

**DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v6i5.1298**

**Citation:** Abdullatipov, A., Adzhamatova, N., Akamov, A., Alieva, A., & Khugaev, I. (2017). Spiritual Literature of the Peoples of the North Caucasus and the Culture of the East. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 6(5), 263-270. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v6i5.1298>

## Spiritual Literature of the Peoples of the North Caucasus and the Culture of the East

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### Abstract

The article poses the problem of connection between the spiritual culture of the peoples of the North Caucasus and the culture of the East. The authors show the historical predetermination of this process, their aim is to solve the problem of forming the North Caucasian literary tradition as a whole, to characterize some of its aspects, in particular, such as the originality of distribution of the Arabic language, the development of Arabic-language literature, its role and character in the process of strengthening the Middle East Caucasian, North Caucasian contacts, North Caucasian literature in Arabic (mainly), Persian, Turkic languages, the formation and development of its genre forms. The authors note that the driving forces of the Arab-Muslim culture - the Arabic language and Islam - have penetrated into Dagestan and the North Caucasus along with the Arab campaigns. The Arabic language and Islam became an integral part of the culture of many Dagestani and North Caucasian peoples. Islam was one of the main, but not the only factor that determined the prospects for cultural interaction. The ethnic and linguistic diversity of Dagestan and the North Caucasus facilitated the wide dissemination of the Arabic language as a communication mean accessible to a large part of the population, in particular, to the clergy. The process of intraregional interaction of literatures is gaining momentum. Therefore, this influence has gradually created the local original literature in the Arabic language in Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, and in part of Kabarda and Circassia. The authors of this article trace the ideological and aesthetic originality of this regional national literature.

**Keywords:** Arabic language, Influence of Arabic language, Spiritual literature of the peoples of the North Caucasus, Literary relationships.

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## **Introduction**

The problem of national artistic tradition is one of the central problems in the science of literature. It helps to understand the specifics and regularities of the literary process. This article is not devoted to the general theoretical aspects of comprehending the literary tradition (although attention is also paid to this in the research of scientists), but to the way in which it has influenced the formation and development of the North Caucasian national artistic traditions.

As Academician G.G. Gamzatov noted: "One of the important tasks of studying the literary creativity of the peoples of Dagestan is to determine the place and extent of impact on it by the cultures of the peoples of the Middle East, in particular, the role of Islam, the Arabic language and the Arabic-language literature, in the process of emergence of the local literary traditions" (1978: 5).

It is necessary to disclose the problem of forming the North Caucasian literary tradition as a whole, to characterize its separate aspects, in particular, such as the Arabic language, its distribution area, the Arabic-language literature, its role and character in the process of strengthening the Middle Eastern-Caucasian contacts; the North Caucasian literature in the Arabic, Persian, Turkic languages, the formation and development of its early genres.

Creative contacts, interaction and mutual enrichment are a natural state, a vital need of the literature. With apparent simplicity and clarity, this process has its own specific features, is subject to complex internal laws. The identification of individual facts and communication lines is only the first step in the problem study. It is necessary to determine the nature and type of contact, to clarify its role and place in the literature development.

## **Discussion**

The literary ties are part of a broader process of interaction between the cultures. Together with Islam, the elements of Muslim culture penetrated the medieval Dagestani society, which promoted the dissemination of literary works in the Arabic, Persian, Turkic languages. Creatively mastering the experience of these literatures, the Dagestan literature, including Kumyk written literature, originated on the ancient Turkic basis, developed new features in itself, determined the way of its further development according to the type of classical literature of the East. Now its connections receive oriental orientation as well.

The forms of this phenomenon are diverse. As Academician N. I. Conrad wrote "there are only two forms of literature penetration of one people into the literary world of another people - penetration in the original and in translation" (1972: 324).

In our opinion, "penetration in the original" of the Arabic-language literature, which is a synthesis of cultural achievements of the numerous peoples that have been part of the Arab Caliphate should be attributed not only to the penetration and approval of the Islamic ideology in the North Caucasus. Undoubtedly, Islam was one of the main, but not the only factor that determined the prospects for cultural interaction.

The Arab Caliphate played an important role in the history of many peoples caught up in the sphere of influence of the Islamic world, including the mountain ones. It was in the caliphate that "the process of interaction between different civilizations created a new highly developed culture, the language of which was Arabic, and the ideological basis was Islam; a new monotheistic religion with a peculiar system of ethical and legal representations and religious and political institutions that arose in the course of Arab conquests. This Arab-Muslim determined the ways of culture development of the peoples who professed Islam, affecting their life to this day for many centuries ahead" (Bolshakov, 1989: 3).

