Muslim reformism in Daghestan

Islamic politics and Muslim education after the Russian Revolution

Sahakyan, N.

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Chapter I

Picture: Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii and Uzun Ḥajjī painted by Khalil-Bek Musaiasul
1.1. Introduction
This first chapter of my thesis covers the years between 1917 and 1929, i.e., from the February Revolution up to the first massive repressions in Daghestan, in a chronological fashion. The chief aim of the chapter is to provide a critical assessment of the history and historiography of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the first Soviet decade in Daghestan. Alongside my discussion of the existing historiography, I also seek to de-Bolshevize the history of the Russian Revolution in Daghestan. One of the ways of clearing the exaggerated roles of the Bolsheviks out of the perceived history of the period is to emphasize the value of the primary Arabic-language sources produced by the Daghestani scholars who were playing active roles in Daghestan during the 1917 revolutions and Sovietization period. On the basis of these unstudied sources, I will peer into the political projects for the future of Daghestan that emerged during those days. Among them, the most influential one was that of the imamate, the discourse about which touched all groups acting in Daghestan, including the reformists, the main protagonists of my thesis.

52 A part of this chapter was published in my article on the language issues in Daghestan. See Sahakyan, Naira. "Language debate and visions of the future in revolutionary Dagestan," *Caucasus Survey* 6, n. 2 (2018): 147-162.
The Russian Revolutions of 1917 and the ensuing Russian Civil War, which also raged in the North Caucasus make Daghestan a unique case for studying ethno-national, religious and social conflicts. The revolutions of 1917, a breakthrough event of the twentieth century, have been examined by scholars for one hundred years. Having no access to the Soviet archives, Western historians focused mainly on events in the metropolises—Petrograd and Moscow—and created a dominant narrative for the revolution according to which the Bolsheviks, against all odds, managed to lead the revolution to success. Moreover, after the establishment of Soviet power, the Bolsheviks unified the revolutionary lexicon and Bolshevized revolutionary history, in which the history of the victors seems to dominate the whole historical process. The Soviet historiography influenced the Western historiography because the scholars had to base much of their research on the works of their Soviet colleagues.

The changes in the Soviets’ archival policy in the last decades of the USSR and especially the archival revolution of the 1990s launched a new phase of studies focused on the imperial and Soviet history of Russia. As a result, the historical narrative of the Russian Revolution has been greatly diversified, mainly through the inclusion of multiple voices from the peripheries. The scholars Ronald Suny, Orlando Figes and Donald Raleigh authored pioneering works on the history of the Russian Revolution on Russia’s fringes. And recent studies have blurred the once sharply defined borders between the

ideological camps by paying attention to pragmatic choices and alliances at the peripheries of the former empire. Still, while some periods of history in the North Caucasus, such as the Caucasian Wars, have been explored in depth, the years of 1917 to 1925, a crucial period of post-imperial politics that provided a brief moment of freedom wherein the mountaineers of the North Caucasus were able to assert their own political ambitions, have received scant attention.

“The Tsar’s fall precipitated an empire-wide crisis,” writes Michael Reynolds in his article “Native Sons: Post-Imperial Politics, Islam, and Identity in the North Caucasus, 1917-1918,” “yet the mountaineers reacted to the news neither by rising in revolt nor by waiting in callow passivity. Rather, they began forming councils of various political orientations at home and dispatching delegates to the congresses of Russian Muslims in Moscow and Baku.” A revolutionary situation at the Russian center activated local discussions on the future of Daghestan. There was a consensus on the necessity of a new order, the model of which became a topic of heated debate. While Reynolds speaks of “a moment of political opening and opportunity,” thereby alluding to the rise of separatist inclinations, Elizabeth Bospflug, analyzing the texts from the First All-Russian Muslim Congress that took place in Moscow (May 1917), demonstrates that there were two distinct camps of Russian Muslims, the so-called “Federalists” and the “Unitarists,” with different ideological views and political goals. The Federalists desired autonomous ethnic republics within a federative Russia while the Unitarists preferred to be citizens of a “Muslim nation” within a unitary Russian state. Bospflug discusses only the case of the First All-Russian Muslim Congress, where the participants did not raise the question of a separate independent state. My analysis of the texts produced by Daghestani ‘ulamā’ demonstrates the local dynamics and the different agendas of various actors at the fringes of empire. I argue that the majority of these actors did not share the desire of the participants of the Moscow Congress to stay within Russia. For them, a separate state was not only possible but also desirable. Thus, I will seek to investigate the agendas of the local leaders and find out where their interests overlapped or contradicted each other.

1.2. The years of freedom and the main actors in revolutionary Daghestan

1.2.1. The first revolutionary turbulences in Daghestan

The February Revolution, the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the collapse of the old order in the Russian Empire in 1917 set in motion a period of intense transformation in the political horizons of the Daghestani ʿulamā’. The Arabic-language newspaper *Jaridat Dāghistān* published the *Declaration of the members of the Provisional Government of Daghestan*, which stated:

> Oh, Daghestani brothers in faith! Be aware that the workers, soldiers and other inhabitants of the country have risen because of their love for their homeland (*al-waṭan*) and their great desire to set up brotherhood (*ukhūwa*) among people and to equate (*taswiya*) all nations living in Great Russia (*al-Rūsiya al-ʿuzmā*), despite their national differences.63

At first glance, this letter aims to raise patriotic feelings, positive attitudes among Daghestani people to the Russian state and a hope for the future national equality. The end of despotism and the proclamation of freedom and equality served the people and their homeland, “Great Russia,” which of course clearly resembles the rhetoric of revolution then circulating in the Russian capital.64 However, this letter was published precisely by the kind of people—Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii, Magomed Mirza Mavraev, Gaidar Bammat, Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov and others—who had their own ideas of what the future of Daghestan should look like, whether together with “Great Russia” or apart from it.

On 1 May 1917, the First All-Mountain Congress was launched in Vladikavkaz.65 Many speakers at the congress mentioned the name of Imām Shamīl (r. 1834-1859), showing loyalty to his heritage. The congress chairman, Basiiat Shakhanov, began his speech by paying homage to the memory of Shamīl.66 What is significant about this speech is its emphasis on the fact that Shamīl was the *imām* of Chechnya and Daghestan and was fighting against the Tsarist regime. Consequently, the revolutionary actions of mountaineers

65 The materials of the Congress were partly published in *Soiuz Ob”edinennykh Gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza i Dagestana (1917-1918 gg.), Gorskaia Respublika (1918-1920 gg.). Dokumenty i materialy*. (Makhachkala, 2013. P. 14-76.
were considered as a continuation of his struggle for freedom. Particularly, Shakhanov said:

Almost fifty years ago, tsarism's heavy oppression crushed the freedom of the mountaineers of the Caucasus. Gunib fell on 25 August 1859. Our unforgettable national hero, the imām of Chechnya and Dagestan, Shamīl was captured and taken to Kaluga to end his life in a vexing gendarme regime. We are aware of what came later. In March 1917, the Russian proletariat and the Russian revolutionary army, in alliance with the Russian intelligentsia, having thrown the shackles off from the Russian people, also smashed the chains that had bound us. So here we are at our Congress of Mountaineers, uniting all the Mountaineers from the Black to the Caspian Seas, freely organizing into an alliance to consolidate our freedom and structure our lives on reasonable, broadly democratic principles.

Another speaker, Kh. Aghaev, the chairman of the Committee of Baku’s Public Organizations, addressed his speech to the “respectable sons of shaykh Shamīl,” and the Dagestanis reacted with a round of applause. One of the main topics running through the discussions surrounded the re-establishment of Islamic law (Sharī‘a). The Congress also set up a Caucasian Spiritual Administration of the North Caucasus led by an Islamic legal authority called a muftī, which is an Islamic authority capable of producing a response to an inquiry.

Though the Congress did not mention the creation of a separate state, the “shar‘ī-fication” of the state-building discourse and the actualization of Shamīl’s heritage led some religious leaders to call for a re-establishment of the imamate, i.e., an Islamic state under the religious and political leadership of an imām. This influential group of ‘ulamā’, demanding the re-establishment of

68 In 1969, The Tsar Alexander II allowed Shamīl to go to Mecca for ḥajj (pilgrimage). After Mecca, Shamīl visited Medina where he passed away in February 1871 and was buried in Medina at the Jannat al-Baqī’, Islamic Commentary.
the imamate, was headed by the famous ‘ālim Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii, who had been elected as muftī of the North Caucasus during the Vladikavkaz Congress, and Uzun Ḥajjī, the shaykh of the Naqshbandiya ṭariqa (brotherhood) who had escaped from exile in Astrakhan, gone to Mecca to perform the ḥajj (pilgrimage) and then returned to the Caucasus in 1916.72

1.2.2. Restoration of the imamate? The Andi Congress
The question of the imamate is one of the most debated questions in the history of the Islamic world, including Daghestan. In Daghestan, some actively regarded the re-establishment of the imamate as highly desirable. Others, however, considered the re-establishment of an imamate in Daghestan to be an inadmissible step that in fact would be against the Sharī’a.

This opposition, however, did not hinder the Daghestanis in establishing a new imamate at the Caucasus. In the nineteenth century, in many parts of the Muslim world new religious movements under Islamic leadership turned the teaching of jihād (“fight or endeavour on the path of God”) into a defensive doctrine aimed against European colonialism.73 In Daghestan, the leader of that movement became the imām Ghāzī Muḥammad (r. 1829-1832), who declared jihād against the Russian Empire.74 Over the next three decades, part of Daghestan was proclaimed the land of Islam (dār al-Islām) under the leadership of three consecutive imams: Ghāzī Muḥammad, Ḥamza Bek (r. 1832-1834) and Shamīl—the proclaimed imāms of the Caucasian Imamate.75 After fierce fighting, the forces of the Russian Empire defeated Shamīl and the imamate collapsed in 1859. When in 1877, during the Russo-Turkish War, the rumor spread that the Ottoman army was on its way to liberate the Caucasus, spontaneous revolts broke out all over Daghestan.76 Muḥammad Ḥajjī (1839-1877) was proclaimed as imām of Daghestan and Chechnya, but due to the lack

of unified leadership and spiritual authority, the uprising of 1877-78 failed.\textsuperscript{77} The idea of an imamate was removed from the agenda for about three decades, to reappear in 1917.

