

4. Respect for people should be expressed in three forms: to love a person as God loves him; pray for him, ask for forgiveness for sins; help him repent of his sins.

5. Respect for parents is also expressed in three formulas: to respect them, to show them respect; to take them on dependent, to supply them with everything they need; do not raise voices against them [11]. The Sufi teachings of ad-Darbendi represented the basis of the ethical program of the subsequent Sufi sheikhs of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia. In a word, his treatise is a treasure trove of moral, philosophical and Sufi wisdom, a source that makes it possible to understand the worldview of a North Caucasian Muslim of the 11th century. The moral and ethical component of al-Faraj's treatise is surprisingly modern.

The type of tariqah ad-Darbendi adhered to has not been established. Some Dagestani scientists, in particular A.R. Shikhsaidov, the point of view is expressed that ad-Darbendi was in close contacts with Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, a supporter of the Shafi'i madhhab, thanks to which, apparently, this madhhab spread and established itself in Dagestan. A.R. Shikhsaidov gives very important information about the study of Ghazali's works in the Arab-Muslim schools of Dagestan in the Middle Ages, which were spread from generation to generation through scribes. It is possible that it was al-Ghazali who influenced the spread of the Shafi'i madhhab among the Muslims of the North-Eastern Caucasus.

On the territory of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, there is a large number of burial places of saints, over whose graves mausoleums have been erected. The early dating of these monuments dates back to the XII-XIV centuries. Numerous epigraphic information in Arabic collected and translated into Russian by A.R. Shikhsaidov [11], confirms the fact of the wide spread of Sufism during this period among Dagestanis and Chechens. Having studied the epigraphic inscriptions on Muslim tombstones, A.R. Shikhsaidov comes to the conclusion that "numerous feasts in Southern Dagestan, a good attitude towards them, numerous mausoleums on the graves of sheikhs or feasts, legends about miracles performed by feasts, testify to the wide penetration of Sufi ideas into this area in the 11th-17th centuries" [12]. The influence of Sufism on Derbent was carried out, apparently, through Azerbaijan. According to the pre-revolutionary researcher P. Pozdnev, the establishment of Islam in Dagestan was promoted by Sufism. "Already in the 10th – 11th centuries, the dervishti aroused Caucasian Muslims against some of the secular princes of Dagestan," he writes. It is further noted that the Sufi brotherhood at the end of the fourteenth century again aroused the mountaineers against "the abuse of some princes and spiritual power-lovers" [13].

As noted by the well-known Dagestan researcher of Islam A.Z. Shikhsaidov, Dagestan in the XV-XVII centuries. shows great interest in the work of al-Ghazali. In his opinion, the craving for his ideas "is associated not only with the domination of the Shafi'i madhhab in Dagestan, not only with the possibilities of Sufism to painlessly adapt to local pre-Islamic cults, but also with the intensive practice of many Dagestanis studying in the cities of the Caliphate, especially in Baghdad, in madrasahs. anti Nizamiyya, from al-Ghazali" [14].

The Sufi teachings of ad-Darbendi became the basis of the teachings for the Sufi sheikhs of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia. Thanks to the treatise of ad-Darbendi, we can understand the worldview of the North Caucasian Muslim of the 11th

century. According to many historians an important role in the spread of Islam in Dagestan is, and later in Chechnya played Sufis, have quickly adapted local pre-Islamic cults and practices under Islam.

In the second half of the 18th century, Sufi ideas were mastered by the young Chechen Alim Ushurma (1770-1794), who later received the name of Sheikh Mansur. His initial religious activity was aimed at spreading high morality among the spiritually ignorant highlanders, eradicating violence, blood feud, uniting the scattered Chechen tribes through familiarizing themselves with the values of Islam. [15] According to the pre-revolutionary Chechen ethnographer Umalat Laudaeva Chechens confessed to him their sins and turned to Toba (repentance), pledged not to do bad deeds, do not steal, do not smoke, do not drink spirits, pray fervently to God.

The lifestyle that Sheikh Mansur led, described by U. Laudaev, corresponds to the behavior of an ascetic mystic. "The people recognized Mansur as their ustaz, that is, an intercessor before God: they kissed the hem of his clothes, and were so carried away by the religious mood that they forgave each other's debts, stopped litigation and forgave even the very blood (tsli - Chech.). People opened their hearts to one another, expelling from them anger, envy, self-interest.. This situation lasted two years and the fame of Sheikh Mansur spread among other peoples of the Caucasus" [16], - says U. Laudaev.