The driving forces of the Arab-Muslim culture - the Arabic language and Islam - penetrated into Dagestan and the North Caucasus along with the Arab campaigns, when they pioneered their mission and established their power and religion in the vast territories of the West and East, North and South. The Arabic language and Islam became an integral part of the culture of many Dagestani and North Caucasian peoples, including Chechens, playing a huge role in the formation of spiritual culture and moral criteria.

A new stage in the development and expansion of the influence of the Arabic language in Dagestan and the North Caucasus is connected with a number of factors and first of all with the creation of local, original literature in the Arabic language. The first surviving monuments of the Arabic-language Dagestan script were the chronicles devoted to the historical events that took place in the Caucasus and Dagestan in the X-XIII centuries. The articles of G. G. Gamzatov, M.S. Saidov, & A.R. Shikhsaidov include the following statements on the momentums of the period mentioned:

"The local creations include: "The History of Shirvan and Derbent" - a large historical painting, created in the early XII century and covering events from the end of the VIII century up to 1075; "Tarikh Dagestan" by Mohammed Rafi (XIV), a chronicle consisting of several parts completely independent, but united by a common idea, the earliest part of which can be attributed to the X-XI centuries; the main components of historical work "Derbent-nameh" date back to the X century, although the composition itself was compiled in the XVI century by Mohammed Avaby Aktashy; "The Chronicle of Mahmud Khinalugsky" created in 1465, one-Aul chronicles, "The History of Abu Muslim", etc.

Creation of the works of regional historiography in the Arabic language in the X-XV centuries can be described as an important cultural phenomenon. Almost all local works of this time that have survived to our time can formally be attributed to the historical genre, but, undoubtedly, they can be considered as monuments of the Dagestani literature in general" (Gamzatov, Saidov, & Shikhsaidov, 1982: 218).

Further, the social position of the Arabic language in Dagestan was increasingly strengthened, and there was a flourishing of scientific and literary activity in this language in the XVIII - early XX centuries.

Although the chronicles took the leading place, other genres of the Arabic-language literature began to appear. They include the works of local scholars on Islamic law, dogmatics, ethics, logic, medicine, epistolary literature, hagiography, etc. The Arabic language, without replacing local languages in everyday life, became the main language of literature, science, education, records management, act materials, private and official correspondence at the same time. All this largely determined the role of the Arabic language and literary creativity of the peoples of the Near and Middle East in the fates of Dagestan written literature and literary traditions (Shikhsaidov, 1988: 53).

A rich written literature was created on the territory of the Arab Caliphate by the efforts of peoples and generations, the basis of which was the cultural traditions of the Mediterranean and the ancient civilizations of the East (Filshtinsky, 1985: 5).

When studying the problems of the origin and formation of Dagestani and North Caucasian literatures, in our opinion, the entire process of the origin and development of literature cannot be reduced entirely to the influence of Eastern culture. For example, as the researcher of Avar literature, Professor S.M. Khaibullaev stated the "the issue of existence of the original and distinctive culture of the Dagestan peoples was completely ignored long before the start of Dagestan conquest by the eastern conquerors. The same was with the fact that this culture went deep into the centuries, to the period of the Caucasian Albania existence" (Khaibullaev, 1998: 20).

Of course, the process of perception of a non-national experience can become fruitful only if it gets on the prepared ground, into the literature that can introduce and develop it on the basis of its traditions. We assume that the peoples of Dagestan and the North Caucasus have been prepared for the perception and assimilation of the Arab-Muslim culture in view of the existence of their own national and artistic traditions.

According to Kh.A. Gibb, the Arabic literature is "...an immortal monument created not by a single people, but by an entire civilization. People who contributed to it belonged to the most diverse ethnic groups, which, however, lost their national languages, traditions and customs and entered a new, comprehensive Arab nation based on the unity of thought and faith under the influence of the Arabs" (Gibb, 1960: 9).

It is known that the Arab conquests were accompanied not only by the Islamization of the conquered peoples, the establishment of Islam as an official religion, but also by the introduction of their language and culture. As a result, the national languages, cultures and traditions were repressed in the conquered territories.

The history knows the examples when the Arabic language has replaced the Aramaic language in Syria and Iran, Greek language in Egypt, Latin and Gothic languages in Spain, etc. "But even with the preservation of their national identity, in spite of significant differences in the historical destinies and national traditions, the peoples which adopted Islam created a special "pro-Arab" culture, if one could so express, which largely determined their spiritual appearance, moral ideals and criteria, psychology and behavior. This applies to such regions as Central Asia, Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, Kabarda and Circassia, and partly Transcaucasia", writes Ch.S. Yusupova (1997: 30).