In the conventional historiography on the issue of an imamate, the events are explained through the positive or negative evaluation of Sufi networks. Soviet historians, such as Khadzhi Alikberov, Nurmagomed Emirov and Badrutdin Kashkaev, who relied almost exclusively on the Russian-language administrative sources, harshly attacked what they saw as clandestine Sufi authorities that acted against the Bolsheviks.\textsuperscript{78} In this literature, the supporters of an imamate—Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii and his followers—were described as the “enemies of working people.” Almost completely ignoring the religious nature of the problem, Soviet historians defined the conflict as a struggle between “the laboring” and the “clerical and bourgeois” classes. According to Makhach Magomedov, during the struggle for power, the clerical and bourgeois classes of the North Caucasus sought to strengthen their positions and began “the process of bourgeois-nationalist autonomous state building.”\textsuperscript{79} Soviet authors described these Muslim leaders as the enemies of Daghestanis and tried to prove that they used the working people for their own purposes. One of the main charges against anti-Soviet spiritual leaders was that they tried to save the bourgeois system. According to Nurmagomed Emirov, Najm al-Dīn and his adherent Uzun Ḥajjī had their own goals which did not coincide with the interests of the working people. “Two reactionaries who did the same black work disagreed; Gotsinskii considered himself the imām of the anti-Soviet gazawat [i.e., jihād] instead of Uzun Ḥajjī, who was only his deputy for the anti-Soviet struggle in Daghestan.”\textsuperscript{80}

On the other hand, historians of the Sovietology school, i.e., Alexander Bennigsen and his students, portray the same events differently by reading the

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{79} Magomedov, Makhach. \textit{Gortsy Severnogo Kavkaza i Sotsialisticheskaiia Revoliutsiya}, 37.

\textsuperscript{80} Emirov, Nurmagomed. \textit{Iz istorii voennoi interventsi i Grazhdanskoi voiny v Dagestane}, 99.
works of their Soviet colleagues in reverse and then praising the Sufi guerrillas.\textsuperscript{81} Alexander Bennigsen, in his book \textit{Mystics and Commissars, Muslims of the Soviet Empire}, notes that “the Daghestani-Chechen revolt was a widespread popular mass movement, resembling a peasant war, but the guerrilla fighters displayed an efficiency that only a brotherhood leadership comparable to that of Shamil’s fighters, with their spirit of total dedication and iron will, could ensure.”\textsuperscript{82} This line was continued by scholars such as Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov and Marie Bennigsen-Broxup.\textsuperscript{83}

Over the last decade this narrative of the Sufi resistance to the Russian advance has been greatly challenged by new investigations into the \textit{jihād} in the North Caucasus, by paying attention to pragmatic choices and alliances.\textsuperscript{84} Continuing in this line, my work is a contribution to the trend of emphasizing actors other than Bolsheviks in the history of the Russian Revolutions of 1917 in Daghestan. Among these actors were the Daghestani ‘ulamā’, including the Sufi leaders and the reformists.

After the Vladikavkaz Congress of May 1917, Najm al-Dīn was not satisfied with the role of a \textit{muftī}, and his supporters took several steps towards the declaration of an imamate. In June 1917, Uzun Ḥajjī travelled from Daghestan to Chechnya to push the idea that Najm al-Dīn be proclaimed imam. Then Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajjī decided to use as a forum for proclaiming the imamate the Second All-Mountain Congress, which opened on 20 August 1917 in Andi—the village where Shamīl’s \textit{nā’ībs} (deputies) gathered in 1847 to discuss organizational aspects of the Caucasian Imamate. For Gotsinskii, Andi was an ideal spot for declaring imamate because it could serve symbolically to link his new imamate with the legacy of Shamil (and also because it was very far from the cities where his enemies were operating).

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\textsuperscript{83} Avtorkhanov, Abdurakhman, Bennigsen-Broxup, Marie (Eds.). \textit{The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance Towards the Muslim World}. Palgrave Macmillan, 1992.
The other organizers of this congress had different reasons for gathering in Andi that were contrary to those of Najm al-Dīn. Invited by the Central Committee of the Union of Mountaineers, the congress sought to solve issues that had not been settled at the First Congress in Vladikavkaz. In the official invitation for the congress, the organizers listed eleven important questions faced by the Mountain Union: the spiritual issues of Muslims, the organization of a national militia, combatting robbery, food supply issues, the organization of councils of peasants’ deputies and land committees, the preparation of the population for elections to the Constituent Assembly, relations with Georgians, the Union’s finances, the internal organization of the union and possible forms for a federation of mountaineers.

However, Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajiī tried to take control, confident that the Andi Congress would elect Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii as imām of the North

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85 Source: the Fond of Pictures of the Civil War in Dagestan. TsGA RD.
Caucasus. People started to believe that some kind of proclamation was indeed issued, and this news instantly spread around Andi. However, directly after this meeting, Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii gave a speech declaring that “there was no need for an imamate in Daghestan.” The confusing situation surrounding the proclamation and its dismissal soon after the gathering raised many questions.

After the meeting in Andi, an article in *Jarīdat Dāghistān* explained the situation surrounding Najm al-Dīn’s imamate by claiming that the meeting intended to be the Second All-Mountain Congress in Andi had failed to materialize and that only a few participants held a “special meeting” (majlis khusūṣī) for discussing the candidacy of Najm al-Dīn. The article claims that no election of an imām had taken place in Andi:

Part of the delegates who had arrived in Andi before others held a special meeting (majlis khusūṣī) during which they decided to establish an administration based on Shari‘a (taṣīs al-idāra al-shari‘a) for the people (ahl) of Daghestan and the North Caucasus and elected the famous ‘ālim Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii to be the head [of that administration] (li ri‘āsatihī), calling him a muftī. As for the news that he was elected for the great imamate (al-imāma al-‘uẓmā), this has not been proven since in his sermon (khuṭba) he [Najm ad-Dīn] declared that there is no need for an imamate or caliphate (lā ḥāja lanā al-yaum ilā imāma wa lā ilā khilāfa).

This article shows that Najm al-Dīn was not elected imām and the only aim of that “special meeting” was to establish a Shari‘a administration governed by Najm al-Dīn as a ra‘īs and muftī. In some other sources, such Najm al-Dīn’s letter to the Chechen shaykhs, Najm al-Dīn also used that phrase by writing that many people gathered and asked me to be the head of Shari‘a (talabū minnī an akūna lahun ra‘īsan shar‘īyan). The position of muftī would make Najm al-Dīn

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88 There is a difference between imāma and al-imāma al-‘uẓmā. A simple prayer leader is an imām while the head of Islamic state is a supreme imām. In other words, he was not just followed by a small group of Muslims during their prayer, but rather he is a leader of an entire community of believers, the entire umma. At some point this supreme leadership was dubbed ‘the great imamate’ (al-imāma al-‘uẓmā or al-imāma al-kubrā) to distinguish it from leadership of other types. Patricia Crone. *Medieval Islamic Political Thought.* Edinburg University Press, 2015. P. 17.
a religious leader only, while the term raʾīsan sharʿīyan here means the leader according to Islamic law, hence, to be an imām, not a muftī.

A very similar message was also published in the newspaper *Vremia* (*Time*):

Scheduled to take place on 20 August 1917 in the village of Andi, the Congress of the Mountaineers of Dagestan and of the North and the Western Caucasus did not take place due to the no-show of many delegates, some of whom were stuck in the village of Vedeno because of the lack of transportation facilities. But, on the border of the Andi district, a large number of Chechens gathered—about 5,000 people—and a rumor spread among them about the election of the imām. The chairman of the Avar district, Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii, explained to them the current state of affairs, the needs of the mountaineers and the plans of the Council of the United Mountaineers. The scholar of Arabic Studies and of *Sharīʿa*, Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii, was elected as muftī of Chechnya and Dagestan.91

Other primary sources, however, argued that the abovementioned “special meeting” enclosed the ritual of electing an imām. These sources also hold that Najm al-Dīn’s candidacy met the opposition of the influential Chechen *Naqshbandī* shaykhs Denī (Arsanov) and Ṣuhaib (Goysum)92. Also, some of the Dagestani ‘ulamāʾ and, particularly, the Dagestani *Naqshbandī* shaykh ‘Alī Ḥajjī Akushinskii rejected the imamate of Najm al-Dīn. This opposition of influential leaders placed Najm al-Dīn before the choice of either going against the shaykhs of the *Naqshbandiya* and, consequently, losing his support in Chechnya and those parts of Dagestan loyal to ‘Alī Ḥajjī (mainly in the Dargi regions), or of refusing the title of imām and accepting the position of muftī of the North Caucasus.

After returning from the meeting in Andi, Najm al-Dīn wrote an open letter to the peoples of the Caucasus in which he attempted to explain the purpose of the suggestion of the ‘ulamāʾ to call him muftī rather than imām. This letter was published in Arabic in *Jarīdat Dāghistān* and in Kumyk in *Musāvāt* (both issues from 18 October 1917). Here I provide an English translation of part of that letter:

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I am far from relying on my own strength but rest on the power of Allah. When I went to the Andi mountain, countless peoples gathered there—Chechens and other Caucasian peoples. They elected me as imām and decided to obey all my commands. I told them: if so, then go back to your homes and follow what is the duty of every Muslim... When I returned, on the advice of people thinking like me, the majority of the people gathered there found it best to call me shaykh al-Islām or mufti. We did that to avoid any misunderstandings between the Muslims and Russians who were aware [of what the election of imām means]. We want them not to think that with the election of an imām the peaceful relations between the Russians and Muslims would be violated. A spiritual leader is required to protect the Shari‘a, to fight against its enemies and to apply the Shari‘a law. Without these important reasons, I would not agree to any requests to assume that position. Therefore, I agreed, and I am ready to serve the Shari‘a as long as my abilities allow me to.93

On the one hand, Najm al-Dīn presented his opponents as “like-minded people,” trying to show there was no confrontation between him and those Chechen shaykhs. On the other hand, he mentions possible misunderstandings on the side of the Russians (such as proclaiming jihād against them) as a reason for his refusal to be called imām. The election of the imām and the planned congress of the mountaineers had a depressing impact on the Russian troops in Daghestan, especially the Botlikh garrison located in the immediate vicinity of Andi.94 Maybe, that was the reason that Najm al-Dīn, despite the allure of reviving Shamil’s legacy, recognized such a move would produce bloodshed and prove counter-productive. However, if that was this reason, why was there an attempt to elect him imām in the first place?