Having received spiritual education from a number of Kumyk mullahs from the Chechen village of Shali, followers of the Naqshbandiyya tariqat, Ushurma- Mansur began to actively disseminate it among his relatives and fellow villagers, called for the observance of the principles of Sharia, how to stop theft, violence, and forgive each other. Tsarist agents who watched his activities reported that he was becoming popular among the people, persuaded the inhabitants of the plains to accept Sharia law, and planned hiking in the mountains where the Chechens remained faithful to semi-pagan and semi-Christian beliefs [17].

When in 1785 Russian troops led by Colonel A. Pieri ravaged and burned the aul of Aldy, the native aul of Sheikh Mansur, he declared a gazavat and led the highlanders [18]. At the same time, the initial activity of Sheikh Mansur was purely religious in nature and he behaved like a Sufi ascetic and mystic. In his sermons, he called on the people to renounce sin and vices, to spiritual and moral perfection. He strove, on the basis of Sharia, to change and improve social, moral and spiritual relations in mountain society. The question of Mansur's belonging to Sufism is often disputed. In the early 1930s, Professor B.V. Skitsky, referring to archival documents, emphasized the belonging of Sheikh Mansur to

the Naqshbandiyya tariqah [19]. The famous French Islamic scholar Alexander Bennigsen is in the same position [20]. Researcher of Sufism in the North Caucasus A.D. Yandarov also believes that Mansur belongs to the Naqshbandiyya order [21].

The persecution forced Mansur to leave his homeland and move to the territory of the Circassians, where he leads the anti-colonial struggle against the Russian autocracy in the North-Western Caucasus, which lasted until 1791, until the capture of Sheikh Mansur by the tsarist general Gudovich in the territory of Anapa. Sh Eikh Mansur, who reached the struggle against human vices, due to circumstances, was forced to take the path of a military struggle against autocracy and the unification of mountain tribes. This transformation is a typical example of the transition of a mystic Sufi to the path of war in the name of liberating his homeland from foreign invaders. Thus, Sufism in the North Caucasus during this historical period acquired features of a political orientation.

The same situation is observed when the Dagestani Sufi Muhammad Yaragsky, who accepted the Naqshbandiyya tariqa from Sheikh Ismail Kurdamir in the early 20s of the 19th century, was forced to substantiate the need for ghazavat against the tsarist troops who began the intensive conquest of Dagestan [22] This Sufi mystic blesses the first imam of Dagestan and Chechnya, Gazimhammad, for an armed conflict with tsarism that lasted for many years. Often in the North Caucasus, the leaders of the Sufi tariqas were at the head of popular indignations, uprisings against the tsarist government, and later against the Soviet government, often expressing in this form a protest against the government that infringed on their religious, ethnic and political interests.

III. Conclusion.

Sufism as a mystical and philosophical doctrine in Islam played a huge role in the socio-cultural development of the spiritual life of the Muslim East. Having conquered southern Dagestan, the Arabs brought with them a new religion - Islam, and the city of Derbent became the main center for the spread of the new religion. The first from Ufa appeared in the North Caucasus as early as the 10th century. Derbent in the X-XI centuries became an important center of spiritual life and the center of Islamic culture in the North Caucasus. The treatise of ad- Darbandi became the basis of teaching for the Sufi sheikhs in the North Caucasus, and the Sufis played a victorious role in the establishment of Islam. A prominent representative of Sufism in the second half of the 18th century was the Chechen Ushurma, who received the name of Sheikh Mansur. He led an active educational work among the people and was recognized ustaza among the Chechens. Sheikh Mansur began to actively spread the teachings of

the Naqshbandiyya order . In 1785, the native village of Sheikh Mansur Aldy was burned by Russian troops , after which a gazavat was declared . Russian troops. The people's liberation movement of the mountaineers lasted 6 years from (1785 to 1791). In 1791, Sheikh Mansur was badly wounded and captured at the Anapa fortress by Russian troops. On October 15 , 1791, he was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Shlisselburg fortress, for agitating the mountain peoples against Russia and causing great damage to the Empire [23] . In 1794, Sheikh Mansur died at 3 years of imprisonment.

At the beginning of 1828, with the blessing of the Sufi Naqshbandiyya Muhammad Yaragsky, the first imam of Dagestan and Chechnya, the Avar Gazimhammad, announced the gazavat of the Russian Empire , which lasted until 1859. In spite of the different national and political transformation, with ufizm in the North Caucasus has maintained its position and relevance . And I didn't even lose them during the years of Soviet power.

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