Muslim reformism in Daghestan

Islamic politics and Muslim education after the Russian Revolution

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The Main Personalities
'Ali Kaiaev (al-Ghumūqi, 1878-1943)

'Ali Kaiaev was born in 1878 in the Lak village of Kazi Kumukh. He received a traditional Islamic education in Daghestani madrasas. Kaiaev travelled to Cairo in 1905 and spent several years at Al-Azhar University, where he cooperated with one of the major Muslim reformists, Rashīd Riḍā. Returning to Daghestan, he became the editor of the Arabic language newspaper *Jarīdat Dāghistān* (“The Daghestan Newspaper,” 1913-1919). After the February Revolution, Kaiaev was one of the salient political actors in Daghestan, serving on the Daghestan Regional Council and as a member of the Executive Committee. After the victory of the October Revolution, Kaiaev left the Daghestani political stage and left Temir Khan Shura for his native village of Kazi Kumukh. In Kazi Kumukh, he spent most of his time as a qāḍī as well as a teacher in a local madrasa. A new stage in his activity became his work at the Republican Museum of Daghestan (1926-1928) and at the Daghestan Scientific Research Institute (November 1928-October 1930).

In 1930, he was arrested and exiled to Chelyabinsk. After several years he was released and on 15 November 1934 was reapppointed to his job at the Research Institute where he worked until December 1938. In 1938 he was arrested for the second time and in 1940 was exiled for five years to Kazakhstan, where in December 1943 he died from typhus. On 17 April 1957, 'Alī Kaiaev was rehabilitated.
Abū Sufyān Akaev (al-Ghazānishī, 1872-1931)

Abū Sufyān Akaev was born in 1872 in the Kumyk village of Nizhnee Kazanishe. He studied at the madrasas of Nizhnee Kazanishe, Tarki, Nizhnii Dzhengutai and Temir Khan Shura.

With Magomed-Mirza Mavraev he travelled to the Crimea, Central Asia and the Volga-Urals region to become familiar with typesetting in the famous printing house of the Tatar reformist Ismail Gasprinskii. Akaev also visited Egypt.

In Daghestan he was one of the first to open a new method school and also worked in the Islamic printing house of Mavraev. Between 1925-1928 he served as editor-in-chief of the Islamic journal Bayān al-Ḥaqā’iq (“Exposing the Truth”). Bayān al-Ḥaqā’iq was published between 1925 and 1928 in Buynaksk, Daghestan.

In 1929 he was convicted as a member of the religious anti-Soviet organization Dini Komitee (“Religious Committee”) and exiled to the Kotlas camps (Arkhangelsk Oblast, Russia), where he died in 1931. He was fully rehabilitated posthumously in 1960.
Muḥammad-Qādī Dibirov was born in the village of Gochob in 1875. Dibirov studied in the madrasa of the village of Aksai. In 1895 he became a teacher at the same madrasa. Later, he moved to Temir Khan Shura and opened a school there.

After the collapse of the Russian Empire he engaged in the political life of Daghestan. After the establishment of Soviet power, Dibirov started working at the Daghestani People’s Commissariat of Education. Then he started working at the Daghestani Publishing Center as an editor of the Kumyk-language newspaper Soviet Daghestan and the Avar-language newspaper Red Mountains. Between 1924 and 1929 he was working at the Pedagogical Technical College of Daghestan and the People’s Commissariat of Education.

In 1929, Dibirov was arrested and soon shot (14 December) in the Makhachkala prison. Dibirov was officially rehabilitated in 1988.
Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii (al-Ḥuzī, 1859-1925)

Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii was born in 1859 in the Avar village of Hotso into the family of Imām Shamīl’s deputy Donogo Muḥammad.

He studied in the madrasas of the Avar regions of Daghestan such as the madrasa in the village of Arakanî and the madrasa in the village of Uantsukul. In 1903, Najm al-Dīn travelled to the Ottoman Empire. Before the revolutions of 1917, Gotsinskii worked in the tsarist administration. After the February Revolution he tried to become imām of the North Caucasus and cooperated with Shaykh Uzun Ḥajī Saltinskii. Facing the strong anti-imamate movement led by the reformists, the Bolsheviks and a part of the Sufi shaykhs of Daghestan and Chechnya, Gotsinskii agreed to remain muftī of Daghestan.

With the coming of Denikin’s army, Gotsinskii refused to go against them and headed to the Avar mountainous areas where in September 1920 he led a large anti-Soviet uprising. Though the beginning of the uprising was successful, the Red Army soon crushed this anti-Soviet uprising. In 1925 Gotsinskii was arrested, and on 28 September 1925 he was shot by the decision of the OGPU in Rostov-on-Don.
Shaykh Uzun Ḥajjī Saltinskii was born in 1947 (or 1948) in the village of Salta. He was a murīd of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sughūrī (Thughūrī) and became a shaykh of the Naqshbandīya ṭarīqa himself.

Uzun Ḥajjī supported the uprising of 1877 and was in favor of jihād against the Russians. Thus, he was exiled to Siberia by the tsarist administration. However, he managed to escape from exile in Astrakhan, went to Mecca for ḥajj (pilgrimage) and then returned to the Caucasus in 1916.

