Chapter II

Picture: A mountaineer holding a flag with sign “ḥurriya” (freedom).
Tāng Cholpān 1 (1917)
The Concept of “Freedom” and the Issue of the Imamate in the Revolutionary Discourse of the Daghestani Reformists

2.1. Introduction
Comparative studies of events such as revolutions emphasize the flows and linkages in an increasingly interconnected and shrinking world. The social web across neighboring (and even remote) empires made the transfer of ideas possible long before the Russian Revolutions of 1917. The ideas of freedom and parliamentarianism as a guarantee of that freedom were already circulating among the Russian, Ottoman and Persian Empires by the end of the nineteenth century; contributors to the political discourse in these empires claimed that freedom and parliamentary democracy were the only way to ensure the development of the state. These ideas against absolute monarchism reached their zenith at the beginning of the twentieth century when the constitutional revolutions broke out in these empires: in Russia in 1905, in Iran in 1906 and in the Ottoman Empire in 1908.\textsuperscript{168} To illustrate the flow of political ideas between these empires, one can mention the 1905 Revolution in Russia and its perception by the Young Turks. As Nader Sohrabi states, to the Young Turks Russia was a civilized Western empire decaying

\textsuperscript{168} More about these events see: Sohrabi, Nader. Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
under the weight of a despotic monarch who opposed the constitutionalist yearnings of his people. The brutal clampdown of early 1905 in Russia served as the perfect occasion for the Young Turks to compare the two despots of the Ottoman and the Russian Empires: "Like Abdul Hamid, [the tsar] does not step outside the palace and does not think of anything but his own self, his property and life."169

After having discussed the overall situation as it emerged in Daghestan after the Revolution of 1917 and the historiography of those dynamics in the previous section, this second chapter of my thesis examines the reformists’ perception of the concept of freedom, their views on the re-establishment of another Daghestani imamate through the prism of that understanding and their writings on what kind of future state would be able to back that freedom.

In this chapter, I first examine the idea of freedom in Islam in general and among Daghestani reformists in particular. Then I turn to discuss the reformists’ standpoint that the old Daghestani historical model of the imamate was unable to protect the newly gained freedom. To do this, I investigate what reformist authors had to say about the figure of Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii as a candidate for the position of imām and about his election at the Andi Congress on 2 August 1917, demonstrating that the reformists portrayed his action as a return to autocracy and a violation of the free will of the Daghestani Muslims. Here I discuss the paradox that the imamate, as a jihād against the tsar, was now portrayed as a system that would support the old regime of the tsars. After this, I also discuss the reformists’ religious arguments against the Daghestani imamate to show the rhetorical practices used by the reformists against their opponents.

It is my claim that Daghestani Muslim reformists became participants of the revolutionary discourse but that in doing so they used specific Islamic connotations and terminologies. Paradoxically, Muslim cultural reformists, or Islamic reformers, became political revolutionaries. And, as they wrote in Arabic, the reformists in Daghestan shaped a regional Islamic discourse but also contributed to the broader Russian political discourse and to the Middle Eastern debates of that time.

169 Ibid., 79.
2.2. Perceptions of the concept of “freedom” in revolutionary Daghestan

2.2.1. The concept of “freedom” in Islam and its echoes in Daghestan

Daghestan, with its ethnic and linguistic background, was a part of both the Turkic and Arabic worlds. Consequently, the antimonarchist ideas emerging in the Middle East also reached Daghestan. These ideas arrived not only through books and newspapers but also through human carriers, travelling from Temir Khan Shura to Bukhara and from Constantinople to Cairo. Reaching the Caucasus, they blended with the local traditions and formed political currents long before the 1917 Revolution (This fact is evidenced by the discussions of these ideas on the pages of the Daghestani pre-Revolutionary press.). These ideas arrived not only through books and newspapers but also through human carriers, travelling from Temir Khan Shura to Bukhara and from Constantinople to Cairo. Reaching the Caucasus, they blended with the local traditions and formed political currents long before the 1917 Revolution (This fact is evidenced by the discussions of these ideas on the pages of the Daghestani pre-Revolutionary press.). The 1917 revolution ended the censorship giving these local actors a chance to embrace a new revolutionary rhetoric, which in its turn created a shared vocabulary between the socialists and the Daghestani reformists. As most Muslim newspapers in the North Caucasus were run by reformists, the latter had a powerful platform.

The February Revolution created an environment for the Daghestani intellectuals to open a new page in the history of Daghestan. The reformists’ discourse on the future of the country in the post-revolutionary period took advantage of this break by rejecting the established political beliefs of the collapsed empire. Being influenced by ideas such as constitutionalism, the reformists developed their vision of the model of a future state which would guarantee this freedom. In particular, the re-establishment of the imamate in Daghestan was accepted by them as an embodiment of despotic monarchism rather than freedom and democracy. They rejected the idea that a new imamate should be established, opting instead for a non-monarchic form of governance.

When mapping the political groups who stood for and against the imamate and trying to find out why exactly they opposed or supported the idea of the imamate, my first step was to examine their religious argumentations to understand the religious side of this, or what seemed to be at first glance, religious question. It turned out that both sides were basing their arguments on the same law school, the Shāfi‘ī school. Given this, the question remained significant if not more complicated. I was sure that there should be something else, and, thus, I continued digging.

170 For instance, in the sixth issue of Jarīdat Dāghistān from 1913, Akaev discussed the events of 1905 stating that though the system of consultation was long known, only in 1905 the Russian Tsar realized that the progress depended “on consultation with its educated subjects.” Jarīdat Dāghistān 6 (1913): 4.
I found that the concept of “freedom” (ḥurrīya) was central to the discourse surrounding the imamate discourse. Thus, I started dealing with the concept of “freedom” on the agenda of the reformists through the periodical press published by the reformists. Daghestani newspapers use the term ḥurrīya when they talk about the situation created after the collapse of autocracy. As Franz Rosenthal observed, while the etymology of ḥurr (“free”) remains in the dark, it has been established that the term ḥurrīya was initially used in relation to the meaning of “nobles” and the use of ḥurr in the metaphoric meaning of “noble, good” was common in pre-Islamic Arabic speech. Ḥurr al-kalām, for instance, does not refer to “free speech” but to the speech of high literary quality. In the Middle Ages, Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī (d. 951) and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), in their turn, took limited notice of freedom as a political term, whereas it has received much attention in Sufi thought and literature.171

Moreover, historically, Muslim jurists have not advanced a theoretical understanding of the general concept of freedom either. Instead, they often spoke about its manifestations, such as the freedom of opinion, belief and ownership. Some Muslim scholars, however, also discussed ḥurrīya as a concept relevant for political and social issues. “Ḥurrīya may have existed in Arabic at an early date, especially for expressing the opposite of the legal term “slavery,” but it does not seem improbable that it started to be used more widely when Islam came into contact with the philosophical thinking of the Mediterranean world that had known speculation about freedom for many centuries.” 172

Ibn ʿĀshūr (d. 1973), the Tunisian scholars who authored contemporary Qur’anic exegesis,173 defined ḥurrīya as “the opposite of slavery and the independent disposition of a prudent man to manage his own affairs by his own free will.”174 As noted by Muhammad Hashim Kamali, this definition is focused on the freedom of the individual to manage his personal affairs without the interference of others.175

---

174 Kamali, Mohammad Hashim. Freedom, Equality and Justice in Islam. P. 4
175 Ibid.
As we see, the concept of “freedom” was accepted differently by the scholars of Islam of different times, making freedom with its metaphysical, philosophical, legal, cultural and political contexts a vague concept. The Daghestani reformists had their own perception of “freedom.” Though they had been reflecting on the idea of freedom in the context of discussions of state models before the revolution in 1917 (especially after 1905), the events of 1917 marked a new phase in those discussions. Possibly under the influence of the revolutionary events, the idea of freedom in Daghestan discussed on the pages of the periodicals by the reformists right after the February Revolution differed from the Islamic, religious understanding of freedom and was located more in the social, economic and political dimensions.

As Vladimir Bobrovnikov observed, “Sharīʿa justice (al-ʿadāla), together with calls for social “freedom” (ḥurrīya) and “equality” (musāwa), was among the most discussed topics of different political groups in the region, including the reformists and the Bolsheviks.”¹⁷⁶ In Daghestan, different groups had their own understanding of this concept, hence, it became a major source of ambiguity.

How the new state should be organized, and which kind of model would facilitate the best implementation of that ḥurrīya remained a matter of heated debate. Thus, when Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii led the movement for the re-establishment of Shamīl’s imamate, not only religious opponents such as ʿAlī Ḥajjī Akushinskii but also the reformists and the socialists confronted him with all sides drawing on the conceptual wealth of hurrīya. As the evaluation of the sources will demonstrate, the reformists of Daghestan, as a real result of the revolution and the collapse of the imperial order, emphasized the socio-political dimension of the term in the form of freedom of religion and freedom of speech.

2.2.2. Talking about freedom in the revolutionary discourse of the Daghestani reformists

The reformists of Daghestan accepted the February Revolution as a liberating event and a chance for a new start for their projects for a developed Daghestan. The reformists and other scholars of Islam did not discuss the character of the

February Revolution. There was no discussion over the bourgeois or socialist nature of the revolution. For Daghestani scholars of Islam, the collapse of the Russian Empire was understood as an end of injustice and an opportunity to establish freedom.

To understand the reformists’ standpoint on freedom, one needs to reconstruct their understanding of this concept. To do so one needs to look at the periodicals published by them. Periodicals are also vital since the articles published by the reformists give us an understanding of what exactly the reformists’ perception of freedom was in those days, while other historical sources take a retrospective view toward the concept. The majority of texts analysed were published in the newspaper *Jaridat Daghistān*. Additionally, I examine some articles from the newspapers *Musavat* (“Equality”), *Tāng Cholpān* (“Morning Star”), *Īlchi* (“Bulletin”), *Īshchī Khalk* (“Working People”) and *Channah Tsuku* (“Morning Star”), where the reformists published their articles. In these periodicals, published after the February Revolution, I identified three main strategies of talking about freedom: a) stressing the negative imperial past, b) highlighting the duties of the people (especially the scholars of Islam) to defend the newly acquired freedom and the correct state model that would preserve freedom and c) the alleged compatibility of freedom and Islam.