The language of Gotsinskii’s letter to the Daghestani peoples is very impressive. Najm al-Dīn stresses that he did not “dream” about the imamate but since the “nations of the Caucasus” elected him to the office of imām, he was ready to deal with that difficult mission. Saying that he did not seek power but tried to take care of the Shari‘a, Najm al-Dīn presented his imamate as his personal obligation (farḍ) before the Muslim community and before Allah. The language of “obligation” is not specific to Najm al-Dīn’s letter, for we find the same approach in the speeches and texts of his opponents. Hence, using the same

language of “obligation,” supporters and opponents of Najm al-Dīn’s imamate expressed contradictory opinions. Also, Najm al-Dīn claimed that he was elected by “countless people,” thereby asserting that his election was the will of the umma (Islamic community).

Next to the above-mentioned Sufi shaykhs from Chechnya, the Daghestani Muslim reformers and socialists (the most prominent among the Daghestani socialists being Alibek Takho-Godi [1892-1937], Jalāl al-Dīn Korkmasov [1877-1937] and Magomed-‘Alī [Makhach] Dakhadaev [1882-1918]) were also against Gotsinskii’s imamate. Seeing the reformers as Najm al-Dīn’s main opponents, Michael A. Reynolds writes that “the liberal intelligentsia had beaten the Islamists on the Islamists’ own turf.”

Reynolds considers the reformists and also the Daghestani secular intelligentsia the reason for Gotsinskii’s defeat. This opinion, however, should be accepted only in part. Indeed, the reformists and secular intelligentsia were against Gotsinskii’s imamate; however, the opposition of the Chechen and some Daghestani shaykhs was decisive.

Soviet historiography described this event as a gathering of fanatics. According to Khadzhi Alikberov, the ‘ulamā́’ “sought to impose their will and establish an imamate with Gotsinskii as imām through religious blackmail and the threat of fanatics. Finding out this plan, many delegates left the ‘congress.’ Only spiritual ‘luminaries’ did their work and elected an imām.”

In the post-Soviet period, Khadzhi Murad Donogo contributed to the topic in both his book devoted to Gotsinskii and brochure on the Andi Congress. Donogo mentions that this congress was “the first serious step by the mountaineers to make their dream come true, i.e., to build a theocratic state.” Nevertheless, the sources show that this was not the dream of all mountaineers and many of them, including the influential Sufi leaders, were against that. Additionally, this also cannot count as a first step, given that before Gotsinskii’s attempts to establish an imamate, there had already existed Imām Shamīl’s imamate.

98 Ibid., 42.
Due to the influential opposition and the risks that his influence would be limited to the Avar regions only, Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii refused to take the position of imām and hence avoided more confrontation. Possibly this is one of the reasons why Najm al-Dīn signed his open letters (not only those published in the press but also other letters directed to individual addressees) not as imām or amīr al-mu’minīn ("Commander of the Faithful"), as Imām Shamīl used to do, but as muftī. Najm al-Dīn’s message was clear, de facto he was not imām of the North Caucasus, not even of Daghestan. While Daghestan’s Avar regions supported his imamate, other regions did not.

1.2.3. Conflicts between Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii and ‘Alī Ḥajjī Akushinskii

After the failed meeting in Andi, Najm al-Dīn and his companion Uzun Ḥajjī sought to reclaim his position as imām. On 11 January 1918, several thousands of mountaineers led by Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajjī marched to the Dagestani administrative center Temir Khan Shura, where they again proclaimed Najm al-Dīn to be imām. According to the newspaper Dāghistān, Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii and Uzun Ḥajjī Saltinskii demanded that Najm al-Dīn become the great imām (yaṭluba li nafsihi al-imāma al-ʿuzmā).

Part of the population respectfully accepted Najm al-Dīn as imām. On this incident, Gamzat Kadiev, a follower of Najm al-Dīn, wrote:

With flags, the Muslim society of Temir Khan Shura was waiting for the imām’s visit. Suddenly, during the fourth prayer, the imām appeared like a sunrise on the road from Jengutay to Temir Khan Shura. The imām welcomed the audience with a brief speech, thanked them and expressed his satisfaction.

The opposition to Najm al-Dīn (including reformists and socialists) was strong in Temir Khan Shura although it was not so in Andi, an Avar region which fell strongly under Gotsinskii’s influence. On 12-13 January 1918, the Regional Executive Committee, which was a representative organ of the Provisional Government, called for a meeting, but Najm al-Dīn did not take


100 In 1918 the newspaper jarīdat Dāghistān was renamed Dāghistān.

101 "Fi Timir Khān Shūra". Dāghistān. 2 (1918): 3.

part in it, explaining that he had caught a cold and was unable to come. The Dagestan Regional Executive Committee expressed its bewilderment at the proclamation of Najm al-Dīn as imām and sent him an “letter of ultimatum,” in which he was asked to explain the situation surrounding the imamate. The letter also demanded that he send the armed people who participated in his campaign back to their villages.103 The next day, Najm al-Dīn participated in the meeting of the Regional Executive Committee. Explaining why he appeared in the company of so many armed people, he claimed that since Dagestan and Temir Khan Shura needed protection, he brought these soldiers to Temir Khan Shura to make them part of the police (militsiia).104 Additionally, Najm al-Dīn stated that he agreed with the committee—a member of which he was—that he was a muftī.105

![Picture 2. Standing from left to right, Uzun Ḥajjī and Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii with their armed guard at Temir Khan Shura](image)

103 Nakhibashev, Makhach. Uzun-Khadzhi Saltinskii – obshestvenno-politicheskii i religioznii deiatel’ Dagestana i Chechni, 60.
105 Ibid.
106 Source: The Fond of Pictures of the Civil War in Dagestan. TsGA RD.
In Temir Khan Shura, among those opposed to Najm al-Dīn’s imamate, was the key political and religious authority ‘Alī Ḥajjī Akushinskii, a shaykh from the Naqshbandiyya Sufi brotherhood who hailed from the village of Akusha in Daghestan’s Dargi region. As already seen in the context of the Andi Congress, Sufi shaykhs were important political and religious actors during the revolutions of 1917 and the Civil War. The influence of the Sufi shaykhs on the Muslims of Daghestan began to grow especially after the February Revolution, when some of them were actively involved in the social and political life of the region, siding with different groups. However, there was not one coherent Sufi movement or coherent ideology that formed these shaykhs’ agendas. As we see, both Uzun Ḥajjī and ‘Alī Ḥajjī were from the same Naqshbandiyya brotherhood but they had opposing standpoints towards Gotsinskii’s imamate. The same happened in the nineteenth century when, during the years of great jihād of the imamate era (1828-1859), different leaders of the same brotherhood took competing positions.

All of these religious figures wanted to establish a Sharī‘a state in Daghestan. However, not all one of them considered an imamate to be the

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107 Source: the Fond of Pictures of the Civil War in Dagestan. TsGA RD.
only way to have a state organized in accordance with Shari’a law. While Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajjī struggled to establish an imamate, ‘Alī Ḥajjī decided to cooperate with the revolutionaries, believing that the Daghestani people could not go against them. In his mind, cooperation with the socialists could at least establish an autonomy within Russia that would be governed by Shari’a law. The Bolsheviks understood that they needed religious leaders to win the battle for Daghestan and were highly interested in cooperation with shaykh ‘Alī Ḥajjī. In his turn, ‘Alī Ḥajjī was sure that the Bolsheviks would allow him to create an autonomy regulated by Shari’a with him as the supreme religious leader. In exchange for this cooperation, the Bolsheviks promised ‘Alī Ḥajjī that the legal problems to which the Bolsheviks and ‘Alī Ḥajjī had different approaches would be solved in accordance with Shari’a and not socialism.

Describing the situation and Najm al-Dīn’s coming to Temir Khan Shura, ‘Alī Kaiaev in his History of Revolution in Daghestan provides significant nuances as to why Najm al-Dīn’s attempt failed again and what role ‘Alī Ḥajjī played in that failure.

The revolutionaries (inqilābiyūn) wanted to counterbalance Najm al-Dīn and his shaykh Uzun Ḥajjī with a similar religious man with a lot of followers, a person whose words would have weight among the inhabitants of Daghestan and who, in his own words, would build a wall between them [on the one hand] and the call issued by Najm al-Dīn and

110 Ibid.
111 In the private library of Ali Kaiaev Shamil Shikhaliev and I discovered several manuscripts with Kaiaev’s own handwriting. One of them is an untitled manuscript telling the story of the 1917 Revolution in Daghestan. While there is no title mentioned by Kaiaev himself, someone who added page numbers also entitled the manuscript Tārīkh al-Inqilābiyūn (The History of the Revolutionaries). Given that this title was not given by the author himself, and also the fact that it seeks to emphasize not the history but the role of the revolutionaries, I will use more neutral title Tārīkh al-Inqilāb fi Dāghistān (History of the Revolution in Daghestan). This is also because the manuscript is mainly about the Daghestani actors and not the Bolsheviks per se. The first examination of the manuscript showed that this is a draft work with many repetitions. For example, the story of confrontation between Khadjalmakhi and Kuppa from one side and Tsudakhar from the other we came across several times. The whole manuscript consists of 52 pages. The main text comprises pages 23 to 42. The pages before and after these pages mainly duplicate the main text sometimes with minor additions. The story starts by the description of the ideological confrontations in Daghestan, gives some biographical details about one of the main actors of revolutionary years ‘Alī Ḥajjī. The most probable period of writing this manuscript is 1930s. al-Ghumūqī, ‘Alī. Tārīkh al-Inqilāb fi Dāghistān. Ilyas Kaiaev’s Collection. № 209
Uzun Ḥajjī [on the other] and therefore this person would be able to withstand the force that was represented by Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajjī.

