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Research paper

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## SUFI MODELS OF AN IDEAL MUSLIM IN DAGESTAN (17th – 19th CENTURIES)

*Abstract.* The article examines the history of Sufism in Daghestan through the lens of specific behavioral models. Across various historical periods, Sufi communities held differing perceptions of what an ideal Muslim should be and through which practices this ideal could be cultivated. An analysis of the genre repertoire within Daghestani manuscript collections indicates that Sufi literature in Daghestan developed unevenly. Prior to the 18th century, the works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī were widely disseminated in Daghestan. Additionally, between the 16th and 18th centuries, the Khalwatiyya works entered the local intellectual tradition and coexisted with those of al-Ghazālī. In the 18th century, interest in Sufism in Daghestan declined, as evidenced by the near cessation of manuscript copying of Sufi texts. However, in the 19th century, local scholars once again began copying Sufi works, coinciding with the spread of the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood in Daghestan. During this period, the writings of al-Ghazālī and Khalwatiyya shayikhs were also reintegrated into the local literary tradition. An analysis of Sufi literature copied in Daghestan reveals three primary models representing the ideal type of Muslim. The first model emphasizes strict adherence to ethical norms intertwined with Islamic normative practices. The second model highlights the significance of esoteric practices. The third model focuses on Sufi ritual practice. These models did not displace one another but coexisted during certain historical periods. The plurality of these models shaped a diversity of behavioral patterns among Daghestani Muslims, who identified themselves through adherence to one model or another.

*Keywords:* Dagestan; Sufism; manuscripts; behavioral model; ideal Muslim

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Исследовательская статья

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## МОДЕЛИ ЛИЧНОСТИ МУСУЛЬМАНИНА В КОНТЕКСТЕ РАЗВИТИЯ СУФИЗМА В ДАГЕСТАНЕ (XVII–XIX ВВ.)

*Аннотация.* Статья посвящена истории суфизма в Дагестане, исследуемой сквозь призму временно-специфических моделей поведения, характеризующих идеальный тип мусульманина. В разные исторические периоды в суфийских сообществах существовало различное понимание того, каким должен быть идеальный мусульманин и через какие практики возможно этого достичь. Анализ жанрового репертуара частных, государственных и мечетских коллекций свидетельствует о неравномерном развитии суфийской литературы в Дагестане. До начала XVIII века широкое распространение получили здесь сочинения выдающегося ученого и суфия Абу Хамида ал-Газали. Параллельно с этим, с XVI века и вплоть до начала XVIII века наблюдается развитие братства Халватия, произведения представителей которого также вошли в местную интеллектуальную традицию, сосуществуя с трудами ал-Газали. В XVIII веке интерес к суфизму в Дагестане заметно снизился, что подтверждается почти полным прекращением переписки суфийских сочинений. Однако в XIX веке дагестанские ученые вновь начали переписывать произведения по суфизму, что совпало с распространением Накшбандийского братства в Дагестане. Одновременно с этим сочинения ал-Газали и халватийских шейхов вновь стали частью местной письменной традиции. Анализ суфийской литературы, переписываемой в Дагестане, позволил мне выделить три основные модели представления идеального типа мусульманина. Первая модель акцентируется на строгом соблюдении этических норм в сочетании с исламскими нормативными практиками. Вторая подчеркивает значимость эзотерических и оккультных практик. Третья делает акцент на ритуальной практике суфизма. Эти модели не вытесняли друг друга, а сосуществовали в определенные исторические периоды. Плюрализм данных моделей формировал разнообразные поведенческие стереотипы дагестанских мусульман, идентифицировавших себя через приверженность к той или иной модели.

*Ключевые слова:* Дагестан; суфизм; рационализм; поведенческие модели; идеальный мусульманин

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## Introduction. Muslim Personality Models

Sufism has occupied a significant place in the life of the Muslims in Dagestan for many centuries. Over years of archaeological work, historians from Dagestan have recorded hundreds of Sufi texts from the region, including more than 60 original works by Dagestani authors.

In studying these Sufi texts, one notices recurring terms such as selfhood (*nafs*), ethics (*akhlāq*), asceticism (*zuhd*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), divine love (*ishq*), etc. The common thread in these Sufi texts is their focus on the moral self-improvement of Muslims. However, there were variations in certain historical periods within Sufi groups regarding how an ideal Muslim should be cultivated.

In this article, I focus on what these sources reveal about the lived experiences of Dagestani Muslims and how they applied their religious beliefs and their notions of what it means to be an ideal Muslim (*al-insān al-kāmil*). My main hypothesis is that Sufi literature serves as a medium for expressing how the author perceives himself as a Muslim and how he attempts to embody his understanding of being an ideal Muslim in his personal life.