Nearly all articles start with a negative description of tsarist Russia to illustrate the contrast with their new revolutionary reality. As my research shows, experiencing a situation of turmoil and an uncertain future, the Daghestani reformists explained the idea of freedom through its absence in the tsarist past, emphasizing the people’s *negative experience* during the imperial era. Here we can come across the phenomenon of *ex negativo* when the absence of autocracy was accepted as freedom. Thus, freedom cannot be a definition of autocracy. In the article called “On Freedom” (*O svobode*) from September 1917, ‘Ālī Kaiaev explains the idea of freedom:

---

177 These journals were in Kumyk (*Musavat, Īshchī Khalk* and *Tāng Cholpān*) and in Lak (*Īlchi* and *Channah Tsuku*) languages. In case of Kumyk texts, I analyze them using both Kumyk original and Russian translations of some texts, in case of Lak language, I use Russian translations of those indigenous writings due to the lack of these languages.

Until now, Russia has been under the rule of Romanovs. [Under their rule] Russian was the only language allowed. All people were forced to work for the benefit of the Russian language and Russian culture. They intended to eliminate all languages in Russia and to establish a single Russian language, to make all the people speak it. To this end, Russian schools were opened in each village. At that time our poor people were mostly dozing, did not know what was going on and sent their children to Russian schools. Some leaders almost became Russian; they considered it shameful to speak their own language. They only wore Russian clothing. They could not say anything about [their problems]. Everybody knew that disobedience would be persecuted. 179

As we will see in the next chapter of my thesis, the language issue, particularly the situation of vernaculars backed by the reformists, was one of the crucial topics in their discourse of progress. In the context of freedom, based on these articles, one may notice that freedom in the imagination of the reformists had several manifestations, such as freedom of faith and freedom to choose a language of teaching.

As we see from the beginning of this quote, for ‘Alī Kaiaev freedom was a condition where religions including Islam could be followed without fear of persecution. However, when he says “everyone has the right to choose any religion”180 he does not mean that the Muslims can convert to other religions or that a Muslim may drop his faith. In Islam, apostasy (irtidād), i.e., the conscious abandonment of Islam by a Muslim, is a crime and a sin, an act of treason punishable even with the death penalty. In the first centuries of Islam, the Islamic legal scholars elaborated a complex set of rules pertaining to the legal status of apostates. These rules belong to the sphere of penal as well as civil law. At the end of the nineteenth century, punishment for apostasy fell into desuetude though it was almost nowhere expressly abolished.181 Thus, for a scholar of Islam such as ‘Alī Kaiaev who valued the role of Islam vigorously, the freedom to choose any religion meant that Muslims should not be forcibly converted to other religions because they had the freedom to choose Islam. He identified this phenomenon of violent conversion with the existence of the Russian Empire. I believe that while talking about the fears of forced conversion,

Kaiaev meant the attempts of the Russian Empire to Christianize the population of the North Caucasus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the mid-eighteenth century, the Russian government rewarded Georgian clerics who were sent to Ossetia to preach Christianity there.\textsuperscript{182} In the nineteenth century, the Society for the Restoration of Orthodoxy in the Mountains, which was created directly under the leadership of the Caucasian Viceroy Aleksandr Bariatinskii (1856-1862), became the intellectual and financial center for the Christianization of the Caucasus population. Later, this society acted under the patronage of Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich, the brother of the emperor;\textsuperscript{183} However, while the attempts in Ossetia succeeded more or less, in Daghestan the Russian Empire hardly even tried to Christianize the country and chose other methods to prevent any uprisings.

Additionally, for the reformists the February Revolution of 1917 meant rebellion against oppression, cruelty, and the injustice of the past, where the interests of privileged individuals had been more important than the interests of the community. An anonymous article from the newspaper *Jarīdat Dāghistān* entitled “The Great Revolution and the change of the bases of the government”\textsuperscript{184} insists that in those days “the affairs of the state and people were in the hands of the tsar while the ministers of different issues were helping him, and they were acting as they wished. They cared only about their selfish interests (*al-maṣāliḥ al-shakhṣiyah*) and did not bother themselves with the interests of all (*al-maṣāliḥ al-‘āmma*).”\textsuperscript{185}

The idea of *maṣlaḥa* (“benefit” or “interest”) is an inherent part of classical Islamic legal thought and literature. The general meaning of the idea is that some actions can be forbidden or allowed according to necessity and circumstances, based on the public interest of the community.\textsuperscript{186} The author seeks to prove not only the evil character of the imperial government in general but also its


\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.

harmfulness from the viewpoint of Islamic law. Thus, he claims that the tsarist system backed and even launched anti-Muslim actions. Therefore, the author brings imperial reality into the Islamic field.

Similar to the situation after the French Revolution, when the future appeared to be unpredictable, open to every possibility, subject to human manipulation or planning, or to use Koselleck’s term, “constructible” (verfügbar), after the Russian Revolution of 1917 Daghestani reformists also found themselves in a situation where the old system had collapsed and the new one was not yet established. In these circumstances, the reformists of Dagestan began describing the future as the absence of the old system. For instance, in the article “How we were until now and how we will be after this” we read, “until now we have been putrefied (sawwasa) by the previous oppressive autocratic/tyrannical government (al-hukūma al-sābiqa al-zālima al-mustabidda) and by its dominance and rule in its own interest.” The author uses the verb sawwasa or sauisa (short vowels are not added), which literally means to be worm-eaten—a metaphor to show the image of the autocratic government and suffering of the people.

In addition to the cruelty and selfishness of the old system, the author also blames the old regime for the Russification policy, i.e., another element of non-freedom. “The motto and the policy [of the old administration] was to protect the Russians and to completely Russify others by converting them to their religion [i.e., Christianity] and language until everybody would speak their language [i.e., Russian] and follow their religion.”

Another feature of this article is the usage of Arabic poetry to prove the argument. For instance, the author cites a verse describing autocracy as an embodiment of the Shayṭān:

The satans of autocracy (shayṭān musalṭa) govern people,
   Every city has a ruler.
   Who does not fill the empty stomachs of people.
   However, they continue drinking wine; they are fat-bellied.

189 Ibid.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
Being forbidden in Islam, the wine here possibly shows the suppression of Muslims under the Christian tsarist government. The Russians are depicted as wine-drinkers, which in its turn creates a link between ethnicity, religion and morality. Those rulers who are “fat-bellied” are depicted as lustful, the opposite of pious, which is associated with Islam.

Additionally, the first line in the poem appears to be a verse widespread in the Arab poetry of the Middle Ages which can be found in different poems. For instance, Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (973-1057) also used this verse.¹⁹² However, in the poem by al-Maʿarrī the second part of the verse differs. Al-Maʿarrī continued it with the phrase “until the imām will rise to benefit us” (ḥatā yaqūmu Imām yastafidu lanā). In the case of al-Maʿarrī, these verses were calls for the restoration of the Arabic Sunni Caliphate to struggle against the dynasty of the Buyids, who were followers of Shiʿī Islam.¹⁹³

Contrary to al-Maʿarrī, who meant the Buyids as musalṭa, our Daghestani author adapted the verse for the Russian context, now blaming the Romanovs’ dynasty. Additionally, the continuation of the phrase was completely different and said nothing about the re-establishment of an imamate, demonstrating the author’s rejection of the imamate. For al-Maʿarrī the imām of the verse is the messias who would liberate the people, whereas Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii’s imamate had nothing to do with that mission of salvation. The February Revolution already played that role of messias and the next step was not to gain freedom but keep it.

To show how the hidden policy of Russification worked, he again cited poetry:

His love came to me before I even knew what love is,
Therefore, it met an empty heart and took possession of it.

Like in the case of the verses mentioned above, these lines are also well-known in Arabic poetry. In our case, with the metaphor of love the authors

¹⁹³ Al-Maʿarrī was living in the late Abbasid era, when the Abbasid caliph had limited power and the real strength was on the hands of Buyid dynasty who were stressing the concepts of dawla (state) rather than the model of a caliphate. For instance, its leaders used the titles with that term such as Muʿizz al-Dawla (“Fortifier of the State”), Ḳimād al-Dawla (“Support of the State”) or Rukn al-Dawla (“Pillar of the State”). More about Buyid dynasty see Donohue, John. The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq 334H./945 to 403H./1012. Shaping Institutions for the Future. Brill. 2002.
mean the positive attitude of Muslims toward the false policy of the tsarist administration. The author argues that the Muslims who studied in the Russian schools or supported the autocracy did not know freedom until it was put on them.

On top of these articles, again to show the evilness of the collapsed empire, Jarīdat Dāghistān also published articles such as “Salaries of the emperor and his family during the autocracy.” This article stresses the inequality and injustice of the tsarist administration. It shows that while the people were starving and suffering, the family of the emperor was receiving huge amounts of money, enjoying a luxury lifestyle.

The February Revolution of 1917 came to change the situation and stopped the suffering of the people. As ‘Alī Kaiaev put it, “[after the revolution] we avoided assimilation and losing our religion.” The same idea was expressed in the above-mentioned article, “How we were until now and how we will be after this,” which states that the Daghestanis “stopped being afraid of our religion and knowledge. Everyone can now worship Allah the Almighty as he wishes and gain knowledge in the religious and contemporary sciences which he desires.”

Stressing the negative experience of the imperial era, the reformists then turned to discuss the role of the scholars and their duties in the context of the newly gained freedom. In this case, the main target audience of the reformists were ‘ulamā’ who should do their best to strengthen the freedom and avoid a re-establishment of autocracy in the future. In the reformist discourse, this was especially important since the people of Daghestan, as the reformists insisted, were poorly educated.

Accepting that after the February Revolution “everyone got a right of free will (svoboda voly) and freedom of speech (svoboda slova),” ‘Alī Kaiaev, however, insists that Daghestanis “have not been freed from the old habit of separatism” and now they “need to prove their maturity, to prove that they are worthy of freedom”; otherwise, “the others will take our affairs into their hands.”