Thus, the revolutionaries turned to ʿAlī Ḥajjī al-Aqūshī, who had a large number of murīds and other followers among the inhabitants of Daghestan. They followed ʿAlī Ḥajjī, similar to how the other part followed Najm al-Dīn and his shaykh Uzun Ḥajjī. The revolutionaries intended to bring him over to their side and invited him to Temir Khan Shura to meet him. He accepted their call and came to Temir Khan Shura at the head of a large procession from among his followers—residents of Dargi and other districts. He met with the revolutionaries and became their assistant against imām Najm al-Dīn, his shaykh Uzun Ḥajjī and those who were on the side of the latter [Uzun Ḥajjī]. ʿAlī Ḥajjī, with his appeals and sermons, erected a great barrier for the rest of the inhabitants of Daghestan against the call of Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajjī. If this had not happened, and if ʿAlī Ḥajjī had joined Najm al-Dīn, then there is no doubt all the inhabitants of the Dargi district, as well as all the followers of ʿAlī Ḥajjī from Kaitag, Mehtulla, Targu and other lowland and mountainous parts of Daghestan would have joined him. And this would happen because of the eloquence [of ʿAlī Ḥajjī] and in view of the fact that people obeyed him.112

This was a crucial moment in the history of the revolution in Daghestan: two influential leaders—Najm al-Dīn and ʿAlī Ḥajjī—came to demonstrate their force and the numbers of their followers. However, ʿAlī Ḥajjī was not just a tool in the hands of the socialists. When ʿAlī Ḥajjī went against Gotsinskii, Muslims from many districts of Daghestan followed him with only the mountainous Avar regions remaining loyal to Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii. Contrary to the information given by Kaiaev, who considered ʿAlī Ḥajjī Akushinskii as the most significant actor in the events, Soviet historians such as Khadzhi Alikberov, Nurmagomed Emirov and Badrutdin Kashkaev ignored the fact that ʿAlī Ḥajjī came not alone but with his followers and that by this step he split the Daghestani people into two parts: followers of Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii and followers of Akushinskii.113 The key argument of Soviet historiography is that the socialists initiated the visit of ʿAlī Ḥajjī Akushinskii to Temir Khan

Shura to counterbalance Najm al-Dīn. Soviet historians do not discuss ʿAlī Ḥajjī’s own ambitions: by minimizing role of ʿAlī Ḥajjī, the Bolsheviks appear as the dominant actors in the events.

ʿAlī Ḥajjī’s cooperation with the Bolsheviks had a crucial effect: now the latter received support from an Islamic authority and no longer appeared as an anti-Šarīʿa force. Before that the socialists had been perceived as a force struggling against Šarīʿa and pursuing the goal of eliminating Islam from Daghestan. Kaiaev stated that ʿAlī Ḥajjī believed in the socialists not being against Islam and that through their cooperation Daghestan would be governed by Šarīʿa law. For ordinary people this was a decisive moment to accept the revolutionaries as their allies rather than as enemies of religion. As Kaiaev mentioned, “seeing ʿAlī Ḥajjī together with the revolutionaries, the people started to believe that such a great scholar and the best of all shaykhs would not have joined them if they brought harm and fear of religion and Šarīʿa.”

Najm al-Dīn left Temir Khan Shura in disagreement not only with ʿAlī Ḥajjī and the reformists, but also with Uzun Ḥajjī. After leaving he wrote a new message to the people of the North Caucasus:

Representatives of Daghestani, Chechen, Circassian and other regions of the North Caucasus, ‘ulamāʾ, good and intelligent people gathered and nominated me as the head of the Šarīʿa. The title that they conferred upon me was different. But the one to whom they gave these titles is only a servant of Allah and sacrificing his life, family and property for the sake of introducing and restoring the Šarīʿa.

I hear the rumors, and enemies of the Šarīʿa say that I want to take the imamate by force. This is a huge lie. I am a builder of Šarīʿa. If any ʿālim is worthy of taking this duty from me, I give him ten thousand rubles.

In this letter, Najm al-Dīn refers to the Šarīʿa restoration discourse, emphasizing his role in the organization of the life of Daghestanis in accordance with Šarīʿa. This message was directed not only against those ‘ulamāʾ who opposed Najm al-Dīn’s imamate but also against the Daghestani socialists who started an active propaganda campaign against Najm al-Dīn when he left Temir Khan Shura. The events of Temir Khan Shura meant a considerable blow to

Najm al-Dīn’s reputation, but in the mountainous areas of Daghestan, mostly among the Avars, he continued to be one of the most influential figures.

1.2.4. The break between Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajjī

Already on the eve of the October Revolution, the ‘ulamā’ of Daghestan were split into two streams, one of which was headed by shaykh ‘Alī Ḥajjī and the other by Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii. Supporters of the first stood against Denikin’s occupation of Daghestan and supported the Soviet regime. Supporters of the second stream were against Soviet power and, out of necessity, were ready to support Denikin. Initially, Uzun Ḥajjī was in the second group, but when Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii began to pursue a policy of conciliation with Denikin’s Volunteer Army (Dobrarmiia), he ceased to support Najm al-Dīn. This shift in relations had a significant impact on future developments in Daghestan and created a curious constellation: Uzun Ḥajjī, ‘Alī Ḥajjī and the socialists against Denikin.117

In May 1919, General Anton Denikin led his anti-Bolshevik forces into Daghestan. Advocating “one undivided Russia,” Denikin refused to recognize any independent states in the Caucasus. Thus, the Dobrarmiia tried to conquer and subjugate the mountaineers as well. Unable to resist militarily, the new government of the Mountain Republic,118 formed in March 1919 by Pshemakho Kotsev, tried to negotiate, and in April its delegation met Denikin in person. The “White” general flatly rejected their claims to independence and demanded loyalty to Russia. The Dobrarmia then conquered Daghestan, thereby putting an official end to the Mountain Republic.119

Some historians misunderstood the role of Najm al-Dīn in the anti-Denikin events. For instance, Robert Bruce Ware and Enver Kisriev argue that “at the forefront of the movement [against Denikin] was Shaykh ‘Alī Gadzhi (Akushinskii) from the ethnic Dargin Akusha djamaat. Other prominent leaders were Shaykh Uzun-Hadji of Salta, and Mufti Nazhmeidin

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118 The Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus or the Mountain Republic was situated in the Northern Caucasus and established on the base of the Union of Mountaineers on 11 May 1918.
While in the case of ‘Alī Ḥajjī and Uzun Ḥajjī the authors are correct, the case of Najm al-Dīn was completely different and he was not at the forefront of the anti-Denikin movement. Najm al-Dīn was the most prominent among the few who regarded the Bolsheviks as more dangerous than the Dobrarmia. This was the main question where the opinions of Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajjī clashed. The overwhelming majority of Daghestani leaders, including Uzun Ḥajjī, saw the Bolsheviks as the lesser evil. At the beginning of 1919, when Denikin’s army made a successful move into Chechnya, the chairman of the government of the Mountain Republic, Pshemakho Kotsev (1884 - 1962), met with ‘Alī Ḥajjī Akushinskii and Uzun Ḥajjī, inviting them to Temir Khan Shura and trying to influence the Chechen nation to continue the struggle against Denikin. In April 1919, Uzun Ḥajjī joined Kotsev and ‘Alī Ḥajjī Akushinskii in a call to resist the Dobrarmia. In April 1919, a joint session of the Union Council (Parliament of the Mountain Republic) and the government of the Mountain Republic was held where the Union Council and the government of the republic decided to organize a united revolutionary front against the Dobrarmia. Understanding the influence of Uzun Ḥajjī and ‘Alī Ḥajjī Akushinskii, now the leaders of the Mountain Republic sought to attract them to their side. In his history of revolution in Daghestan, ‘Alī Kaiaev writes:

Pshemakho Kotsev also knew that the shaykhs Uzun Ḥajjī and ‘Alī Ḥajjī enjoyed great authority in Daghestan. And he did not see any other way for the defense of Daghestan and resistance to the Cossacks except by attracting these two shaykhs to the government, thereby persuading the inhabitants of Daghestan to defend their homeland. Pshemakho Kotsev realized that he needed it, that he had no other choice, even if his own government would defy his move. He expressed his opinion to the parliament, but members of the parliament said that these shaykhs are today our enemies and are agitating the people against us. We will not be able to persuade them to join our side. Pshemakho Kotsev answered the following: “Leave this to me. I will bend both shaykhs to our side and invite them to Temir Khan Shura whatever it takes. If they refuse to come to us, then I myself will meet with them.” Then Pshemakho Kotsev went to Akusha, having agreed that Uzun Ḥajjī would also arrive there. He clarified the current situation to them [Uzun Ḥajjī and ‘Alī Ḥajjī] and encouraged them to defend Daghestan, promising that if they accept his

proposal, he and the government [of the Mountain Republic] would obey them. Uzun Ḥajjī and ‘Alī Ḥajjī would still be able to do what they want and would arrange things the way they want. ‘Alī Ḥajjī and Uzun Ḥajjī accepted his offer and Kotsev returned to Temir Khan Shura. A few days later the shaykhs arrived there too, and each of them was accompanied by fifty horsemen from among their associates (ašḥāb wa anṣār). They took government affairs into their own hands.121

On 19 April 1919, ‘Alī Ḥajjī and Uzun Ḥajjī visited Temir Khan Shura and within the framework of that joint session gave speeches calling the nations of Daghestan and Chechnya to struggle against Denikin. Additionally, ‘Alī Ḥajjī and Uzun Ḥajjī planned the mobilization to defend Daghestan against Denikin.122

Shaykh Uzun Ḥajjī gave a speech at the meeting of the parliament of the Mountain Republic.

If we were still united and organized, no enemy would dare to cross the borders of our Motherland [i.e. Daghestan]. The first ‘ulamā’ did not unite,123 and after them there was a tragedy. The Muslims began killing each other. Whatever they were, matters of the past must be forgotten. Let’s unite, even now, facing the common danger. Unite, and then no one can defeat us. Our holy duty is to respond to the call of our Chechen and Ingush brothers,126 otherwise we will end up under the control of the Cossacks. There is no benefit from words, we need to act. O, our people, wake up from your slumber. ‘Alī Ḥajjī and I, no matter how old,125 let us go to die for the people.126

Following Uzun Ḥajjī, ‘Alī Ḥajjī, who supported Uzun Ḥajjī on the issue of helping the Chechens and Ingush, added:
Also, from others I hear that in order to protect the republic and freedom it is necessary to fight. It is necessary to fight in order to guarantee the triumph of our religion. Freedom and independence are also dear to us, but each case must be organized in accordance with the Shari’a prescriptions.  