The study of Sufi literature, alongside the theory and practice of Sufism in Dagestan, made it possible to identify several distinct behavioral models for self-cultivation and how Muslims are encouraged to pursue this ideal. The coexistence of different models during certain periods was typical. Some models prevailed over the others, and this diversity in behavioral models has been a characteristic feature of Dagestan for many centuries.

### The “Moral subject” model

The integration of Derbent, first into the Arab Caliphate and later into the Seljuk state, led to the formation of strong scientific and educational ties between the Muslim elite of Derbent and scholars in the Middle East. Beginning in the 11th century, many members of Derbent’s intellectual elite were educated at the renowned *al-Nizāmiyya* madrasa in Baghdad, where Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī taught for most of his life. Upon returning to their homeland, these scholars established madrasas and educational circles in mosques, modeled after the *al-Nizāmiyya* [1, pp. 267–268]. This resulted in the widespread dissemination of educational literature associated with *al-Nizāmiyya*’s activities in Dagestan, including numerous works by al-Ghazālī or those inspired by him. Al-Ghazālī’s works would continue to play an influential role in Islamic thought in Dagestan for centuries. In Dagestan, al-Ghazālī was primarily revered as a Sufi shaykh, and his writings were regarded as the foremost, if not the only, authoritative sources on Muslim ethics for several centuries. One of the most popular works of al-Ghazālī include *Minhāj al-‘ābidīn*, *Ayyuhā-l-walad* written in the genre of ethical guidance that the author gives to his student<sup>1</sup> as well as his other work *Bidāyat al-hidāya*.

The intended audience of *Bidāyat al-Hidāya* were students, and the text aims to educate Muslims on how to approach their journey towards becoming an ideal Muslim. The work comprises an introduction and two main sections. Al-Ghazālī begins this essay by appealing to readers who are about to embark on the study of Islamic sciences. He emphasizes that these studies should not be pursued for personal gain or to achieve social status, but solely for the purpose of “guiding Muslims along the true path” [3, pp. 59–60]. In particular, Al-Ghazālī writes:

“I will show you where the path of truth begins, so that you experience your selfhood (*nafs*) with it. If you see that your heart is inclined towards it, and your essence obeys it, then you can strive for the ultimate goal of the true path and immerse yourself in the study of the sea of sciences. If your heart is not following this, then know that your selfhood (*nafs*), striving for the study of sciences, is essentially the essence leading to evil, subordinate to the Satan who will deceive you into the abyss of disasters” [3, p. 61].

Here, Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that the study of the Islamic sciences should be undertaken with the sole intention of educating oneself and others on the true path, thereby earning God’s approval. Otherwise, if used for worldly aims, the scholar will face divine punishment on the Day of Judgment, and the pursuit will ultimately fail.

1. Alexey Khismatulin questions the well-established attribution of this work. He believes that this work is a later compilation attributed to al-Ghazālī after his death. See: [2, pp. 266–326]. Without denying this hypothesis, I still rely on the fact that the Daghestani theologians attributed authorship to al-Ghazālī.

Further al-Ghazālī outlines three main components of Muslim ritual practice (*‘ibāda*): ritual purity (*ṭahāra*), ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) and fasting (*ṣawm*). Unlike other theologians, al-Ghazālī not only discusses obligatory actions to be performed during ritual ablution or prayer, but also considers additional prayers, the reading of which, in his opinion, is highly desirable.

The subsequent section of his work is dedicated to the ethical norms Muslims should observe in society, as well as in their personal communication with God.

In his work, the ethics of performing every action (awakening, ritual ablution, eating, going to bed, etc.) occupies an important place and is closely intertwined with ritual practices. According to al-Ghazālī, an ideal Muslim is not only one who fulfills all five of God’s obligatory duties. In his view, all these practices should be part of the daily life and should be closely intertwined with morality. This emphasis on the place of the Muslim in society in terms of morality is the main feature of al-Ghazālī’s works [3, pp. 114–115].

Hence, merely observing the five pillars of Islam is not enough to become an ideal Muslim. Only the person, who while observing all the precepts of Islam, also benefits people and society through his actions, truly conforms to the Muslim ideal. According to al-Ghazālī therefore, the cultivation of an ideal Muslim must include both instruction in correct ritual practices and emphasis on conducting oneself in a manner that benefits others.

It is important to note that morality, as the main category for defining the ideal Muslim, permeates not only his work in the field of Sufism, law or philosophy [4, pp. 111–127]. Al-Ghazālī also draws close attention to the issue of cultivating moral subjects in the field of education, since it is the future Muslim elites who will be responsible for raising ideal Muslims [5, pp. 316–319].

The popularity of al-Ghazālī’s works in Dagestan can partially be explained by the fact that he wrote for a variety of target audiences and that his works include accessible educational material. The interest in al-Ghazālī’s works in Dagestan is evident in the manuscript copying practices of the region.