After the February Revolution, Uzun Ḥajjī became a supporter of Najm al-Dīn Gotsinskii. However, unlike Gotsinskii, who refused to fight against Denikin, Uzun Ḥajjī came into an agreement with Shaykh ʿAlī Ḥajjī Akushinskii to mobilize Daghestanis against the Whites.

Losing his hope on Gotsinskii’s imamate, at the beginning of September 1919, Uzun Ḥajjī proclaimed the establishment of the Emirate of the North Caucasus (Severo-Kavkazskoe Emirstvo), with himself bearing the title of both imām and amīr, and called for jihād on the Denikin’s army.

In 1920, soon after rejecting the Soviet ultimatum letter, Uzun Ḥajjī died.
Shaykh ʻAlī Ḥajjī Akushinskii was born in 1847 in Dargi village of Akusha. He studied at the *madrasa* of his native village. In 1890 he became an *imām* of the mosque of Akusha.

ʻAlī Ḥajjī, a shaykh of the *Naqshbandiya* Sufi brotherhood, was politically active after the February Revolution and was one of the key opponents of Gotsinskii’s imamate. Having his own interests, ʻAlī Ḥajjī became an ally of the Daghestani Bolsheviks against Gotsinskii’s imamate.

In 1918 ʻAlī Ḥajjī became *shaykh al-Islām* of Daghestan and with Shaykh Uzun Ḥajjī he tried to organize the Daghestanis’ defence against Denikin’s army.

Though he cooperated with the Daghestani reformists as well, his religious views were in contradiction to the reformists’ standpoints.

ʻAlī Ḥajjī’s cooperation with the Bolsheviks helped the latter to seize power in Daghestan. However, after the establishment of Soviet power, ʻAlī Ḥajjī changed his standpoint and called the Daghestani people to rise up against the Soviets. In 1928, the Soviets opened an investigation against ʻAlī Ḥajjī and his supporters, the result of which became the repressions of ʻAlī Ḥajjī’s sons. Due to his age (80), the Soviets did not repress ʻAlī Ḥajjī, who died soon after the exile of his sons.
Alibek Takho-Godi (1892-1937)

Alibek Takho-Godi was born on 15 August 1892 in the village of Urakhi. After the death of his father he went to stay with relatives in Vladikavkaz, where he graduated from the Vladikavkaz Gymnasium in 1912.

After graduating, he entered the Faculty of Law at Moscow University. He graduated from the university in 1916.

After the February Revolution, Takho-Godi became one of Daghestan’s prominent socialists. Between 1920 and 1922 he became the People’s Commissar of Justice and a member of the Daghestan Regional Committee of the RCP(b). From 1922 to 1929 he became the People’s Commissar of Education of Daghestan. From 1929 he worked in the People's Commissariat of Education in the RSFSR. He was lecturing at Moscow University.

Alibek Takho-Godi died on 9 October 1937.
Jalāl al-Dīn Korkmasov (1877-1937)

Jalāl al-Dīn Korkmasov was born in the Kumyk village of Kumtorkala on 1 October 1877. In 1897 he entered the Faculty of Natural Sciences at Moscow University. Studying here for a year, he then went to France, where he continued his education in the Faculty of Natural Sciences at Sorbonne University and the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS).

Between 1904 and 1906 he was living in Temir Khan Shura. In 1906 he got arrested by the tsarist administration and exiled to the Olonets Governorate. However, he managed to obtain the permission to replace his exile with emigration and left Russia for France, where he continued his education in the Faculty of Law at Sorbonne University.

After the February Revolution he returned to Russia and with A. Takho-Godi, Makhach Dakhadaev and others opened the Socialist Group in Dagestan. On 5 August 1917, he was elected chairman of the Provisional Regional Executive Committee. On 11 April 1920, the Defense Council of the North Caucasus and Dagestan was transformed into the Daghestan Revolutionary Committee (Dagrevkom) and Korkmasov became its chairman. Between 1920 and 1937 he held different positions in Soviet Daghestan.

Jalāl al-Dīn Korkmasov was repressed during the Great Purge and was rehabilitated on 4 August 1956.
Magomed-‘Ali (Makhach) Dakhadaev (1882-1918)

Magomed-‘Ali (Makhach) Dakhadaev was born on 2 April 1882 in the village of Untsukul.

He studied at the Realschule in Temir Khan Shura. In 1900 Dakhadaev entered the Petersburg Institute of Transport Engineers. In Petersburg, he became interested and involved in revolutionary activities. In 1905 he returned to Daghestan and continued his revolutionary activities, being arrested twice. He was released and graduated from the institute in 1910, afterwards becoming a railway engineer in Maykop.

After the February Revolution, Dakhadaev became one of the socialists active in Daghestan and a member of the Provisional Regional Executive Committee of Daghestan. Dakhadaev participated in the First Congress of the Mountaineers in Vladikavkaz. Dakhadaev was involved in organizing the Daghestani Red Army. Dakhadaev was killed in 1918.

In 1922, the city of Port-Petrovsk was renamed Makhachkala, i.e., the fortress of Makhach, after him.