197 Ibid.
and that will not be freedom but autocracy.”

Given the Daghestani context of the struggle for power, under the concept of “others” Alī Kaiaev means the Russians and the Turks. Evidence can be found in his article about the Russian and Ottoman imperial policies to Russify and Turkify Daghestan. The next chapter of my thesis will discuss this article in detail in the context of the language policies.

As the Daghestani and Ottoman periodicals indicate, after the revolutions some of the contributors went beyond emphasizing the positive aspects of freedom, highlighting its possible negative dimensions or consequences as well as in order to warn the people. “Freedom as a motto, as a way of thinking, needed to be tamed, and the uses, as well as the abuses, of freedom, had to be defined,” concludes Bedross Der Matossian, the author of Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire. This statement can also be applied to the Daghestani reformists’ post-revolutionary discourse on freedom.

In this context, the role of education seems significant for avoiding possible negative consequences. Kaiaev states that valuing freedom means to educate people and unite them. If one compares this style of writing with the articles published in the Middle East after the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, the similarities of the tactics will become visible. For instance, Bedross Der Matossian analyzed Arabic periodicals such as the newspaper Lisān al-Ḥāl, which sought to define and explain the concept of freedom “in order to avoid bad behaviour.” After the Young Turk Revolution, most of the articles and editorials that dealt with the concept of freedom began with questions like “What is freedom?” “What is meant by freedom?” or “How should we use freedom?”

The same way of dealing with “freedom” was implemented by the reformists of Daghestan who saw several key elements in the concept of freedom. For instance, the article “The freedom and the duty of the ‘ulamā’” by the little-

201 Ibid.
202 Ibid., 52.
known author B. ‘A Ghazānishī identifies six components of freedom: 1. freedom of religions and religious schools (ḥurrīya al-adyān wa-l-madhāhib), 2. freedom of spiritual life, i.e., the freedom to embrace any religion one desires, 3. personal freedom which is the liberation of everyone from contemp, humiliation and insults to their honor, 4. freedom of publications, which is the liberation of writers (asḥāb al-qalam) from censorship, 5. freedom of speech, which is the liberation of everyone from the oppression alongside the permission to say what one thinks is beneficial and glorious, and 6. freedom of political, religious and other meetings.

Based on these six components of freedom, the ḥurrīya that reformists had on their mind was neither about relations with the Divine nor the independence of Daghestan. None of the articles mention the Arabic term istiqlāl which means independence, but they prefer to speak about this socio-political freedom, particularly in the sphere of religion and education, where the ‘ulamā’ should play a primary role in establishing and preserving these freedoms.

At the same time, the reformists were also sure that after the revolution the Daghestani Muslims would choose the correct path. The author cites the first verse from the qaṣīda by Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) where the poet says, “You have two roads in front of you, which one will you choose: the straight one or the curved?” After these verses, B. ‘A. Akaev claims that Muslims will not choose the harmful way, full of distractions, stating that it is “hard to imagine a Muslim choosing the destruction of his people, religion, language and knowledge and that it is hard to imagine a Muslim does not know that their righteous predecessors were struggling against infidels in order to obtain and defend the freedom, equality and justice which they received today.”

Basically, for the author of these lines, Muslimness already includes the capacity to choose the right direction, identifying freedom, justice, and equality as inherent parts of Islam. Another exciting moment is how the author links the revolution with the actions of their ancestors, stating that they were fighting for the same freedom they have received today. This way of writing was not characteristic to Daghestani authors alone. The same tactics and vocabulary had already been used in the nineteenth century when a group of Muslims from Egypt

was sent to Europe to study there and come back to use their knowledge for the development of Egypt. For instance, in 1826 Muḥammad ʿAlī Bāshā (1769-1849) sent a student military mission to France. Among the members of the group was also the famous Rīfāʿa Rāfīʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801–1873). Another group was sent to Paris in 1844. 206 One of the key ideas then and in Dagestan of the twentieth century was that the Europeans received the knowledge of how to develop from Muslims and now the Muslims were bringing back what they had transferred to Europe.

Finally, besides talking about the negative experience of the imperial period, the obtained freedom and its meanings, the reformists also were discussing the compatibility of Islam and freedom, adapting the general discourse to the local specific religious atmosphere. The question of whether freedom and Islam can coexist or whether they contradict each other became central for them.

The article “Freedom, equality and Islam,” 207 published in the newspaper Jarīdat Dāġhistān, locates Islamic ideas within the framework of the concepts of freedom and equality. The article discusses three main questions—marriage, the killing of an apostate and slavery—and claims that these are the questions that were brought up by the enemies of Islam who want to demonstrate the discrepancy between Islam, on the one hand, and freedom and equality, on the other.

While their arguments are based on the Qur’an and Sunna in the case of negating autocracy, the reformists are using poetry once they discuss the compatibility of Islam and freedom. Particularly, the author cites Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt (“The Chambers”) which says “O mankind, indeed, we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.” 208 The verse insists that it is the wish of Allah that there be a difference of nations and that these nations have the equal right to exist. None of these nations had the right to destroy the others or establish its power over them. Besides the

208 Q.13:49.
Qur'an, the author also refers to one of the ḥadīths (the record of the words, actions and the tacit approval of the prophet Muhammad), which reads “O people, your Lord is one and your father Adam is one. There is no favour of an Arab over a foreigner, nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness.” Then he raised a rhetorical question: “After his [Prophet Muḥammad’s] words, is there any place for the doubts of sceptics?” What is important here, I believe, is the fact that the author does not cite any Shāfiʿī authority but rather quotes a ḥadīth from the Musnad by Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (22978), one of the main authorities cited by the Salafis. In Daghestan the most widespread ḥadīth collections were Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna by al-Baghawī (1041-1122) and al-ʿArbaʿīn al-Nawawīya by al-Nawawī (1234-1277)—both Shāfiʿī hadīth scholars. Contrary to these two collections, Ibn Ḥanbal’s Musnad was not widely spread or cited in Daghestan. To be more precise, it was cited by al-Darbandī (1058/68- 1145) in his works and nine centuries later in the works of reformists. There are nearly no references to him between the eleventh and twentieth centuries. The choice of this hadīth demonstrates how flexible the reformists were when making their arguments, demonstrating a growing distance towards their own madhhāb.

The ideal way to protect freedom appeared to be the parliamentarian system of governance. In his article “Khans and tsars,” Kaiaev states that “there was a time when all people were equal, when there were no kings or khans and everyone was free.” 209 To restore that time of freedom, Kaiaev suggests the people should elect their governor regularly and there should not be a lifelong leader. In his opinion, a parliament should be established to control the actions of that elected ruler. Obviously, for the author, the best way to protect freedom and justice was to have a system that was not concentrated in the hands of one person. Perhaps, one can state that in this case the model of the imamate does not support the idea of freedom that the Daghestani reformists developed. The February Revolution of 1917 marked the end for the model where one person is in charge of the whole state, or as Kaiaev put it: “Gone are the days when one person controlled the fate of the entire state.” 210

Through this prism of the concept of freedom, the model of the imamate, the imam’s election in Andi and the very figure of Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii embodied autocracy rather than freedom. This is especially visible when the reformists describe Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii’s election in Andi and his biography in general.

2.3. Reformist critiques of Gotsinskii’s claim to the imamate

To understand the Daghestani perception of the imamate, one needs to look at the Shāfi’ī standpoint on this question, given that this school is dominant in Daghestan and Daghestani scholars of Islam were basing their argument on its literature.

The question of who can become imām was central throughout the entire history of the caliphate. The conditions differ from one law school to another. In his book, The Ordinances of Government,211 the Islamic jurist of the Shāfi’ī school Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Māwardī (known in Latin as Alboacen, 972–1058) uses three terms—imāma, khilāfa and imāra—for describing the classical system of governance in the Sunni world. In the Daghestani context, the debate raged around the term imāma and very rarely khilāfa.212 Daghestani reformists differentiated between two kinds of imāma: al-imāma al-‘uzmā and “simply” imāma. In the case of imāma the religious leader was authorized lead the prayer, while in the case of al-imāma al-‘uzmā he was the supreme leader. When supporters and opponents were talking about Gotsinskii’s imamate, they were using the term imāma but they meant al-imāma al-‘uzmā and khilāfa.

Before turning to the biography of Najm al-Dīn, let us see what the Shāfi’ī tradition says about the qualities that the imām should have and then discuss Najm al-Dīn as a possible candidate for the position of imām. Al-Māwardī sets seven conditions: 1. Justice together with all its condition; 2. Knowledge which equips them for ijtihād in unforeseen matters and for arriving at relevant judgements; 3. Good health in their faculties of hearing, sight and speech such that they may arrive at a sound assessment of whatever they perceive; 4. Sound in limb, free of any deficiency which might prevent them from normal movement; 5. Judgement capable of organizing the people and managing the offices of administration; 6. Courage and bravery enabling them to defend the territory of Islam and to mount jihad against the enemy and 7. Of the family of

the Quraysh because of the text (of a prophetic hadith) on the matter and by virtue of consensus.213

Al-Māwardī’s book emerged in the context of the political and religious rivalry between the Abbasid, Fatimid, Buyid and later the Seljuk Dynasties. In this context, the text written by al-Māwardī was meant as a source to legitimize fighting against the enemies of the Abbasids and reemphasize the legitimacy of the Abbasids over other pretenders of the supreme power, such as the Fatimids based in Egypt. While stressing the significance of the Abbasid caliphs, al-Māwardī justified the rule of the newcomer Seljuqs, who were seen as presenting the possibility of a revival of Abbasid might through an alliance with them. Al-Māwardī’s work and ideas had a lasting impact on political movements calling for the re-establishment of the caliphate. At the same time, it was also the scale and model for fighting against those not fitting that scale. In other words, the image of the future imām played a vital role in the discourse of imamate and was given inherent characteristics such as a brilliant Islamic education equipping him for ījtihād and the physical health and movability which every imām must possess.

Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii enjoyed a high profile. He was born in 1859, the very year when Imām Shamīl was taken captive by the tsarist army in the Avar village of Hotso—hence his nisba (“attributive name”) al-Ḥuzī. His father, Donogo Muḥammad, was a scholar in Islam and one of the closest nāʾibs (“deputies”) of Imām Shamīl. After being captured by the tsarist army, he became an officer in the tsarist administration.214 According to Colonel Muḥammad Dzhafarov, a contemporary of Najm al-Dīn and a witness to the revolutionary events, Najm al-Dīn’s father was “one of the prominent nāʾibs of Shamīl... The imperial administration saved his life when capturing him and freed him because he was one of the most influential figures in that region.”215 One can say that his position and reputation later opened the door of the tsarist administration to his son, Najm al-Dīn.

The educational background of Najm al-Dīn and his excellent knowledge of Arabic could not be disputed. He passed his first years in the Avar regions

of Daghestan. First, Najm al-Dīn studied at the elementary school (*maktab*) and *madrasa* in the village Arakanī; thereafter, he studied at the *madrasa* in the village of Untsukul. Here he studied mainly Islamic law and then improved his knowledge in the madrasa of the village of Butsra. Najm al-Dīn’s Islamic education later would become one of the preconditions for his imamate’s legitimacy since one of the main characteristics that an *imām* must have is an excellent knowledge of the Islamic sciences.

Above the regional courts (*oblastnye sudy*) was the Daghestani People’s Court consisting of “eminent and knowledgeable natives (*tuzemtsy*)”\(^\text{216}\). In 1891 Gotsinskii became a deputy of the Daghestani People’s Court.\(^\text{217}\) Najm al-Dīn’s service in the tsarist administration ended in 1896 when Gotsinskii beat up a thief and for this was imprisoned for seven months. In explaining the reason for his action, Gotsinskii answered that according to the *Sharīʿa* they should cut off the hand of the thief; since he knew that the administration would not let him do that, he beat him to apply the *Sharīʿa* law. After imprisonment, the tsarist administration fired him, and that was the first rupture of relations between the administration and Najm al-Dīn. This information is given in the archival document containing the biographies of leaders of the anti-revolutionary movement, including Gotsinskii. The documents were already collected and copied in the Soviet period. The same text of these biographies can be found in different document collections of both the Central State Archive of Daghestan and the fonds of the Institute of the History, Archaeology and Ethnography. Given the Soviet origin of this text and the many copies in the archives, one might assume this was a Soviet sanctioned narrative of Gotsinskii’s biography.\(^\text{218}\)

In 1903, with the permission of the military governor, Najm al-Dīn set out on a trip to the Ottoman Empire. One of the Ottoman religious leaders, a Sufi shaykh named Muḥammad-Ẓāhir met Najm al-Dīn in the palace of the sultan. This was probably the famous Shaykh Muḥammad Ẓāhir al-Witrī al-Madanī (d. 1904),

---


who was closely acquainted with a number of Daghestani and Tatar shaykhs including ‘Abd al-Latīf (1857–1890), Najm al-Dīn’s Sufi brother, who made a pilgrimage (ḥajj) to Mecca, visited the Ottoman Empire and after returning to the Russian Empire was arrested by the tsarist administration because he had no permission for travel. Shaykh al-Witrī had considerable authority at the court of the Ottoman Sultan and organized, therefore, a meeting with Sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II (1876–1909) for Najm al-Dīn. During the meeting, Najm al-Dīn “asked the Sultan for permission to become an imām of Daghestan.” Though the Sultan replied that he had no rights to let him become an imām since Daghestan was a part of the Russian Empire, he urged Najm al-Dīn to improve the situation and become an imām.

The trip to Constantinople had consequences; the tsarist administration started to keep a close eye on Najm al-Dīn’s activities as an Ottoman emissary. Probably, this was one of the reasons that Najm al-Dīn did not participate in the Russian Revolution of 1905. In January 1905, Petrograd’s workers held a peaceful demonstration to bring their economic grievances to the attention of the tsar, which led to the events known as the 1905 Revolution. Though the Soviet historiography sought to argue the exact opposite, Daghestan did not actively respond to the 1905 Revolution, and things did not change much on the fringe of the Russian Empire. According to Soviet historians, the proletariat was the driving force of the revolutionary movement. In Daghestan, this layer of society was still very weak; there were only a few small factories in Port Petrovsk and Temir Khan Shura, while the majority of the population was mountaineers who hardly participated at all in the small meetings by the

221 Ibid.
224 For example, Magomedov, Makhach. Gortsy Severnogo Kavkaza i Sotsialisticheskaia Revoliutsiia. P. 21.
workers of those factories. Hence, the small Daghestani proletariat could not have any significant impact on political developments in Daghestan.

Nevertheless, the Daghestani periodicals, such as Jarīdat Dāghistān, characterized the changes after 1905, like the establishment of the State Duma, as a great achievement. The press of Dagestan, however, was under the pressure of the imperial administration. Consequently, every article published there had to correspond to the tsar’s policy. Hence, even several years later, one of the authors of the Jarīdat Dāghistān, Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov, presented the achievements of the 1905 Revolution, praising it as a progress of the kingdom (taqaddum al-mamlaka) and as resulting from the will of the emperor to improve the situation of the population. Of course, he must have been aware of that Tsar Nicholas only gave in to the demands of the people after much bloodshed.

The same document—“The Biography of Najm al-Dīn”—also claims that Najm al-Dīn organized secret agitation against the tsarist administration. There is no proof of his agitation in other sources such as the historical works of contemporaries. Given the passiveness of Najm al-Dīn, I agree with Hajji Murad Donogo, who claims that “the revolution of 1905-1907 played a twofold role in Najm al-Dīn’s life. On the one hand, the revolution struck a blow to autocracy, a process that must have brought Najm al-Dīn some satisfaction. On the other hand, the peasant movement targeted landowners such as Najm al-Dīn, and he risked losing his lands.”

After the deaths of his father and brother, Gotsinskii remained the sole owner of the family property. Especially in the context of the land reforms offered by the socialists, Gostinkii’s wealth became a hot topic of discussion. Soviet historians

225 In contradistinction to the Revolution of 1917, not many materials had been published on the Revolution of 1905 in Dagestan. Some lists of revolutionaries are mainly related to factories and state-backed education institutions such as gymnasiums. For instance, see Delo o zabastovkakh uchashchikhsia uchebnykh zavedenii v Derbente i Temir-Khan-Shure v 1905. TsGA RD. F. p-8. O. 2. D. 8. Additionally, worth mentioning that a closer look at the list of revolutionaries revealed that they are mainly Russians in origin. Another list contains hundred names only several from which are Dagestani-Islamic surnames which pushes me to conclude that the Dagestanis were not actively engaged in the events of the 1905 Revolution. See, Spisok uchastnikov revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia 1905g. s kratkimi biografiami. TsGA RD. F. p-8. O. 2. D. 5.
always mention his wealth when writing about his efforts to establish the imamate and claim that this very wealth was the significant factor in his candidacy for the imamate. For instance, in his book *The mountaineers of the North Caucasus and the Socialist revolution*, Makhach Magomedov stresses that Gotsinskii was “the owner of several thousand acres of fertile land and ten thousand sheep.”229 Gotsinskii’s wealth was mainly discussed by the socialists of Daghestan and later developed in Soviet historiography, while the Daghestani vernacular sources say almost nothing about his wealth. Tahkho-Godi, in his book *The Revolution and the counter-revolution in Daghestan*, provides Gotsinskii’s letter where he also talks about the attacks on his properties.230 In particular, he states the following: “True, I have lands that have passed to me from my father, according to Sharīʿa. My father did not take these lands from anyone by force: he bought them from Muslims who had legal documents in their hands. If there is a person who wants to challenge me over the land, let him come, according to the Sharīʿa, with the necessary documents, and I will give them to him.”231 Gotsinskii stresses the *Sharīʿa* law where Islam does not prohibit inheritance,232 whereas the justice system was different for the socialists.

Responding to these attacks by the Soviet historians on Gotsinskii for being a landowner, Khadzhi Murad Donogo demonstrates that he was not among the

230 Tahkho-Godi’s book later was cited repeatedly by Soviet historians, however the source of this letter was Dibirov’s *The history of Daghestan in the Revolution and the Civil War* which was only published in 1997. The statements of Dibirov to OGPU agents in August 1929, revealed a tragic plagiarism. In 1924 Alibek Tahkho-Godi established the Research Institute in Makhachkala and ordered both Kaiaev and Dibirov to write a history of the 1917 Revolutions in Daghestan. Dibirov wrote his *History of Daghestan: Events after the Revolution* in the Kumyk language. During the interrogation, Dibirov said that he sold the notes of his work to People’s Commissar Tahkho-Godi. He claimed that he handed over the notes to Takho-Godi on condition that it would be published by the Soviet government with his own signature. However, the book has never been published with the name of Dibirov, but the work titled *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Dagestan*, composed of the notes of Dibirov was published under the signature of Alibek Tahkho-Godi. Currently, both the original Kumyk language text and the Russian translation of it are available. Muḥammad Dibirov. *Daghistan tarikhí*. IIAE DFITs RAN, FVR, FMS. O. 1, D. 2 (in Kumyk language); Muḥammad Dibirov. *Istoriia Dagestana (Sobytiia posle revoliutsii)*, IIAE DFITs RAN, f. 2, O. 1, D. 256 (Russian translation by Temirbolat Baibolatov, 1958). In 1997, the Russian translation was published. Dibirov, Magomed Kadi (Karakhskii). *Istoriia Dagestana v gody revoliutsii i grazhdanskoi voiny*, edited by Gadzhiev, Adil’-Gerei, Dakhduev Dakhtugadzhi. Makhachkala, 1997.
wealthiest landowners of Daghestan, which means that the question was more political and the debate over his wealth was politicized. Nevertheless, Gotsinskii was a wealthy man and that played a role in his candidacy of imām.