Nevertheless, though the shaykhs gave these speeches, they avoided being actively engaged in that mobilization process. ‘Alī Ḥajjī, announcing that he is quite old and had no time during the fasting, left Temir Khan Shura for Akusha. On 22 May of the same year the Mountain Republic collapsed. Already at the beginning of September 1919, in Vеденко (Chechnya), Uzun Ḥajjī proclaimed the establishment of the Emirate of the North Caucasus (Severo-Kavkazskoe Emirstvo), with himself bearing the title of both imām and amīr, and called for jihād against Denikin’s army. Like Najm al-Dīn’s case, many of Uzun Ḥajjī’s moves pointed at, and drew legitimacy from, the memories of the heroic Islamic resistance of Shamīl: his appropriation of the title imām and his choice of Vеденко—Shamīl’s “capital” between 1845 and 1859—as his own headquarters made that obvious. So did the division of the emirate into seven nā’ibs.

This division between Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajjī split the movement for the re-establishment of the imamate. The confrontation between Uzun Ḥajjī and Najm al-Dīn diminished the authority of Najm al-Dīn since he lost not only his shaykh and support but also his candidacy for the imamate. While, before this shift, Daghestan’s Avar regions were supporting Najm al-Dīn, now his authority weakened there too since Uzun Ḥajjī was also of Avar origin and, in addition, he was a Naqshbandī shaykh, which was very powerful in the Avar lands. Gotsinskii’s influential (in terms of wealth and knowledge) figure was a key factor in Uzun Ḥajjī’s plan. Gotsinskii was more powerful in the Avar region than Uzun Ḥajjī though the latter was a shaykh. But Uzun Ḥajjī, like other actors of the time, was quite flexible in making relations. When Gotsinskii rejected the position of imām for the second time, Uzun Ḥajjī choose fighting against Denikin

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127 Ibid.  
in contrast with Gotsinskii. The struggle against the restoration of the Russian Empire gave Uzun Ḥajjī the hope of establishing an Islamic state, thus he did not hesitate to cooperate with Akushinskii and the Bolsheviks. Once all his aces were played, Uzun Ḥajjī decided to establish his own emirate, recognizing the Ottoman Sultan as imām. The anti-Soviet powers such as Turkey and Georgia tried to use this emirate and thus provided some assistance. However, the death of Uzun Ḥajjī, on whose reputation the newly established was built, meant the collapse of the state. Furthermore, just before his death Uzun Ḥajjī received a letter from the Soviet state insisting he accept the power of the Soviet government. Though Uzun Ḥajjī rejected that ultimatum, his successor, Shaykh Darvīsh Muḥammed, could not save the emirate. This short-lived state formation collapsed in March 1920.


During this period, i.e., between January and March 1920, when Uzun Ḥajjī tried to reinforce his emirate, the Soviet army launched its successful offensive

130 Source: the Fond of Pictures of the Civil War in Dagestan. TsGA RD.
in the Terek and Daghestan regions. On 11 March 1920, the Reds entered Vladikavkaz and Nalchik. The Whites tried to keep Port Petrovsk, but already in mid-March 1920, the city was controlled by the Red Army.\footnote{Lobanov, Vladimir. Terek i Dagestan v ogne Grazhdanskoi voiny. Religioznoe, voennopoliticheskoе i ideologicheskoе protivostoianie v 1917-1920-kh godakh. Sankt-Peterburg, 2017. Pp. 446-448.}

\section*{1.3. The first Soviet decade in Daghestan}
\subsection*{1.3.1. Sovietization of Daghestan and the anti-Soviet uprising}

After the break with Uzun Ḥajjī, Najm al-Dīn moved to the Avar regions, declaring he preferred Denikin over the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevization of Daghestani politics pushed him into taking certain steps against them. In September 1920, Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii led a large anti-Soviet uprising under the banner of Islam, and the mountainous regions of Daghestan supported him. The First Secretary of the Daghestan Regional Committee, Najm al-Dīn Samurskii, in his work published in 1925 acknowledged that “the uprising happened not only because of the influence of its leader, i.e. Najm al-Dīn, but also due to mistakes made by some Soviet officers.”\footnote{Samurskii, Nazhmuddin. Grazhdanskaia voina v Dagestane. Makhachkala, 1925. P. 14} Najm al-Dīn himself claimed that the uprising was not planned. As he would later say during his interrogation by the OGPU (Ob”edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoе upravlenie, the All-Union State Political Administration), he “stayed at home and wanted to surrender to the Bolsheviks.” But he found out that an armed group of Bolsheviks was coming to arrest him and thus understood that he had no choice but to revolt. Since this is what he said during his arrest and interrogation, we may assume that at this point it was in his interest to conceal his actions and present them as spontaneous rather than as a planned anti-Soviet uprising.

At the beginning of the uprising, Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii managed to defeat some Red Army units in Botlikh, Khunzakh and Gunib. This success pushed the Dagrevkom (Daghestani Revolutionary Committee) to organize a special meeting in Temir Khan Shura to discuss their next moves against Najm al-Dīn. The situation changed in October when groups of the Eleventh Red Army coming from Baku reached Daghestan. Although Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii actively played the Shari‘a justice card, his anti-Soviet uprising was soon crushed by the Red Army.
After the defeat of Najm Dīn’s uprising, on 13 November 1920, Joseph Stalin announced the Declaration of the Soviet Autonomy of Daghestan during the Congress of the Peoples of Daghestan in Temir Khan Shura. Significantly, this declaration was emblematic for the policy that the Bolsheviks introduced in Daghestan in the first years after the revolution. It addressed several vital issues of those days such as the state order, the role of Sharī’a and Najm al-Dīn’s revolt.

One of the central events mentioned by Stalin was the anti-Soviet uprising led by Najm al-Dīn. Stalin called upon the people of Daghestan to prove their trustworthiness by driving out Najm al-Dīn. At the same time, Stalin insisted that “the people of Daghestan were with the Reds and have demonstrated their loyalty to the Red flag in fighting against [Najm al-Dīn] Gotsinskii.” Later, the Soviet historiography would maintain this interpretation to present the uprising as a confrontation between the working people of Daghestan and the gangs of Najm al-Dīn. However, from domestic Daghestani sources we learn that the Daghestani people preferred to follow various local religious leaders. For example, the Dargi regions were following ‘Alī Ḥajjī while the Avar regions located in mountainous Daghestan were following Avar religious leaders such as Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii and Uzun Ḥajjī Saltinskii. These regions were more inclined to re-establish an imamate and opposed Soviet ideology. Reformist ideas, by contrast, were widespread in urban centres and in the Kumyk regions located near these centers. One may notice that hardly any reformists resided in the mountainous parts of Daghestan, while the urban centers and their environs were the main centers of Muslim reformism. Even if a few reformists were born in mountainous Daghestan, they later moved to the cities. The Daghestani reformists were mainly operating in the urban regions where they found fertile ground for cooperation with the Bolsheviks and their allies in order to have a chance to implement their own projects.

As Stalin stated, the “New Russia”—a Russia of workers and peasants—granted autonomy to the people of Daghestan allowing them to “enjoy the right of internal self-administration while retaining its fraternal tie with the peoples of Russia.” According to Stalin, “the Soviet Government is the first government to grant Daghestan autonomy voluntarily.” Here we see a contradiction in Stalin’s words: he argued that the people of Daghestan were mature enough to help

destroy the old order and contribute to the revolution, but then he states that the autonomy was an expression of the Soviets’ benevolence and not the result of the Daghestanis’ political maturity. To enforce this claim, Stalin emphasized that “autonomy does not mean independence. The bond between Russia and Daghestan must be preserved, for only then can Daghestan preserve its freedom.”

Continuing to clear the name of the Bolsheviks as an anti-Shari’a force, Stalin stressed the role of the Islamic law and customary law. As Stalin stated,

Daghestan must be governed in accordance with its specific features, its manner of life and customs.

We are told that among the Daghestani peoples the Shari’a is of great importance. We have also been informed that the enemies of Soviet power are spreading rumors that it has banned the Shari’a.

I have been authorized by the government of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic to state here that these rumors are false. The government of Russia gives every people the full right to govern itself on the basis of its laws and customs.

The Soviet Government considers that the Shari’a, as common law, is as fully authorized as that of any other of the peoples inhabiting Russia (Sovetskoe pravitel’stvo schitaet shariat takim zhe pravomochnym, obychnym pravom, kakie imeetsia i u drugikh narodov, naseliahushchikh Rossiiu.).

If the Daghestani people desire to preserve their laws and customs, the latter indeed should be preserved.135

This statement is, we must assume, deliberately vague. While over the centuries the Islamic scholars in Daghestan had been struggling with the tension between customary law (‘adat, obychnoe pravo) and Islamic law, Stalin in his speech associated Shari’a more with tradition and customs than with Islam. Moreover, by saying “The Soviet Government considers that the Shari’a, as common law, is as fully authorized as that of any other of the peoples inhabiting Russia,” Stalin represents it as one custom among the many customs of the peoples inhabiting Russia, reducing its religious role and countering any universalist claims for Islamic law. To Stalin, the Shari’a was just an order for community organization and could never be the way to attain truth and obtain eternal life in the thereafter.

After the arrival of the Red Army, Najm al-Dīn had to flee and hide in the remote alpine areas of Daghestan and Chechnya. Over the next four years he would try to mobilize the mountaineers against Bolshevik rule. In 1924 Gotsinskii issued a note protesting against the policy of the Bolsheviks and calling for the introduction of Shari‘a law. Unfortunately, the surviving translations and publications of these document do not provide information on the whereabouts of the original letter; given that Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii published his letters in Arabic, we must assume that it was written in this language. Here I will cite from the English translation published by Vladimir Bobrovnikov:

From the imām, who has devotedly followed in the footsteps of the four imāms, shunning hypocrites (munāfiqūn) and their intrigues, the faithful imām of all the people of the Caucasus, Najm al-Dīn al-Ḥuzī.\footnote{“Note from Imam Najm al-Dīn al-Hutsi to the Soviet Government (1924)” in Islam and Sufism in Daghestan edited by Gammer, Moshe. Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2019. P. 124. In a footnote to this document V. Bobrovnikov remarks that with the “four imāms” Najm al-Dīn referred to the first ‘rightly guided caliphs’ (al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn), i.e. Abū Bakr (632-634), ‘Umar (634-644), ‘Uthmān (644-656) and ‘Alī (656-661). Given Najm al-Dīn’s previous attempts to link his policies to the imamate of Shamīl, I believe that in this letter as well he meant the first Daghestani imām rather than al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn.}

Najm al-Dīn now presented himself as imām after having rejected this title twice. His emphasis on his emulation of the four imāms (that is, the three imams of 1829-1859, including Shamīl, plus the Daghestani imam of the 1877-78 revolt) demonstrates that he was still trying to link his imamate to the rule of Shamīl.