Originally, the interest in the Arabic language was associated with the study of the Koran, Koranic literature, penetration of Islam, but later the scope of language application proved to be more extensive. According to S.M. Khaybullaev, "the Arabs appointed their proxies, built mosques, religious centers, religious schools, brought and distributed religious literature, appointed imam-khatibs, mullahs who were obliged to teach children the Arabic script in the occupied areas. It appeared a large number of the Koran reciters, which had far-reaching consequences for the cultural development of Dagestan" (Khaibullaev, 1998: 20).

The ethnic and linguistic diversity of Dagestan and the North Caucasus probably facilitated the wide dissemination of the Arabic language as a communication mean accessible to a large part of the population, in particular, to the clergy.

The Arabic-language culture acts as a factor of the centuries-old influence on the cultural life of the peoples of Dagestan, "as one of the sources that raised the cultures of this region", and the process of mastering the Arabic language as a reflection of the spiritual need of the mountain population in knowledge and in accessing the achievements of world civilization (Gamzatov, 1978).

Knowledge of the Arabic language became an indispensable element of every educated Muslim. Over time, a number of Dagestanis grew up in a whole galaxy of scientists who created the original works, which were the first monuments of culture and literature of Dagestan, created in the Arabic language.

Evaluation of a genesis of this peculiar culture, given by the Oriental scholars, was different. Some of them were inclined to regard this culture as a branch of Arabic literature. The Dagestan orientalist M.S. Saidov wrote: "The character of the Dagestani literature in the Arabic language is due to the peculiarities of the country's historical development. Being developed as a provincial literature, it is of great importance for the science of Dagestan as a historical source and an interesting literary material, and for the general Arab studies, since it provides an opportunity to present a clear picture of development of one of the lateral branches of Arabic literature" (Saidov, 1960: 11).

At the initial acquaintance with the national sources in the Arabic language, a similar opinion was expressed by Academician I.Yu. Krachkovsky: "Despite the fact that the "Islamization" of some regions of the Caucasus belongs to rather late periods, their "Arabization" occurred so thoroughly that, in certain cases, the Arabic language was the main literary language of a number of areas. For example, it was so in Dagestan or in Ingushetia, where this position remained unchanged until the 1920s. In addition to the historical significance of sources of this kind, they are curious as a kind of branch of the "Arabic" literature, not only yet thoroughly uninvestigated, but even unknown in its main lines in the sense of elementary accounting" (1960: 560).

After a thorough and in-depth study of the Dagestan sources in the Arabic language, I. Yu. Krachkovsky came to the conclusion that the Arabic-language literature was connected with the Dagestan reality and was a material that grew entirely on the national basis.

The statement of the well-known orientalist I.M. Filshtinsky seems correct to us: "...the Dagestani literature of the XVI-XIX centuries in the Arab language, experiencing the common influence of medieval Arab literature, had its roots in the history and culture of Dagestan and thus essentially formed the spiritual heritage of the peoples of Dagestan, who only used the Arabic language at a certain stage of historical development" (1962: 153).

After the foregoing, in our opinion, we cannot fail to take the cultural heritage created by the peoples of Dagestan in the past both in native and in the Arabic, Persian, Turkic languages for our national heritage.

The spread of Islam was accompanied by the creation of centers of Muslim education: maktab and madrasah. The highlanders were taught the basics of the Muslim religion along with spelling in them.

According to some scholars (Kaymarazov, 2001), the Muslim schools were opened everywhere in Dagestan in connection with the consolidation of the Islam positions. There were several such schools in large settlements. The Muslim educational system was widely spread in Dagestan, and the Muslim school was becoming an important source of upbringing and education for the younger generation up to the 1930s of the XX century. The Muslim educational system in Dagestan consisted of education in the elementary school (maktab), where children were taught the mandatory religious canons and the skills of mechanical reading the Koran. The pupils were also taught writing. Then the training continued in the madrasah - secondary school.

Madrasah was located in large settlements, where the clergymen known for their scholarship were carrying out service in mosques. Specific centers of religion, culture and science were formed in Dagestan, such as Tarki, Endirai, Yakhsai, Kumukh, Arakani, Kudutl, Sogratl, Oboda, Akusha, Gengutai, Akhty, etc.

The XVII century is characterized by a "victorious march of Islam in the Chechen societies". By the end of the 1830s, there were 310 mosques in Chechnya (Krupnov, 1971).