Opponents of Najm al-Dīn’s imamate were unable to challenge his candidacy based on his knowledge of the Islamic sciences. However, the situation changed somewhat when it came to the case of his desires. While the socialists blamed Gotsinskii for being a greedy person opposed to sharing his lands with the poor people, the reformists described his desires for power as something contrary to the spirit of Islam. An analysis of the reformers’ texts clarifies what they wanted to emphasize about Najm al-Dīn’s intentions to become an imām. Let us take the question of who exactly came up with the idea of re-establishing the Daghestani imamate. The first significant meeting between Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Hajjī, which determined the tactics of both ‘alims between 1917 and 1918, took place on 14 May 1917. The Soviet-style biography of Najm al-Dīn analyzed above states that at this meeting, Najm al-Dīn inclined Uzun Hajjī towards agitating the population in favor of proclaiming him imām of Daghestan. Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov, a reformer and an opponent of his imamate, in his History of Daghestan: Events after Revolution also claims that Najm al-Dīn influenced the opinion of Uzun Hajjī. For Dibirov, Gotsinskii’s purpose was getting power and for this aim he used the religious figure that was Uzun Hajjī.

Unlike reformists, some contemporaries, such as the Colonel Muḥammad Dzhafarov, believed that the initiative of proclaiming Najm al-Dīn imām actually came from Shaykh Uzun Hajjī. In particular, Dzhafarov writes, “Uzun Hajjī showed remarkable energy, determination and perseverance. Najm al-Dīn, though a knowledgeable man, was very passive and a coward... Uzun Hajjī

---

235 al-Qarākhī, Muḥammad-Qādī. Daghīstan Tāriḵī. IIAE DFITs RAN, FVR, FMS, op. 1, d. 2 (in the Kumyk language); al-Qarākhī, Muḥammad-Qādī. Istoriia Dagestana (Sobytiia posle revoliutsii), translated by Temirbolat Baybolatov. IIAE DFITs RAN, f. 2, op. 1, d. 256, Fol. 16.
236 al-Qarākhī, Muḥammad-Qādī. Istoriia Dagestana (Sobytiia posle revoliutsii). Fol. 22.
constantly pushed him to action.” Addressing this issue, another opponent of Najm al-Dīn’s imamate, ʿAlī Kaiaev, claimed that Najm al-Dīn not only attracted all the Avar shaykhs to his side but even declared himself a murīd of Shaykh Uzun Ḥajjī to further raise his authority among the Sufis. I believe that the truth lies somewhere in-between these two versions. While Najm al-Dīn himself desired a new imamate, Shaykh Uzun Ḥajjī’s support pushed him into actions. This cooperation appeared fruitful for both.

Describing the ambitions of Najm al-Dīn, ʿAlī Kaiaev writes:

The scholar Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii and Shaykh Uzun Ḥajjī al-Saltī wanted to establish a Sharīʿa Imamate in Daghestan, one similar to the one established by Imām Shamīl. However, Najm al-Dīn would not be satisfied with attaining all the power and influence of Shamīl. He was not content with what Shamīl had and (his ambitions) extended to the entire North Caucasus. Najm ad-Dīn Gotsinskii saw himself as higher than the Turkish sultan of his time and considered himself more worthy to be a caliph and imām than the Turkish sultan because he, in his opinion, was a worthy scholar and a brave man while the sultan was a coward and lacked knowledge of religion and sciences. Moreover, the sultan, according to Najm al-Dīn, had no advantage over other people to be their imām.

ʿAlī Kaiaev portrays Najm al-Dīn as an ambitious person who sought to take power when he saw that opportunity rather than as a person who sought to protect the faith. Additionally, ʿAlī Kaiaev underlines Najm al-Dīn’s greed and pretentious character when writing that he considered himself to be higher than the Ottoman Sultan. Finally, it is important to pay attention to the language that ʿAlī Kaiaev used. The phrases “in his opinion” and “according to Najm al-Dīn” also demonstrate that, for the author, Najm al-Dīn was an arrogant person.

2.3.1. The Andi Congress through the prism of the reformist understanding of freedom

Having dealt with the candidacy of Najm al-Dīn, let us now concentrate on the way he was elected Imām of Daghestan and the North Caucasus in Andi and the reformers’ description of this election, looking through the reformists’ lenses of freedom and religious norms.

---

239 Polkovnik Magomed Dzafarov. P. 66.
241 The author means the territories included in the Imamate of Imām Shamīl.
In this context, it is vital to examine who elected Najm al-Dīn and how that election was performed. In the Shāfi‘ī tradition, candidates who can take an active part in an imām’s election must meet certain conditions. First, they must have the knowledge that would let them understand who has the right to be imām. Additionally, they must possess the wisdom which would guide them to select the right person who has the most knowledge in how to manage the branches of government.243

Now, let us look at the memoirs of the contemporaries about this election. The participants of the meeting in Andi describe the events quite differently. The descriptions depend mainly on the political views of the authors; while the socialists describe the events as “a gathering of savages” and the intelligentsia describe it as a “strange gathering,” the supporters of the imamate represent it as a “gathering of intelligent people.”

One of the leaders of the socialists, Alibek Takho-Godi, writes:

The delegates who gathered at the congress were witnesses of an unprecedented spectacle: along the roads they were met by picturesque groups in colorful turbans, hurrying to Andi to the lake Eisenam. People [whom the delegates encountered] said that the imām of all Muslims would appear. The imām would walk on water, would distribute gifts and show other miracles. What a surprise and fright it was for the delegates and visitors, who after all were civilized people, when in Andi they saw thousands of peoples wearing turbans and yelling wildly (kakovo zhe bylo udivlenie i ispug delegatov i gostei, vse-taki kul’turnykh liudei, kogda na meste v Andi oni uvideli tysachi chalmonosnykh golov s dikimi vopliami). With weapons in their hands, they were demanding the proclamation of Najm al-Dīn to the office of imam, and death to those who opposed it. At the same time, participants, including several intellectual delegates, were approaching and kissing the clothes of Najm al-Dīn.244

It is worth mentioning that Alibek Takho-Godi wrote his work Revolution and counterrevolution in Dagestan in 1926-1927.245 Therefore, such a description of the events is not surprising. The author tries to show that Najm al-Dīn’s followers were from the backward masses; they were so simple-minded that they were awaiting miracles. Having received an education at Vladikavkaz’s

243 al-Māwardī. The Ordinances of Government. P. 11
gymnasium and then at the University of Moscow’s Department of Law, Takho-Godi had his own vision of development and progress for Daghestan. National dress, in this case, was considered to be a sign of retardation while the supporters of Najm al-Dīn were described as “savages.” With this obvious exaggeration, Takho-Godi tried to portray his own group and a segment of the intelligentsia as modernists who sought the development of Daghestan. Additionally, what is striking in this quote is that Takho-Godi describes the “delegates and visitors” as “civilized people,” thereby differentiating them from the backward masses. Before this congress turned into the election of an imām, it had been intended as a Second Congress of Mountaineers, where not only the religious authorities but also the secular leaders, including the socialist group, would be represented.

Unlike Takho-Godi, the descriptions of the reformers were more balanced, and they were highlighting different episodes that, in their mind, violated the election. For instance, Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov writes:

On the day of Andi’s congress, Uzun Ḥajjī came there, accompanied by a multitude of people. Most of the delegates had already arrived. Uzun Ḥajjī with his murīds, without waiting for other participants to join the congress, took Najm al-Dīn and left with him to the Andi Mountain. There he led the ritual of the election of Najm al-Dīn as imām of the Muslims of Dagestan and the North Caucasus. When the delegates arrived at the congress, the Daghestani and Chechen ‘ulamā’ saluted this election. Seeing such strange and wild actions of the ‘ulamā’ and shaykhs, some of the delegates, especially the intelligentsia, were amazed and frightened.246

Unlike Takho-Godi, Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov does not portray Najm al-Dīn’s followers as an unconscious and backward mass but speaks about the ‘ulamā’, the scholars of Islam. Though their actions frightened some delegates, Dibirov represents neither ‘ulamā’ nor the people as “savages” in his History. Nevertheless, Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov underscores that the election of the imām was implemented only by a group of persons closer to Uzun Hajjī and Najm al-Dīn. Though the source says that it was an election, Dibirov’s description, as well as the biography of Najm al-Dīn, penned by Kaiaev which will be discussed below, describe an Islamic oath of allegiance rather than election. Bay’a (“homage, oath of allegiance”) is an important concept of Arab

246 al-Qarākhī, Muḥammad-Qādī. Istorīia Dagestana (Sobytiia posle revoliutsii). Fol. 23
and Islamic life. In the earliest times those who wanted to join the new religion had to swear allegiance to the Prophet and, after the death of the Prophet, his successors, the caliphs, received their official recognition by means of the bay’ā.247 This oath is a source of legitimacy and sovereignty: it reenforces the leader with his community’s agreement to lead them.

Consequently, instead of remaining within the framework of the congress where all sides would express their visions of future to arrive at a compromise, Uzun Ḥajjī and Najm al-Dīn withdrew together with other religious authorities to practice this ritual.

In order to emphasize the public’s participation in the appointment of a head of state, Muslim modernists have also appealed to the historical practice of bay’ā.248 Emile Tyan’s definition of bay’ā is also an explanation of why they appealed to this concept. According to that definition, bay’ā is “an Arabic term denoting, in a very broad sense, the act by which a certain number of persons, acting individually or collectively, recognize the authority of another person.”249 This process is associated with the idea of election, which was assumed to be one of the symbols of democracy. In this sense, the Daghestani reformists did not state that the concept or the event was anti-democratic, but rather they said that the violation of the process was harmful to freedom and democracy. For instance, Dibirov stressed that Najm al-Dīn and Uzun Ḥajjī did not wait for the others to join the congress. Consequently, Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov intended to show that the election was illegal and unauthorised.