In this letter, Najm al-Dīn demanded that Soviet rule be removed not only from Daghestan but also from other Muslim regions of the USSR such as Turkestan. Moreover, he even demanded that Christianity should be practiced freely.\footnote{“Note from Imam Najm al-Dīn al-Hutsi to the Soviet Government (1924)”} It is hard to imagine that in 1924 Najm al-Dīn believed that his letter would somehow change the order of things in the region. The USSR was already established. This ambitious letter can be considered the final effort of a defeated leader to improve his reputation.
The letter did not help and Najm al-Dīn could hardly find support among the mountaineers. In 1925 the Soviets managed to defeat Najm al-Dīn’s troops and arrest him. On 28 September 1925 Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii was shot in Rostov-on-Don by the decision of the OGPU.139

1.3.2. Soviet attempts to force the Daghestani ‘ulamā’ to support their policies

At the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in March 1919, Vladimir Lenin formulated the Soviet policy towards Islam in the following manner:

What can we do in relation to such people as the Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Turkmens, who are still under the influence of their mullas? Here in Russia, the people’s memory of their unhappy experience with the “popes” has helped us to throw these off. But you know how badly the decree about civil marriage is still being carried out. Can we go to those nations and tell them, “Shall we get rid of your exploiters?” We cannot do that because

138 Source: the Fond of Pictures of the Civil War in Dagestan. TsGA RD.
they are completely subservient to their mullas. We just have to wait for the development of each particular nation and for and the inescapable differentiation of the proletariat from the bourgeois elements.¹⁴⁰

The Soviet leadership aimed to eliminate all religions, including Islam. To reach to this objective, those working on the anti-religious propaganda combined different tactics.¹⁴¹ In the 1920s the state policies of discrediting Islam were extremely diverse. Lenin’s idea of dealing with every nation separately and waiting for the specific moment to tackle the issue shows the character of the Soviet anti-Islamic policy in general. It was based on patience and counted on the uniqueness of every Muslim region of Russia.

The Sovietization of Daghestan gradually reduced the social field of *Sharī’a*. As the official document “Statute on Shari’a Courts in the Daghestani Autonomous Soviet Republic” issued by the Central Executive Committee of the Daghestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (DASSR) (30 July 1922) shows, first the Soviets cut the financing of these courts, thereby putting the onus of their maintenance on the shoulders of communities. Additionally, the document shows that people’s courts were preferable and had a higher status than *Sharī’a* courts.¹⁴² Soviet judicial institutions were replacing *Sharī’a* courts at the district level. Between 1923 and 1926 the number of district *Sharī’a* courts was reduced from eleven to eight.¹⁴³

Examining the first decade of relations between the Daghestani Muslim scholars and the Soviet government, Bobrovnikov states that “in the years 1920-1927 the relationship between the Soviet authorities and the Muslim jurisconsults and scholars were not as antagonistic as they are usually portrayed.”¹⁴⁴ As proof for this argument he provides examples of scholars who were allies of the Bolsheviks. As he writes, “It is not a coincidence that

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 113-114.
a number of influential Daghestani ‘ulamā’ took active part in the Socialist reform of Daghestan. Some of them held positions in Soviet judicial and cultural institutions from 1918 onwards. For instance, in 1918-1919 the Naqshbandī-Šādhilī shaykh Sayfīllāh al-Nītsovkrī (Bashlarov, 1853-1919) headed the judicial Shari‘a department of the Daghestani Revolutionary Committee (revkom). Another well-known Muslim scholar and liberal journalist, Ali Kaiaev, was chairman of a district Shari‘a court in his native village of Kumukh from 1918-1925.145

I agree with Bobrovnikov that some of the scholars cooperated with the socialists. However, I would like to focus attention on two debatable nuances. First, Bashlarov’s examples relate to the years of 1918-1919 when the USSR did not exist yet and consequently this cooperation differs from the cooperation of the scholars after its establishment. Another key moment is the example of ‘Ali Kaiaev. The new source evaluated in this dissertation—the untitled memoirs of Kaiaev, which I discovered in his private archive,146 throws new light on the cooperation between the reformist ‘ulamā’ and the Daghestani socialists. As Kaiaev wrote,

The revolutionaries sought to unite their aspirations and movement with the ‘ulama’ and therefore they arranged a meeting in the house of the engineer ‘Ādilkarāy.147 I was also invited. Korkmasov, Dakhadaev and Kuarshalov attended from the revolutionaries. The scholars attending the meeting were Yūsuf Qādī al-Ghumūqī, Muḥammad Qādī Dibirov, Ibrāhīm Qādī al-Dūranghī and the Qādī of the city of Temir Khan Shura, Aghā Raḥīm.

During the meeting the socialists presented their program, and the opinions of the ‘ulama’ were divided. While some of them said that there is no contradiction between Shari‘a and socialism, the others stated that contradictions do exist. In my turn, I told the socialists that there are both similarities and dissimilarities [between the Shari‘a and socialism]. If there is a contradiction in private matters, then what will you do? Will you remove what is contrary to Shari‘a from your path

145 Ibid.
146 The translation of this source from Arabic was made in collaboration with Dr. Shamil Shikhaliev.
147 ‘Ādilkarāy or Adilgerei Daidbekov (1873-1947) had studied in the Imperial Technical School and was an official in the Tsarist administration. After the 1917 Revolution, he participated in Vladikavkaz Congress and became the minister of transport of the Mountain Republic. With the establishment of the DASSR, Daidbekov served as Head of the Department of Railways of Daghestan. He was a member of the Revolutionary Committee of Daghestan. Possibly, by choosing this place, the Socialists desired to have a dominant position.
(madhhab)? As for us, we will not take away [the parts of the *Sharī’a*] that stand in contradiction to socialism. To this, Dakhadaev replied that he did not see any contradiction between *Sharī’a* and socialism... and I replied to him, ‘This is not an answer. I’m not talking about their similarities. I ask you, if there is a contradiction in a particular question, what program will be decisive: socialism or *Sharī’a*? You assume that there is no contradiction today. What will happen if a difference appears later? Also, it must be kept in mind that only a small number of scholars are present at this meeting, but in the mountains there are many scholars, and they are the ones who have much influence. If those who are present here today recognize unity, what will happen if others disagree with us?’

To this, Dakhadaev answered that they will remove what is contrary to *Sharī’a* and replace it with what is consistent. But he only said that in his speech. It was not what he really thought. And the scholars present at the meeting were aware of this.

Korkmasov voiced what was really on his mind, saying “We will never change anything in our program in order to comply with *Sharī’a*!”

What can we learn from this piece of memory? First, that there was a vivid debate about the compatibility of *Sharī’a* and socialism. Secondly, we see that there was no trust between the ‘ulamā’ and the socialists: the ‘ulamā’ were sure that the socialists were not being honest with them. Finally, the determination of the ‘ulamā’ that they will not go against *Sharī’a* even if it contradicts what was in the socialists’ program demonstrates the strength of their position in 1918 because they could still force the socialists to maneuver and, if necessary, hide their real intentions.

The arrival of the Red Army changed the balance of forces, placing the socialists into a dominant position. Consequently, the cooperation needs to be investigated while keeping in mind two important factors: a) the scholars’ distrust and b) their vulnerable position. While in the first revolutionary years (1917-1918) the scholars saw collaboration with the Bolsheviks mainly as an opportunity to implement their own projects, the cooperation that emerged after the establishment of the USSR was a way of adaptation to Soviet domination. The reformists were very willing to be catapulted into a leading political role by the socialists. Otherwise, they would not have accepted this invitation.

However, the role of the reformists was mainly limited to the education,

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publishing and cultural spheres. From the reformists, Dibirov was working in the Daghestani People’s Commissariat of Education in the first year of Sovietization. Then he started working at the Daghestani Publishing Center as an editor of the Kumyk-language newspaper Soviet Daghestan and the Avar-language newspaper Red Mountains. Between 1924 and 1929 he worked in the Pedagogical Technical College of Daghestan and at the People’s Commissariat of Education.\textsuperscript{149} Kaiaev and Akaev also became part of the Soviet system. Like Dibirov, after the establishment of the USSR, Akaev was also working mainly in the publishing sphere. In 1925, with the permission of the Soviets, he started publishing Bayān al-Ḥaqā’iq (“Exposing the Truth”) and became its editor. As for Kaiaev, between 1918 and 1925 he lived mainly in Kumukh, where he worked in the Shari‘a court and also opened a madrasa.\textsuperscript{150} In 1925-1928 he worked at the Republican Regional Museum and in 1928-1930 in the Daghestani Scientific-Research Institute.\textsuperscript{151}

Important for investigating the relationship between the Soviet authorities and the Muslim scholars in the years 1920-1927 are the meetings of the Muslim scholars. It was the Soviet authorities who either organized or prompted these conventions. In examining the reports from those meetings, I seek to understand their primary purpose. Did these conventions just continue an already established policy of using religious authorities to legitimize policies, or were these conventions a new tactic used by the Soviet government?

In the early 1920s, the Soviet government initiated the organization of Muslim congresses on all-Russian and regional levels, aiming to use the authority of pro-Soviet Muslim leaders for their international and domestic ambitions. All-Muslim meetings such as the Moscow and Baku congresses\textsuperscript{152} were vital for the Communists’ plans for exporting the revolution internationally. As Edward


\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 29.

Carr emphasizes, in these meetings the notion of revolution was combined with a willingness to compromise with Muslim traditions. “Muslim beliefs and institutions were treated with veiled respect, and the cause of world revolution narrowed down to specific and more manageable dimensions. The Muslim tradition of jihad, or holy war against the infidel, was harnessed to a modern crusade of oppressed peoples against the imperialist oppressors, with Britain as the main target.”

Whereas this was true for the huge congresses that the Bolsheviks organized, the regional meetings of pro-Soviet ‘ulamā’, which were more limited in scope, actually aimed to eliminate anti-Soviet Muslim reactions such as the uprising led by Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii. In the DASSR, such conventions were held in 1920, 1923 and 1925. Like the Baku Congress, the 1920 Congress of the Muslim Clergy of Daghestan followed the course adopted by the Communist International (Comintern) and the Soviet government to unleash the proletarian and anti-colonial world revolution. Its delegates called on all working Muslims of the East to fight “for liberation from the Anglo-French and other capitalists’ ‘yoke’ and expressed readiness to “take up arms for the defense of Soviet power in Daghestan, the Muslim East and the whole world!”