It should be noted that many humanities and natural sciences received significant dissemination and development in Dagestan, along with the teaching of theology and philosophy. The training course included such sciences as mathematics, astronomy, geography, philosophy, philology, jurisprudence, logic, rhetoric, etc. To continue education, the Dagestan scholars often traveled to the countries of the Near and Middle East. The Muslim education was of an encyclopedic nature. The theologians, as a rule, were simultaneously philosophers, scientists and poets.

During the movement of highlanders led by Shamil in Chechnya, it was extensively described the genre of namma, a religious song, which eloquently described the period of forming the Muslim religion and its struggle against paganism and Christianity. The prophet Muhammad, who forced his ideological opponents to surrender their positions by his wisdom and omnipotence, was the central character in such

nammas. Very often these nammas take the form of an elegy in which the complaints about the impermanence of this life are expressed ("the day of judgment", "son of the people", "Praise to Muhammad", etc.). The historical personality of Sheikh Kunta-Haji became the object of numerous initiations - religious namma in the form of Qasida.

Dagestanis were the supporters of the "anthological", universal education appeared in the X century among the Arabs, for the mastery of which a lot of work and efforts were required. "Only a man with a great natural talent and enormous capacity for work and perseverance could become a professional poet or a scientist-philologist. Without these qualities it was impossible to master all the language details, the knowledge of which was required from the poet in the first place. It was also needed a colossal memory to memorize whole divans of ancient poets, as without this a human was not considered an adib, - an educated, professional philologist or poet", writes B. Ya. Shydfar (1978: 20).

The Dagestani scholars enjoyed deserved respect and authority in many countries of the Muslim East, and Dagestan provided theologians for the entire North Caucasus. As the historian M. N. Pokrovsky stated, "Dagestan supplied the entire eastern Caucasus with experts in the Arabic language, reciters, mullahs, and kadis. This pile of bare rocks was perhaps the most literate place in the Caucasus: at least boys were taught reading in the Arabic language almost in every self-respecting family. Literally, Islam fed a good half of the population. That is why it treated Islam as consciously as anywhere else, and while the Islam was still covered by the primitive religious beliefs of the mass of the population in Chechnya and Kabarda, the theological disputes and life according to the Tariqa were an ordinary household affair in the poor Dagestan" (1924: 209).

And, finally, it was no coincidence that the well-known scholar of the Muslim East, Academician I. Yu. Krachkovsky wrote: "Dagestanis proved to be universally recognized figures of authority for the representatives of the entire Muslim world as a whole outside their homeland, wherever fate casted them" (1960: 615).

After the end of the Caucasian War, the works in the Arabic language were created mainly by well-known historical figures that were captured and deported to the province of Russia. Their world view, attitude to the events that took place here were imprinted in the works they created.

One of such representatives is the former naib Shamil Atabi Ataev. When the Imam was captured, Ataev led a peasant uprising in the mountains of Chechnya. In 1861, he was captured and sent to a settlement in the city of Kasimov, which was located in central Russia. Atabi Ataev was one of the educated people of his circle. A. Ataev's literary activity was characterized by the forms of poetry and epistolary epistles, but, unfortunately, his spiritual heritage was not preserved. We can judge the content, style and form of his literary activity by his message to Tsar Alexander II and the Queen (TSGVIA, F. VUA, d. 6685, lit. 232-233 ob.).

After October, the traditions of Arabic-language literature have been developing for some time. Some highly educated representatives of the clergy wrote poetry, in which the real and contradictory life of the 20-30s of the XX century was interpreted.

## **Conclusion**

The North Caucasian scientists and poets of that time were not isolated from each other, they maintained the closest contacts. This was facilitated by their knowledge of Arabic, Persian, and later Turkic languages. This contributed to the fact that the scientists of one people cooperated with the scientists of other peoples of Dagestan; strong scientific ties were formed between the scientists of the North Caucasus, and this contributed not only to the development of Arabic-language culture in the region, but also to the

rapprochement of culture of the peoples of the North Caucasus, their mutual influence and mutual enrichment.

These ties contributed to the advancement of a whole galaxy of scientists, contributed to the development of a unified scientific thought and culture of Dagestan. Therefore, the achievements of one people became the achievements of other peoples of Dagestan.

In summary, the Arab literature penetrated into the North Caucasus in the originals, i.e. in its linguistic expression (translations into native languages were made later). The highlanders were characterized by the type of writer who usually knew the Eastern literature well. The Arab-Muslim culture with its diverse and aesthetically developed literature took a direct part in forming the Arabic-language literature of Dagestan, its genres, styles, trends, and content.

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