After the congress, however, under pressure from some of the ‘ulamā’, Najm al-Dīn refused to be an imām and continued to be shaykh al-Islām and muftī. On this matter, Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov writes:

Some scholars, feeling that the election of the imām would entail grave consequences, discussed this issue at the meeting and decided to regard Najm al-Dīn not as imam but just as muftī. On returning from the congress, Najm al-Dīn did nothing: he acted neither as an imām nor as a muftī but sat quietly at home. Nevertheless, his mind was filled with vast

plans. His thoughts were occupied with dreams of an imamate for the entire Caucasus.250

Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov underscored the “idleness” of Najm al-Dīn. Given that one of the primary duties of both imām and muftī is considered the organization and protection of the community in accordance with the Sharīʿa, Muḥammad-Qādī pointed out that Najm al-Dīn did not possess the qualities necessary for a community leader. Moreover, as in the case of Kaiaev’s description of Najm al-Dīn’s ambitious personality, Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov also portrayed him as a man who did not act appropriately but desired to seize power.

Besides Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov’s text about the congress of Andi, we also have some descriptions from ‘Ali Kaiaev, which are included in his History of Revolution and in the two-page biography of Najm al-Dīn. Those texts also allow us to acquire some understanding of what the perception of the reformers was about the Andi Congress. In his History of Revolution, al-Ghumuqi writes:

After the fall of the autocracy, Najm ad-Dīn Gotsinskii and Uzun Ḥajjī al-Saltī called a general congress (shūrā) in Andi in order to choose himself [Najm al-Dīn] as imām. Their followers distributed this appeal, convened this congress in Andi, elected Najm al-Dīn as imām and dispersed.251

Here again, the main critique is that only these two persons initiated the congress in order to elect Najm al-Dīn as imām and that the electorate consisted only of their followers and not the people of Daghestan and the North Caucasus in general.

Another important document is a biography of Najm al-Dīn, penned by Kaiaev. This text tells us about the process of election. At the beginning of his text, Kaiaev describes Najm al-Dīn with these words: “He was quite influential and very famous among the people of Daghestan and especially in Avaristan. He was considered the prime scholar of his era. Also, he had a huge love of power, eminence, fame and authority, and of the Great Imamate and great leadership (al-imāra al-‘uzmā wa-l-riyāṣa al-kubrā).”252

As in the case of his other work, here as well Kaiaev accepts Najm al-Dīn’s knowledge of Arabic and Islamic sciences but insists that he was spoilt by the desire to seize power; his political actions were initiated by that desire rather than by a motivation to protect the religion and the umma. While the reformers had no problem with conceding that Najm al-Dīn was a highly educated man, they describe him as an arrogant and ambitious person who was disrespectful toward his contemporaries. Thus, they argue that a) he did not have the appropriate attributes to be imām and b) the process of election was violated.

In the same work, Kaiaev says that during the Andi Congress Najm al-Dīn organized a shūrā (‘aqada al-shūrā) to elect himself an imam. According to Kaiaev, during the Andi Congress, one of the scholars stood up and stated that “in these days there is no need of an imamate” in Daghestan. As Kaiaev writes, “Najm al-Dīn screamed him away and threatened him. [Najm al-Dīn’s act] weighed heavily on the people. However, they kept silent and did not say anything.”253 Kaiaev, who had his ideal model of freedom, wanted to portray Najm al-Dīn as an emerging autocrat at a time when the autocracy of the tsar had collapsed.

2.3.2. Reformists’ religious argumentations against Najm al-Dīn’s imamate

Those texts were the indicators of the attitude of the reformers toward Najm al-Dīn and his imamate, but as a part of religious polemic, they had to use religious argumentations showing that his imamate went against the Sharīʿa. Among those arguments was the question of whether two imāms could co-exist at the same time—one in Istanbul and one in Daghestan.

On 14 January 1918, already after the events in Andi where Najm al-Dīn and his army were in Temir Khan Shura and he was again proclaimed imām, the scholars of Islam gathered to discuss the current situation, including the question of the imamate.254 Both supporters and opponents of Najm al-Dīn’s imamate participated in that meeting. During the meeting, Ibrāhīm Qādī—one of the supporters of the imamate—raised a question:

At today’s meeting, Najm al-Dīn is always called a muftī of the North Caucasus and Daghestan. The Sharīʿa demands Daghestan have hundreds of muftīs, not just one. The muftiate was an institution organized under

253 Ibid., 140.
the old government to deceive Muslims. Najm al-Dīn is different. I do not think that such a great and noble person as Najm al-Dīn will agree with the title of muftī. He is the patron of the Shari‘a. At the congress of Andi, he was elected imām, and so he was in [Temir Khan] Shura and elsewhere. I am surprised that people who do not even have any idea of Shari‘a call him a muftī. They say that one person cannot be given all the rights. He is imām! If he does not enforce the prescriptions of the Shari‘a, he is not an imām.255

Ibrāhīm Qādī’s perception of the muftī was through the imperial policy which was rejected after the February Revolution. One of the results of the Russian imperial confessional policy was the creation of an official Muslim hierarchy. Using the model of the muftī establishment in the Ottoman Empire, on 22 September 1788 the Orenburg Assembly (Orenburgskoe magometanskoе dukhovnoе sobranie, OMDS) was set up by the decree of Catherine II. In nonofficial usage it was also called a muftiate.256 Consequently, when there was no longer an empire, neither should there be a muftiate.

Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov, another reformist opponent of the imamate in the North Caucasus, responded to him, saying, “The title of muftī is convenient [for Najm al-Dīn]. Another title does not fit. We cannot call him an imām! Imāms are different: imām of a village, imām of prayer, imām of a city. Najm al-Dīn is the spiritual leader”257.

When talking about the Daghestani case, Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov accepted the meaning of imām only as of the spiritual leader of the community. He did not discuss the case of imām as the successor of the Messenger of God (khaliqat rasūl Allāh) or the Great Imām (al-imām al-a‘ẓam). The opponents of Najm al-Dīn’s imamate reserved this title for the Ottoman Sultan. Nevertheless, given the position of reformists in other questions, such as their approach to the language issues (to be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis), or their approach to the state model, I believe that they did not want to become part of the Ottoman Empire and accepted the authority of the Sultan only in questions

related to religion. Probably, the division between the khilāfa and salṭana plays a big role here. While accepting the Ottoman Sultan as a khalīfa they rejected his secular functions as a leader for them. Consequently, they insisted on having a secular leader elected by the people of Daghestan.

This debate is just a small part of the discussion among the Muslim scholars on the issue of the imamate. The question was first raised right after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 632), when it was necessary to work out a system that would keep the link between the Islamic umma and Allah, and to organize and defend the members of the community. Nevertheless, that was the beginning of different approaches. In Daghestan, that discourse was mainly conducted within the Shāfiʿī legal school; however, even within that particular school, the approaches of the ‘ulamā’ differed. Hence, one faction of the scholars stated that it is necessary to establish an imamate in the North Caucasus while the other part was sure that it was against Shariʿa. Consequently, when Najm al-Dīn was proclaimed imām, a historical debate on the institution of the imamate came to new life.

The Daghestani debate on the imamate consists of several questions. One of these questions is how many imāms can rule at the same time. This question was not unique for Daghestan only. Those who support the idea that the Muslim world can have only one imām justify it by the Qur’an’s sūra “The Prophets,” which states, “had there been within the heavens and earth gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined. So exalted is Allah, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe.”258 In analogy with this, the supporters of one imām claim that if there were more than one imām, the result would be destructive.259 Also, the idea of one imām is substantiated by the ḥadīth according to which the Prophet said, “When an oath of allegiance has been taken for two caliphs, kill the one for whom the oath was taken later” (I dhā būʾiʿā li-khalifatayni f-uqtulū al-ākhar minhumā) (Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim 1853). By contrast, those who claim that there can be more than one imām state that if there can be more than one prophet (the prime example being Moses and Aaron), then it is permissible to have two imāms as well.260 Nevertheless, this was a political debate during the last years of the Abbasid Caliphate.

258 Q. 21:22.
260 Ibid., 274.
Defenders of two contemporary *imāms* were the scholars of Andalus and Maghrib who tried to legitimate the Caliphate of Cordoba (929–1031) and the Almohad Caliphate (1121–1269). In response to them, the scholars who adopted the legitimate authority of the Caliphate of Baghdad claimed that while there could be two false caliphs at the same time, the true caliph cannot coexist with another “caliph.” 261

The most influential Muslim opponents of Najm al-Dīn’s Imamate—Abū Sufyān Akaev, ‘Alī Kaiaev and Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov—stated that since the caliph of the Ottoman Empire was also the *imām/caliph of all Muslims, Najm al-Dīn could not be proclaimed as *imām*. The idea according to which the Sultan is the caliph of the whole Muslim world emerged in the sixteenth century when, after the conquest of Egypt, the Ottomans also conquered the Hijaz, the region of the Arab peninsula where Mecca and Medina—Islam’s two main cities—are located. With the conquest of the Hijaz, the Ottoman Sultan Selim I Yavuz (r. 1512-1520) obtained the keys of the Ka’ba, becoming the Khādim al-Ḥaramayn (servant of the two sacred cities, i. e., Mecca and Medina). 262 Later, the legend was created which says that al-Mutawakkil III, a member of the Abbasid family, handed the title of caliph over to Sultan Selim.263

Based on this idea, the opponents of Najm al-Dīn’s imamate claimed that there could not be any caliph besides the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. On 16 February 1918, ‘Alī Kaiaev wrote an open letter to the scholars of Daghestan talking against the imamate in Daghestan. However, we only have a Russian translation of the letter, published in Medzhidov and Abdulaev’s volume on Kaiaev. It is impossible to check the validity of this translation. We know that in other publications, Medzhidov and Abdulaev used to cut out phrases, for instance where ‘Alī Kaiaev mentions Allah. 264 This fact demonstrates how Medzhidov and Abdulaev dealt with the sources, selectively choosing paragraphs to support their arguments. This makes it difficult to analyze Kaiaev’s letter.

261 Ibid.
Despite this, I will provide the key points of this letter. One of them relates to the question of how many imāms there can be at the same time. Referring to the sixteenth-century Shāfi‘ī scholar Sha‘rāwīya ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Aḥmad ash-Sha‘rānī, Kaiaev states that, “If two caliphs appear, then one of them should be killed. It is unacceptable to have two [caliphs] at the same time.” As we see, this is the same argument that was mentioned during the meeting of the scholars. Another authority mentioned by Kaiaev in his letter is Ibn‘Arabī, who said “it is necessary that one imām rule; otherwise it will cause the fall of morals. Just as in the Universe there is no God besides Allah, the position of imām among Muslims, according to the Shari‘a law, must be one. The presence of several imāms leads to strife and hostility, which is unacceptable among the faithful sons of Islam. Do not show enmity. Otherwise, you will be defeated, and your power will go away.”