However, the resolutions, the issues that were discussed, and the character of the main actors at these meetings demonstrate that the main purpose of these conventions was still to establish cooperation between the Soviet government and the religious leaders (in particular Sufi shaykhs) who were not openly anti-Soviet.

This makes sense, especially given that the Soviet government had lost the support of ‘Alī Ḥajjī, formerly the main ally of the Soviets in Daghestan. ‘Alī Ḥajjī Akushinskii changed his attitude towards the Soviets and became the central anti-Soviet figure of Daghestan in the 1920s when the Soviet government undermined the material base of the ‘ulama’, first by redirecting part of the waqf and the zakāt incomes for the maintenance of secular schools and then by transferring these budgets into the hands of the Soviets. Obviously, ‘Alī Ḥajjī Akushinskii overestimated his influence on the government. These decisions undermined Akushinskii’s trust in the Soviet government and he ceased to

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reckon with the Soviet authorities.

In 1925, ‘Alī Ḥajjī with his sons and relatives sharply opposed the re-election of the village council in his native village of Akusha in the Dargi region of Daghestan. Osman Osmanov, the chairman of the Dargi district, came to Akusha. Though Osmanov had a long conversation with ‘Alī Ḥajjī about the significance of the actions of the Soviet government, ‘Alī-Ḥajjī openly spoke out against them. Nevertheless, ‘Alī Ḥajjī’s efforts were futile. A year later, in 1926, the religious men of Akusha and a number of other villages conducted open agitation against Soviet power, opposing Soviet schools and cultural and educational institutions. At the order of ‘Alī Ḥajjī school desks were thrown into the river, an act by which they openly showed their disagreement with the creation of new Soviet schools.

Between 1925 and 1927, ‘Alī Ḥajjī travelled through the villages of Daghestan, accompanied by his murīds. He visited Karabudakhkent, Paraul, Kayakent, Tsudakhar, Gubden, Burki-Mahi and other villages of Daghestan. Nearly everywhere almost all the population of these villages met him. Some of the villagers even walked several miles to meet him before he made it to their villages. G. Kakagasanov and A.-G. Gadzhiev emphasize that, having visited these villages, he “urged [the people] not to listen to the Communists since they are unbelievers (giaurs) and they cannot be buried in the cemetery, as they will go to hell.”

Coming back to the Daghestani meetings of the ‘ulamā’, one can see that as long as Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii in the mountains and ‘Alī Ḥajjī in his regions of influence were acting against the Soviet government, actively criticizing the Bolsheviks for their anti-Shari‘a policy, the Soviet government had to search for new sources of support from among the ‘ulamā’ and maintain a façade that would allow them to pose as a not-anti-Islamic force. The organization of the meetings of ‘ulamā’, I believe, was one method they used to show that they were not against Islam and to demonstrate to the people of Daghestan that they enjoyed the support of famous religious leaders. Among the latter, the most influential person was the shaykh of the Naqshbandi and Shādhili tariqas Hasan Ḧilmī al-Qaḥī (1852-1937), who hosted one such convention of scholars on 20 November 1923. The place of the meeting—the village of Kakhib—was an ideal location for gathering the ‘ulamā’ who were accepting of the Soviets since it was the birthplace and residence of the most

influential Avar shaykh of the 1920–1930s, Ḥasan Ḥilmī, a shaykh who was acting in line with the Soviets outwardly up to his repression by the regime he supported. Ḥasan Ḥilmī al-Qaḥī was an influential authority in that region. He was helping the Soviets to suppress the uprising of Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii in 1920-1921. However, as in the case of the confrontation between Najm al-Dīn with Uzun Ḥajjī and ‘Alī Ḥajjī, I argue that the cooperation of Ḥasan Ḥilmī al-Qaḥī with the Bolsheviks against Najm al-Dīn was a pragmatic political step that had nothing to do with ideology. Kaiaev, in his *History of the Revolution*, uncovers the reason for al-Qaḥī’s position: Ḥasan Ḥilmī al-Qaḥī understood it would be impossible to win a war against the Eleventh Red Army. He wrote:

At the beginning of the revolution, Muḥammad Dibir156 went to the Gunib fortress to ask Gunib’s residents about freedom, whether they choose freedom or autocracy. Among those present was also Ḥasan al-Qaḥī. [Before that] Shaykh Sayfallāh al-Nitsovkrī (Bashlarov)157 wrote him urging al-Qaḥī to help freedom and strengthen the side of freedom.158 And he told him that the revolutionaries would undoubtedly win. Freedom would be established, and they needed to support it. When the meeting was fully assembled, Shaykh Ḥasan spoke and reported the good news of freedom. Aḥmad al-Kuchrī was the representative of the opposing group, and he wanted to argue with him. And he [Ḥasan al-Qaḥī] rejected him and a dispute began between them. And then [Ḥasan Ḥilmī al-Qaḥī] said, “The condition for the battle is the balance of the parties, isn’t it? Here we see the opposite.” “Our strength is sufficient,” [replied al-Kuchrī]. He [Ḥasan al-Qaḥī] said, “If we have an old gun, then they have a rifle, and if we have a rifle, then they have machine guns. So how can our weapons beat their weapons?” [al-Kuchrī] shut up and agreed to this. The inhabitants of the village of Teletl wrote to him [al-Qaḥī], asking whether he was for a war against the Bolsheviks and whether this corresponds to the *Sharī‘a*, or whether it is necessary to obey. And he wrote to them and said briefly: “Look at your burned stones and understand their purpose, and this is enough for you to understand whether it is worth going against them.”159

156 The author means Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov.
158 As we see under the freedom, they understood the collapse of autocracy and the victory of the Revolutionary side.
Just after the collapse of the Russian Empire, when the discourse of the re-establishment of an imamate was at its zenith, debates resurfaced on whether the *jihād* against the Russians was permissible or not. The questions addressed to Ḥasan Ḥilmī al-Qaĥī form part of this debate. As we will see in the next chapter of my thesis, Daghestani reformers supported the idea that a jihad against Russians was forbidden since the Russians were no longer enemies. Ḥasan Ḥilmī al-Qaĥī did not voice this particular reasoning but rather argued that the Daghestanis were not strong enough to fight against the Bolsheviks. With the imagery of the “burnt stones” he reminded the villagers of Teletl that their village had been burnt three times by the Russians: twice during the Caucasian War and the third time during the uprising of 1877. One might notice that Ḥasan Ḥilmī al-Qaĥī did not consider the Bolsheviks as a group against whom *jihād* was forbidden; rather, he stated that the reason why they could not fight against the Bolsheviks was the imbalance between the struggling sides. Thus, when we study him as the main actor organizing the Kakhib meeting, we need to take into consideration his reasons and desires and avoid viewing him as a Sovietized ‘ālim.

The Kakhib meeting of 1923 discussed the following questions: How does Soviet power relate to the Muslim religion and the ‘ulamā’ and why are the ‘ulamā’ separated from Soviet power? How should the ‘ulamā’ and the wider Muslim masses relate to Soviet power? Should Muslims assist the Soviet government in any way or not? Does secular science bring any benefits to the Muslims of Daghestan or not? What action can be organized against the “self-proclaimed” imām Najm al-Dīn and how should the entire population of Daghestan relate to him and his actions?

Obviously, these questions remained topical in 1923, a circumstance that demonstrates the weakness of the Soviets in the region. The Bolsheviks were still in need of support from the side of Muslim leaders such as Ḥasan Ḥilmī al-Qaĥī to maintain its influence over the population of Daghestan, most especially in the mountains where Najm al-Dīn’s continued to operate.

The resolution accepted by the meeting says:

After careful consideration of the content of serious discussions, communicating their views, [the meeting] decided:

1) The Soviet government is brotherly to all the peoples of the world, including Muslims. The Soviet power does not create any obstacles in the
way of performing religious rites; it gives everyone the right to believe as he himself finds it necessary and to pray as much as he wants. Not only does the Soviet government not oppress or force the faith of a person, but, on the contrary, it severely punishes violent citizens and state officials, which it will always do. By separating religion from earthly power, the Soviet power is doing the right thing...

From now on, we will not interfere in the internal affairs of the earthly powers (vnutrennye dela vlasti zemnoi), but we will help the Soviet authorities to grow stronger so that they can improve the situation of the poor (bednota), which it always cared about, for Allah and his Prophet Mohammed were taught to love the poor, to help them and those who care about them.

2) We believe that all Muslims should wholeheartedly submit to the present Soviet power and by all means help it in all affairs, and the Muslims will join in the fight against the enemies of the Soviet power, i.e., against the enemies of Muslims, not only of Daghestan, but of the whole world. The Qur’an says that subordination to the existing power is the responsibility of all Muslims... All the precepts of our Prophet Muḥammad (Magomed), who all his life fought against the khans and the rich with his companions [askhaby], teach us to submit to such authority. This is what we are taught by the āyas sent to us by Allah through the prophet Magomed in the Qur’an.

3) All Muslims, whether they live in Daghestan or in other countries, should, by virtue of Allah, certainly provide full support to the Soviet government. Muslims should remember that the weakening of Soviet power brings about the danger that all Muslims will be enslaved [again], since Britain, France, Italy and other countries, having royal or bourgeois power, will always try to strangle the Soviet power and with it the entire Muslim East, hand in hand with whom the Soviet power (Soveskaia vlast’) is working against their common enemies.

4) The Congress considers it necessary to widely explain the importance of the secular sciences to the Daghestan poor. These sciences give a person knowledge, and to entire nations they give power and strength since uneducated people do not know how to improve their existence.

Darkness is the greatest evil, which is the basis of all disasters. One who does not learn is like an unreasonable animal with whom one can do everything. We will help the Soviet government to educate the minds of the dark Daghestan poor; we will convince the population, not sparing energy and means, to learn and teach their children.
5) For the difficult period from the beginning of 1918 to the end of
1920, we all became convinced that the self-proclaimed imām Najm al-
Dīn Gotsinskii is an evil spirit that brings only misfortunes, orphanage
and widowhood to Daghestanis. We see that Allah cursed Najm al-Dīn
Gotsinskii and made his endeavors fail.