The Collection of Oriental Manuscripts of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography in Makhachkala, which comprises more than 5000 works, includes 105 copies of al-Ghazālī’s works, which is slightly more than 2%. Considering that the total number of works on ethics and Sufism make up more than 4% of the collection, al-Ghazālī’s work account for almost half of this category.

The other private and public collections paint a similar picture. In all the eight private and state collections I investigated, there were 164 manuscripts of works by al-Ghazālī. The figure below displays in what century the texts were copied.<sup>2</sup>

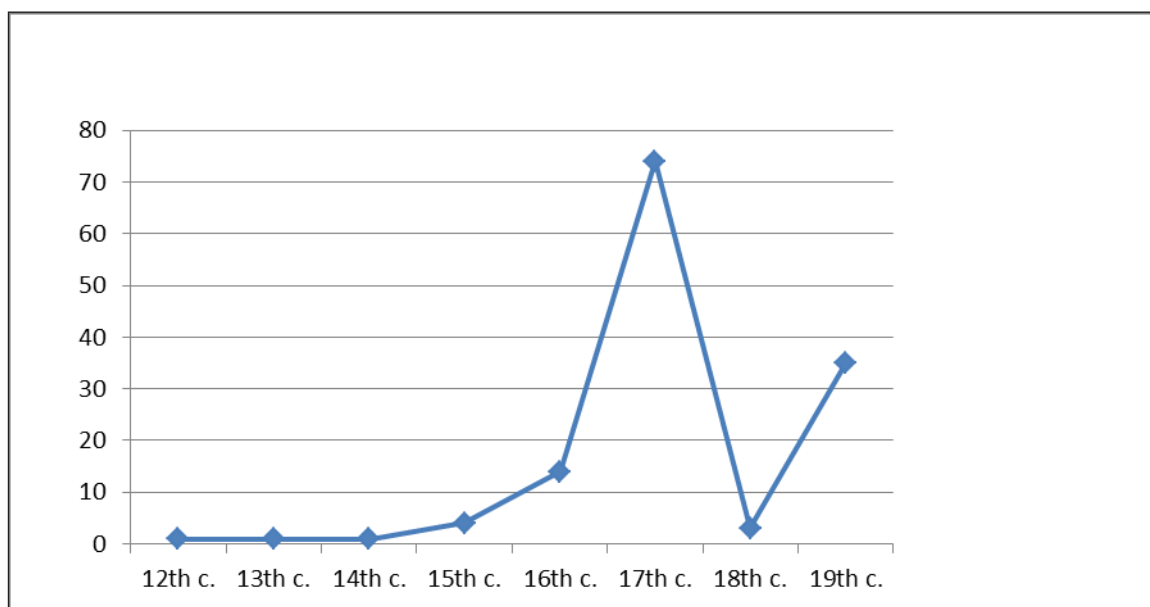


Fig. 1. The copying of al-Ghazālī works in Dagestan

2. All figures presented below are based on a statistical analysis of genres, dates and places of copy from private and public collections in Dagestan (approximately 8000 manuscripts and old printed books).

As shown in Fig. 1, the overwhelming majority of al-Ghazālī's manuscripts were copied in the 17th century, with more copies produced in the first half of the century than in the second. Toward the end of the 17th century and during the first half of the 18th century, interest in al-Ghazālī's work almost entirely disappeared in Dagestan, and his works were rarely copied. However, interest in al-Ghazālī's works resurged at the beginning of the 19th century.

In the 15th – 17th centuries, al-Ghazālī's works occupied a dominant position in the field of Muslim ethics in general and Sufi ethics in particular. Interest in his works in Dagestan re-emerged at the start of the 19th century, which corresponds to the spread of Naqshbandiyya in Dagestan.

Interest in Sufi literature declined in Dagestan at the start of the 20th century, as it did throughout the Muslim world. The figure below shows when manuscripts on Muslim ethics and Sufism from the Dagestan collections were copied.