Kaiaev explained his position by saying that acceptance of Najm al-Dīn’s imamate would split the umma; hence, to preserve the unity and strength of the community, they must obey only the Ottoman Sultan.

If we look at the arguments expressed by the opponents of Shamīl’s imamate, we will see that many of them were identical, which is not surprising since the central discourse was within the Shāfi‘ī school and they referred to the same scholars such as al-Sha‘rānī. For example, one of the most famous opposition figures in Shamīl’s imamate, Nur-Muḥammad al-Avarī, in his Taqrīrat (“Conclusion”), based on the hadīth which states that, “If two caliphs were elected, do not obey the last of them,” claims that all law schools agreed there could not be more than one imām for the Muslims at the same time even if their territories are located on different parts of the world. As a proof of his words, he cites al-Sha‘rānī’s al-Mizān al-Kubrā. We see that ‘Alī Kaiaev used the same scholars as a proof of his arguments as were used by the opponents of Shamīl’s imamate.

Like ‘Alī Kaiaev, Abū Sufyān Akāev claimed that “in the Muslim world, there is one imām—the Turkish imām. With one living imām, Muslims cannot have a second imām.”

---

265 Ibid., 369-372.
The arguments for and against were expressed in a debate between Akaev and Taj al-Dīn Qādī, the latter being a supporter of Najm al-Dīn’s imamate. The debate took place during the meeting of ‘ulamā’ initiated by Najm al-Dīn in Temir Khan Shura on 16 January 1918.²⁶⁹

Taj al-Dīn Qādī: Is there anyone among the ‘ulamā’ of Daghestan who opposes the Imamate?
Abū Sufyān Akaev: I believe that we do not need an imamate.
Taj al-Dīn Qādī: Do you have proof for your claim?
Abū Sufyān Akaev: We should not have an imām; it is forbidden. I give proof from reliable books, which say that in the Muslim world there should not be more than one imām. Our imām of the caliphate is the Sultan, and we do not see the conditions for the imamate of Najm al-Dīn. Najm al-Dīn does not have the qualities to be an imām.

Taj al-Dīn Qādī (with a laugh): If so, our Imām Shamīl did his job without knowing [that it is forbidden].
Abū Sufyān Akaev: We are not talking about who should be a follower of Shamīl. We are talking about the fact that the imamate is forbidden. Some books say that you can have two imāms if there is a sea between them, a great distance, the ocean. The Sultan guards Mecca and Medina [which are located farther than Daghestan]²⁷⁰.

Like ‘Alī Kaiaev, Akaev describes the Ottoman Sultan as the imām who can protect the lands of Islam even located far from the center of the empire. Consequently, if the Sultan can be the imām of Daghestani Muslims as well, the existence of the sea between the empire and Daghestan would not be an obstacle. ‘Alī Kaiaev offers a new argument explaining why distance is no longer a problem, for “locomotives have brought countries closer, and steamships have replaced sailing vessels.”²⁷¹

After this statement, in accordance with the translation of the letter, ‘Alī Kaiaev supposedly writes, “all but defective stubborn people know that for the Daghestanis, the position of the imām is unacceptable. To the contrary, after we have gotten rid of the power of the oppressors, we must obey the all-powerful imām [the Sultan], wherever he is. The imām will appoint his deputy to be the governor of Daghestan, who will execute his orders. If we disobey, then they

²⁷¹ Vozzvanie Ali Kaiaeva.
should wage war with us, dealing with us as rebels.” 272 It is quite doubtful that Kaiaev, indeed wanted the Sultan to appoint his deputy to be the governor of Daghestan. As mentioned above, by accepting the Sultan as a spiritual leader, the reformists denied his political power over Daghestan. In his other works, Kaiaev harshly criticizes the actions of the Ottoman Empire and perceives it as an oppressive imperial power like the Russian Empire.

As for the parts where Kaiaev speaks about the new types of locomotives, here he applies *ijtihad*. Citing ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, Rudolph Peters gives us a classical meaning of *ijtihad*—“exerting one’s effort in order to derive from the bases of the law an opinion concerning a legal rule.” 273 Its opposite is *taqlīd*, by which the term is understood as “accepting an opinion concerning a legal rule without knowledge of the bases.” 274 Joseph Schacht explains the term *taqlīd*, writing that it “had originally denoted the kind of reference to Companions of the Prophet that had been customary in the ancient schools of law and which now came to mean the unquestioning acceptance of the doctrines of established schools and authorities.” 275 Rudolph Peters stated that the way reformists in the Islamic world expressed themselves was to a large extent conditioned by tradition. 276 Among the issues that became associated with this was the issue of *ijtihād* versus *taqlīd*. *Taqlīd* positions the founders of established schools in a higher position than other men. The concept of *ijtihād* condemns the view that the founders of these schools “obtained divine knowledge and were therefore infallible,” a notion to be found for instance in the works of al-Sha’rānī, 277 a scholar whose works, as we saw above, were cited by Kaiaev. This issue of *ijtihād* versus *taqlīd* was intensively discussed in other Muslim regions of Russia as well, and in many cases these debates were politicized. 278

The opponents to Najm al-Dīn’s imamate, especially ‘Alī Kaiaev, relied heavily on *ijtihād* when it suited his viewpoint. They belonged to a group of reformists

---

272 Ibid.
274 Ibid.
277 Ibid.
who wanted to reform not only the education system but also the legal system. As Shikhaliev states, Kaiaev would go as far as an “independent ījtihād” that would, if necessary, leave the boundaries of the existing madhhabs (al-ījtihād al-muṭlaq). This approach also applies to the issue of the imamate. It is against this background that Kaiaev emphasized that new technologies (e.g., new types of ships) bypass problems such as distance and sea. Consequently, there is no need for a second imām. As for the taqlīd, Shikhaliev and Gould state that from the vantage point of the Daghestani reformists, “taqlīd seemed like an atavism of an older generation.” However, I believe that ‘Alī Kaiaev did not reject taqlīd completely. The citations existing in the works of Daghestani reformists (e.g., Kaiaev’s case of referring to al-Sha’rānī) demonstrate that for them the scholars before them and especially the founders of legal schools were highly respected authorities whose works served as bases for the arguments of the reformists.

2.3.3. The reformists’ arguments of (dis-)continuity of the imamates of Shamil and Najm al-Dīn
The heritage of Imām Shamil played a key role in the question of Najm al-Dīn’s imamate. Najm al-Dīn and his followers considered themselves the heirs of Shamil’s imamate. The idea of a successor is especially obvious in the poems of Najm al-Dīn, where he curses Shamil’s enemies such as Yusuf al-Yakhsawī (d. 1289/1871) and praises Ḥajī Murād (d. 1852), a naib of Shamil.

Yusuf al-Yakhsawī, a wealthy landowner and qāḍī from the village of Aksai in the plains of northern Daghestan sought to discredit Shamil through satire. As Michael Kemper states, being a qāḍī of Aksai, al-Yakhsawī had a military rank (and a salary) by the Russian administration. Furthermore, he worked as an advisor to the Russians, who hoped to use his knowledge of Islamic sciences. In his poem, Yusuf wrote that “the imamate of Shamil is a humiliation” and compared him to “a cloud without rain.” This comparison can be encountered in Arab political

---

279 Shikhaliev, Shamil. “Musul’manskoe reformatorstvo v Dagestane (1900–1930 gg.).” Gosudarstvo, Religiya, Tserkov’ v Rossii i za rubezhom. 3, no. 35 (2017): 143
poetry. For instance, the poet laureate of the Umayyads, al-Akhtal al-Taghibī (640 – 710), in his panegyric poem (qaṣīda al-maḍḥ) “Those that dwelt with you have left in haste” devoted to ‘Abd al-Mālik ibn Marwān (r. 685-705), writes that he is “the Caliph of Allah through whom men pray for rain” (Khalīfāt Allāh yustaqā bihi al-matar). Here “rain” is an allegory of divine knowledge and Allah’s will. By comparing Shamīl to “a cloud without rain” Yusuf seeks to show that he is not a caliph of Allah and his imamate is false.

If Shamīl’s imamate was not legitimate, then Najm al-Dīn’s imamate was also wrong. Therefore, Najm al-Dīn felt obliged to defend Shamīl against Yusuf al-Yakhsāwī in the following verses:

Reprove him and see: Is it possible to insult a lion with roars of donkeys?
The lion will remain among the lions, even if the cows moo, scream and deny him.
Why should an eagle and a falcon care that chickens are cackling?
Will your barking harm the man to whom the earth and stones sing an ode?
The earth that he dressed in red, clothing that was sewn by swords, not needles.
Oh, Yusuf, cursed man! What you say is a lie. Your speech is no satire.
Before mentioning him [Shamīl], clean your teeth and recite the basmala:
an enemy with a dirty mouth has no need to praise [Shamīl]
Oh, bearer of the captivity to the imām!
Can the star be eclipsed by anything but the sun and the moon? 285

Obviously, for Gotsinskii, Shamīl was an authority whose work he sought to continue. At the same time, Gotsinskii was generously praising Shamīl’s deputy Ḥajjī Murād. Najm al-Dīn’s poem in honor of Ḥajjī Murād was introduced to the scholarly world by the Russian Arabist Ignatii Krachkovkii. Given that in Stalin’s USSR Najm al-Dīn was presented as the enemy of the working class, Krachkovskii could not

name the author;\textsuperscript{286} therefore, he writes that the *qaṣīda* had been composed by “an Avar.”\textsuperscript{287} In this poem the author calls Ḥajjī Murād “a lion who killed many enemies in battle and left behind a blessed memory at all gatherings.”\textsuperscript{288}

As Rebecca Gould notes, even as Najm al-Dīn claimed Shamīl’s legacy by styling himself as the *imām*, when he glorified his nemesis Ḥajjī Murād, Najm al-Dīn also joined his voice to the subterranean critique of Shamīl that permeates the Caucasus literature of insurgency\textsuperscript{289} and desired to continue *jihād*.