We see that Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii did not think at all about the
welfare of the Daghestani people. Just like his ancestor, Gotsinskii’s goal
was to sell the freedom of Daghestanis to England, the common enemy of
all Muslims and free republics. He wants to turn us and all Muslims into
slaves.

We know that Gotsinskii deceived us by saying that Said, a grandson
of Shami, works with him. Knowing and considering all the evil deeds
and calamities that Gotsinskii brought to all the tribes of Daghestan
[plemenam Dagestana], considering that he sought power and wealth
and that he sold his services to England, our common enemies, for his
own sake, [and considering] that he forgot all Muslims in the world,
we consider it necessary to declare to all the people that Gotsinskii
deserves the most severe punishment. We received the āya of the Qur’an
which says that a person who sheds innocent blood deserves severe
punishment by crucifixion and stoning. We consider it necessary to
widely disseminate among the population the divine curse of Gotsinskii
as well as [our] declaration that Gotsinskii is an enemy of Muslims not
only in Daghestan but in the whole world.161

This resolution published in Krasnyi Daghestan ("Red Daghestan") is all we
know about the meeting; hence we need to take into consideration that this is
a product of the Soviet power published in the Russian language (which most
‘ulamā’ did not understand). On the other hand, looking at this resolution from
a different angle demonstrates at least two important nuances: how the Soviets
were dealing with the ‘ulamā’ and how the ‘ulamā’ might deal with this kind of
resolution on the basis of what they discussed. The way the Soviets chose to
deal with the ‘ulamā’ as early as 1923 demonstrates that the Daghestani ‘ulamā’
who participated in this meeting were a tool in the hands of the Soviets used
by the latter to legitimize their actions in Daghestan. As the resolution was so
obviously a product of Bolshevik rhetoric, it can hardly have been acceptable
for the Daghestani scholars; perhaps it even contributed to their alienation.

160 Presumably this “ancestor” was Najm al-Din’s father, suspected to be a traitor who allegedly
showed the Russians the way how to take Shami’s last stronghold Gunib.
161 Krasnyi Dagestan. 282-283 (1923).
The last Bolshevik-orchestrated meeting of Muslim clergy was held on 12-14 February 1925 in Temir Khan Shura. While for the previous meetings the Soviets selected a highly respected shaykh as official host, knowing that only such an authority could bring together many scholars, the 1925 meeting was organized by Alibek Takho-Godi, a Daghestani Bolshevik who at that time served as the People’s Commissar of Justice of the Daghestan ASSR and who was a member of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR. Obviously, by 1925 the Soviets managed to organize gatherings of Muslim religious leaders by their own call, and the role of the religious authorities decreased. Additionally, the chosen location was Temir Khan Shura, the Soviet center (today’s Buynaksk) rather than the center of influence of any shaykh.

One of the main topics discussed during the meeting was the issue of schools and the absence of Islamic subjects in the programs of these schools. While the reformers Abū Sufyān al-Ghazānishī and Muḥammad-Qādī al-Qarākhī supported the development of new schools (The third chapter of the present thesis discusses the standpoint of the reformers in detail.), among the delegates were also scholars who expressed their dissatisfaction on this question.

On this question we have the reply of Alibek Takho Godi:

I know the main disease of our ‘ulamā’: they think that faith will be destroyed in Soviet schools. Isn’t the Qur’an studied outside the school? Do not mosques and madrasas teach the Qur’an? Did the Soviet government close any madrasa? No! Why should we be afraid of a religion of science (religiia nauki), given it has already existed for 1000 years. There are only 130 Soviet schools in Daghestan but 1,000 madrasas and even more.162

From 1926 on, the Bolsheviks had defeated all the opposition and felt free to cease its cooperation with imāms and shaykhs. With the Soviets firmly in power, all the remaining religious authorities were associated with the anti-Soviet resistance and marginalized.

1.3.3. The start of massive repressions of the Daghestani ‘ulamā’
The first repression of the Muslim scholars of Daghestan relates to the organization called Dini Komitee (“Religious Committee”). The history of this organization, its main goal and even the circumstances of its establishment

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are not clear, and, perhaps, it might have been a Bolshevik plot to eliminate the ‘ulamā’. One can find dozens of references to this organization in the biographical books devoted to the Daghestani scholars who were repressed at the end of the 1920s; however, these references only tell us that this was a secret organization with anti-Soviet goals. Who established it and for what purposes, what kind of actions this organization carried out and who its real members were remains to be discovered. The problem is that there is no information about the organization in the accessible archives. Information about it is kept in the Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB of Russia) where access is very limited, especially for non-citizens.

One of the few scholars allowed to use materials from the FSB archive was the Daghestani historian Khadzhi Murad Donogo. Together with Dakhdugadzh Dakhduiev, Donogo published a book entitled Mukhammad-Kadi Dibirov (Karakhskii). Na izlome vekov using materials from this archive.163 They were given this access because Dakhduiev is a relative of Dibirov, the subject of their research. In 1997 he asked for access to the archive, stating he was preparing a request for the official rehabilitation of Dibirov.

The investigation files related to the life and final years of Dibirov164 also contain information about the history of the organization and a list of the scholars repressed because of their membership in the Dini komiti.

According to Donogo, in the spring of 1920 a certain Badawi-Qādī Adilbekov (1885-1929), an ardent supporter of Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii, established an organization called “Dini-Jamiat” in the city of Buynaksk. During the investigation, members of the organization described the establishment differently. Donogo cites the words of Aghā Raḥīm Mustafaev, one of the members of the organization, who stated that Badawi-Qadi “informed them that he negotiated with the government, and they [i.e., the authorities] agreed to permit opening committees for Muslims to defend their religion.”165 Later, during the court process he stated that the head of the Buynaksk police was the initiator of the organization.

164 As Kh. M. Donogo told me, he could access to only half of the investigation files. The other part were deletions and considered secret.
Based on the investigation files, the main purpose of the organization was the protection of Islam. However, in 1929 the leaders of the organization decided to speak up against the closure of the Orthodox Church and even sent their opinion on this issue to the Buynaksk Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks.\textsuperscript{166}

On 8 April 1929, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars of the RSFSR issued the resolution “On Religious Communities” (O religioznykh ob”edineniiakh) according to which these societies could begin their activities only after registration. This resolution also prescribed that members of those societies could be only be those who had attained eighteen years of age.\textsuperscript{167} Consequently, all other organizations, including the \textit{Dini Komiti}, found themselves outlawed.

As Donogo states, the repression of the members of the organization was primarily targeted at Dibirov. Between May and November 1929, the Daghestani department of the OGPU arrested seventy-five persons, considering them members of the counterrevolutionary organization \textit{Dini Komiti}; among them were the Daghestani reformers Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov and Abū Sufyān Akaev.

As soon as 14 December 1929, Muḥammad-Qādī and nineteen other members were sentenced to death by the OGPU. The other members were sent to internment camps. Abū Sufyān Akaev was exiled to the Severniy Kray for ten years, where he died a few years later.

The repressions at the end of the 1920s were designed to eliminate any possible resistance against Soviet power. If at the beginning of the 1920s the Soviets managed to defeat the Muslim religious leaders such as Sufi shaykhs, the repressions of 1929 were already targeting the reformers who had been included in the Soviet system.

Reportedly, seventy-five members of the \textit{Dini Komiti} were arrested. Among these the most prominent victim was ‘Alī Kaiaev. In 1930 he was arrested on a charge of belonging to a religious organization that aimed to overthrow the Soviet regime in Daghestan. He was exiled to Chelyabinsk, and then due to health reasons he was transferred to Voronezh to serve his sentence. With the help of

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 142-143.
\textsuperscript{167} “On Religious Societies” (O religioznykh ob”edineniiakh) by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (8 April 1929) http://his95.narod.ru/doc22/52.htm
Korkmasov he was soon released and on 15 November 1934 he again began his work at a research institute. In 1938 he was arrested again, this time for his close links with the “enemy of the people” Korkmasov. In 1940 he was exiled for five years to Kazakhstan, where in December 1943 he died from typhus.

1.4. Conclusion
In this chapter I have analyzed the history of the revolution in Daghestan based on the Arabic and Turkic language sources penned by Muslim non-Socialist actors. For this purpose, I turned to the Daghestani sources produced by the Daghestani scholars who witnessed the revolutions, civil war and establishment of Soviet power. As my research shows, these Arabic-language sources focus on the role of three crucial figures: ‘Ali Ḥajjī, Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii and Uzun Ḥajjī Saltinskii. The people of Daghestan were following mainly these religious authorities with their choice of leaders depending on these leaders’ ethnicity and the influence they had over certain regions rather than their religious standpoints. For example, it is obvious that the Dargi shaykh ‘Alī Ḥajjī was supported by the populations of the village of Akusha and the wider Dargi region. Meanwhile, the Avar regions located in mountainous Daghestan were close to the Avar religious authorities Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajjī Saltinskii. Being shaykhs of the same silsila (the lineage or spiritual genealogy of Sufi masters), both ‘Alī Ḥajjī and Uzun Ḥajjī had the same religious standpoints, but their political goals were different. As for the reformists, it became clear that they were residing in urban centers and the regions located near these centers that were mainly populated by Kumyks.

In view of the clash between ‘Alī Ḥajjī Akushinskii and Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii, one may argue that the Daghestani political projects failed on their own terms rather than because of the actions of the Bolshevik victors. The struggle for hegemony among different projects, built around key religious and political figures, weakened them all. Here the Bolsheviks used the failure of these leaders to change the ratio of the forces in the region. The arrival of the Red Army finally shifted the balance into the Bolsheviks’ favor, making them the dominant power.

Until the mid-1920s the Bolsheviks were highly interested in cooperation with religious authorities such as Sufi shaykhs and reformist Muslim scholars as they understood such cooperation would improve their reputation among the Muslims. This cooperation was bilateral. However, while Sufi shaykhs were, in their ideological dimension, closer to the anti-Bolshevik forces, the
reformists shared the idea of “progress” and had a greater chance of being brought into the Soviet system, which happened right from the beginning of the Soviet era. Nevertheless, this cooperation was quite fragile due to the lack of trust between the camps.

Having discussed the main turbulence of those years in this first chapter, I will now concentrate on the Daghestani intellectuals’ perception of the 1917 Revolution and the formation of their agendas.