Announcing and leading the *jihād* was an inherent part of an *imām*’s duties. On 24-29 March 1918, Baku was captured by the Bolsheviks under the command of Stepan Shahumyan, a leader of the Russian Revolution in the Caucasus. The Bolsheviks were accompanied by the Armenian Dashnaks.\textsuperscript{290} As Peter Hopkirk states, in April 1918 Baku “had become a battlefield, with trenches and barricades being hastily prepared everywhere. Russian gunboats in the harbour, whose crews were mostly sympathetic to the Bolsheviks and their leftist allies, joined in against the Muslims, mercilessly bombarding their quarter of the city, and wreaking terrible carnage and destruction. But it was the Armenians who decided the issue. At first, they proclaimed their strict neutrality, and refrained from taking part in the struggle for control of Baku. They withdrew their forces to the Armenian quarter and deployed them purely for self-defence. But their neutrality only lasted for the first few hours of the battle. Under intense pressure from the Dashnaks, an extremist Armenian nationalist group, their leaders joined forces with the Bolsheviks against the Muslims.”\textsuperscript{291} As a consequence of these clashes, Baku erupted into bloodshed.

\textsuperscript{287} Krachkovskii, Ignatii. *Izbrannye sochineniia*. P. 619.
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., 147.
and several thousands of Muslims were massacred. Baku’s Muslims turned to the Daghestanis for help. The supporters of the imamate, such as Tāj al-Dīn Qādī, called for sending troops and help to the Muslims in Baku. Since it suited his strategies, Najm al-Dīn summoned the Daghestanis to jihād against the Armenian Dashnaks. Najm al-Dīn used the moment to present himself as an imām and a leader of the Muslims. Dibirov informs us that, “having learned about this, the Daghestanis, especially Najm al-Dīn, wanted to send help to the Baku Muslims. Najm al-Dīn sent a part of the Daghestani troops to Baku and declared “gazawat”—holy war—in Daghestan.” Hence, Najm al-Dīn continued the jihād that Shamīl had given up in 1859.

On a sidenote, it is striking that Gotsinskii never mentions the uprising of 1877 as another historical jihād to evaluate. The reason, probably, is his father’s role in the failure of the uprising. During this uprising, his father was among those who were sent to the region Koisubulu “to call on the inhabitants to ask for mercy from the infidels.”

By rejecting Najm al-Dīn’s imamate on the basis of the Sharīʿa ban on two contemporaneous imāms, Najm al-Dīn’s opponents found themselves confronted with a problem: their reasoning would also have meant rejecting the memory of Shamīl’s jihād although this stance would have been considered unacceptable. Their strategy was either to bypass the case of Shamīl’s imamate or to emphasize differences between Najm al-Dīn’s and Shamīl’s imamates.

One of the arguments defending the legitimacy of Shamīl’s imamate was the necessity of jihād. On this matter, ‘Alī Kaiaev writes:

They [imāms of the Caucasian Imamate] waged jihād for the faith, were the leaders of the troops and fulfilled the burden imposed on them at the time. The infidels conquered the country, and what is the damage if the population of this country called their leaders imāms. Now the infidels...

---


294 al-Qarākhī, Muḥammad-Qādī. *Istoriia Dagestana (Sobytiia posle revoliutsii)*. P. 58

have retreated, gone and opened the way to believers; thus we must strengthen the *Sharī‘a*.

Also, Kaiaev stressed that the people of Daghestan decided to call Shamīl their imām, i.e., Shamīl himself did not seek that title. By this Kaiaev was claiming that the imamate of Shamīl was the will of people. As we saw above, Najm al-Dīn also tried to show that it was the will of the population to proclaim him *imām* of Daghestan and the North Caucasus.

Like ‘Alī Kaiaev, Akaev also justifies the imamate of Shamīl by the historical conditions and the need for *jihād* against the Russians. In the Kumyk-language newspaper *Īshchī Khalk* Akaev writes that “during the autocracy, the Russian soldiers were our colonizers. Thus, we needed an *imām*. However, when the tsar is overthrown, when the Russians have become different, we do not need an *imām* anymore because we do not wage war [against the Russians]. The present Russians in Daghestan are here only to save us from the beks and landowners.”

Here the image of the Russians is completely different. It seems that after the collapse of the Russian Empire Akaev saw in the Russians those who were breaking the system against which Daghestan had had to fight. As now the tsar was gone, the Russians were helping the Muslims against their own exploiters. Although Akaev wrote this article after the October Revolution, the perception of the 1917 revolutions still remained that of a game-changer event which gave freedom.

Abū Sufyān Akaev even turned against the institution of the imamate: in his mind, the imamate served and will serve only the interests of feudal-clerical circles and officers. “Having restored the imamate, they want to return their wealth and take away from the common people the rights that they themselves had obtained.”

296 Vozzvanie Ali Kaiaeva.
297 Though ‘Alī al-Ghumūqī sought to show that “the population of this country called them *imāms*” but not they themselves, there are evidences that Shamīl himself presented himself as caliph. As Michael Kemper states that Shamīl signed some of his letters by the title of ‘Commander of the Faithful’ (*amīr al-mu‘minin*). For examples of his signing by the title *amīr al-mu‘minin*, see Sharafutdinova, R.Sh. *Araboiazychnye dokumenty epokhi Shamilia* Moscow, 2001, documents 67, 68, 69 (pp 127–131). Kemper, Michael. “The Daghestani Legal Discourse on the Imamate.” P. 277.
299 Ibid.
2.4. Conclusion
The February Revolution in Russia gave rise to discussions around the concept of freedom and the government model that would be the guarantee of that freedom. The concept of freedom in Daghestan as discussed by the reformists was within the social and political dimensions of this phenomenon. As my research shows, the Daghestani reformists understood freedom as the new reality where there was no tsarist regime: the absence of the empire embodied the new freedom. Thus, in their articles on freedom, the reformists always first portrayed the evilness of the imperial government and the Russification and oppression they had faced before. Only afterwards did they begin to discuss the new era of freedom. To illuminate the harmfulness of the imperial order, they claimed that it had supported and created a fertile environment for actions directed against the Muslim community. To avoid the re-establishment of autocracy—whether in the form of another empire or a Muslim imamate—the Daghestani reformists stated that the process of a regular election was essential and at the same time inherent to Islam. They did not reject the Islamic discourse in order to embrace the European form of state-building, but, to the contrary, engaged within that Islamic discourse (the Shāfi‘ī tradition) which offered them support against Gotsinskii. The Daghestani reformists were still fully anchored in the Islamic discourse and praised democracy or parliamentarianism either whenever it suited them or when it was adapted into Islamic contexts such as the Middle Eastern understandings of these concepts.

The central part of that understanding of freedom by the reformists was directed toward highlighting the oppressive autocratic order. Through this understanding of the concept of freedom, the model of imamate and the figure of Gotsinskii embodied the autocracy rather than freedom. Paradoxically, in the discourse of the reformists, the proponents of the imamate were conflated with the historical enemies of Shamīl’s enemy, namely autocracy.

While for a group of Gotsinskii’s supporters, the concept of freedom was embodied in the re-establishment of the imamate in Daghestan, the reformists’ perception of an imamate was of an autocratic model of government. Thus, for figures like Kaiaev and Akaev, this model resembled oppression and not freedom. However, when speaking against that imamate, the reformists preferred using the Islamic argumentations. Given the audience they had, to substantiate their standpoint the reformists also needed religious argumentations against Najm al-
Dīn Gotsinskii’s imamate. The legal and political discourse on the imamate was utilized by both sides of the conflict—Najm al-Dīn’s supporters and opponents-reformists. This debate drew heavily on classical Shāfi’ī literature focused on the North Caucasus. Like in Shamīl’s case, the re-establishment of the imamate was not perceived unequivocally. While the supporters of Najm al-Dīn tried to strengthen his position as imām based on the works of Shāfi’ī scholars, others used works of the same school to prove that Shari’ā bans proclamation of a Daghestani imamate.

Both sides used the language of “protection of the community” yet represented different ideological platforms. While Najm al-Dīn and his supporters vitalized the role of imamate for the community development, their opponents pointed to the interests of the same community, showing that the imām’s proclamation in Daghestan divided the Islamic community and that this model is not the embodiment of freedom that was also desired by their ancestors.

In the anti-imamate discourse of the reformists, the characteristics of Najm ad-Dīn played a vital role. Unlike Shamīl, who was an absolute authority among his deputies and a military leader actively participating in state-building,300 Gotsinskii was more cautious and sometimes undecided. Thus, unlike Shamīl, who not only presented himself as imām but also signed some of his letters as the “Commander of the Faithful,” Gotsinskii signed his letters only as muftī of the North Caucasus. When discussing Gotsinskii’s efforts to establish the imamate, the reformists rarely mentioned his wealth. They instead preferred to portray his actions as against the Islamic law. Though using different discourses—Islamic and socialist—the reformists and the Bolsheviks, having the same target in the figure of Gotsinskii, still shared the same rhetoric against oppressive autocracy. This discourse will later become one of the vital theses in the Soviet historiography. Nevertheless, during the civil war, the advent of such a thesis had already been seriously attacking Najm al-Dīn’s imamate and his image.

While after the February Revolution, the reformists’ main task was to show the compatibility of Islam and the main ideas of the revolution—freedom and equality. After the October Revolution the task changed, and now the reformists sought to show the compatibility of Islam and socialism. For

---

example, the editorial article entitled *al-Sāsiyālim wa al-Sharīʿa* (“Socialism and the Sharīʿa”) stated that the new government—the Bolsheviks—were those who were fighting for freedom and, consequently, they were giving the people freedom of religion. Interestingly, in this article, the main manifestation of freedom is the freedom of religions. As we have seen in the first chapter, the main official line of the Bolsheviks included emphasizing that they accept the *Sharīʿa* as a dominant legal system for Daghestanis.