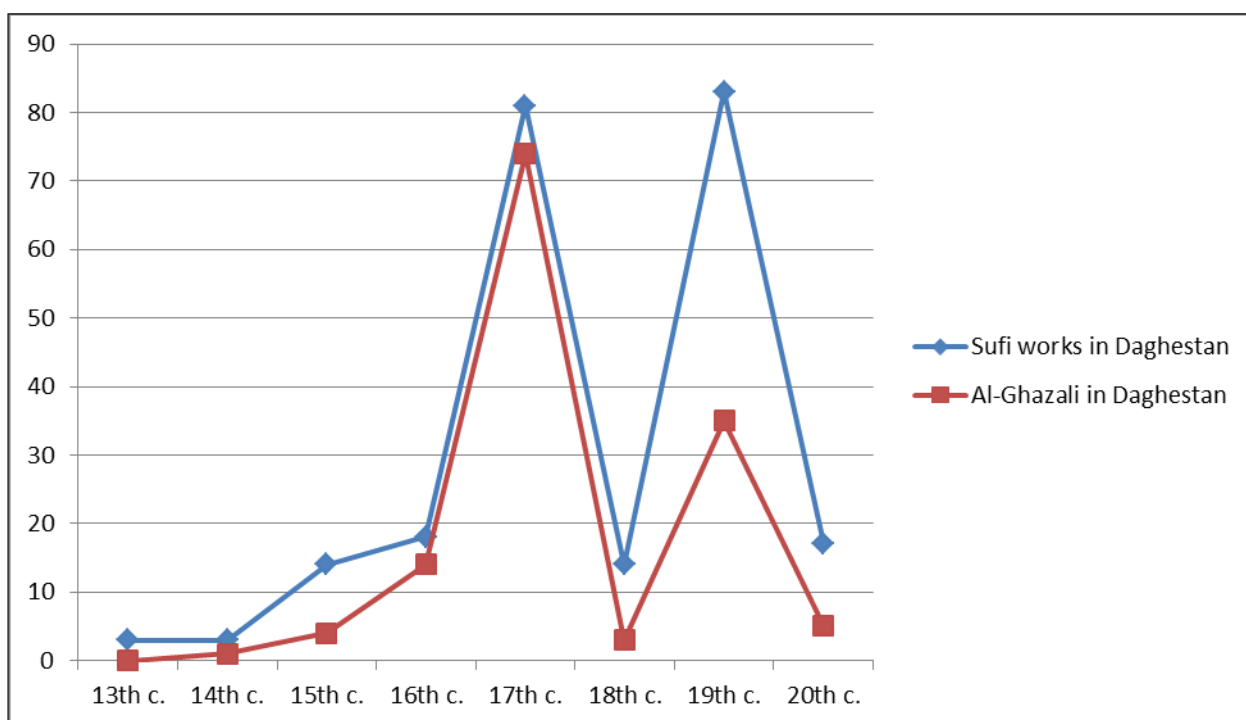


Fig. 2. The copying of al-Ghazālī and works on Sufism in Dagestan

Al-Ghazālī strictly approaches Sufi practice, evaluating its compliance with the Qurʾān and Sunna. Unlike other Sufi theologians, al-Ghazālī rarely focuses on irrational experience, except when discussing knowledge of God, who is beyond all definitions. In his works, ritual practice is closely intertwined with a deep immersion in moral aspects, effectively minimizing the extreme degree of exaltation of Sufism. Al-Ghazālī develops a more strict form of Sufism, and, by evaluating Sufi practices on the basis of the Sharīʿa, he brings Sufism as close as possible to Sharīʿa principles.

This model is characterized by the definition and classification of Sufi terms and concepts, their interpretation, and a deep immersion in ethics. There is a significant emphasis on explaining Sufi “stations” (*al-maqāmāt*) and “states” (*al-aḥwāl*), as well as the interpretation of emotions such as repentance, fear, trust in God, joy, and sadness. These terms and concepts are closely intertwined with the norms of Islamic practices.

Al-Ghazālī's Sufism is not an elite movement. In his works, there are no complex Sufi practices and rituals intended solely for a select group. Instead, al-Ghazālī appeals to all Muslims and formulates his ethics precepts for the Muslim society (*umma*) as a whole. By reaching a wide range of readers, these works had a profound impact on the norms of societal behavior, the moral aspects of Muslim life.

In al-Ghazālī's works, the utterances of the Prophet Muḥammad (*hadīth*) serve both to illustrate the ideal behavior of a Muslim and as an unconditional absolutization of the statements of the Prophet Muḥammad and as an irreproachable authority in matters of law, morality and ethics.

### The “Esoteric subject” model

In parallel with al-Ghazālī, one can find the coexistence in the same period of the works of the Khalwatiyya shaykhs. Moreover, the works of the Khalwatiyya shaykhs begin to spread exactly when those of al-Ghazālī start their sharp rise in popularity in the 16th century and interest in the shaykhs’ ideas continues to follow suit to that in those of al-Ghazālī.

Penetrating into Dagestan through Shirvan, this brotherhood first spread in southern Dagestan [6, 105–111; 7, pp. 97–102; 8, pp. 179–188]. Gradually moving northwest, it expanded to Central Dagestan and ultimately reached Western Dagestan [9, pp. 70–81], an area that had only recently been Islamized. Extant Sufi genealogies of this brotherhood indicate the presence of shaykhs from this branch in various regions of Dagestan from the 16th to the first half of the 17th centuries.

Although the history, theory, and practice of this brotherhood’s spread have already garnered scholarly attention [10; 11, pp. 101–119], the Dagestan branch remains largely unexplored. It would be inappropriate to rely solely on existing scholarship about Khalwatiyya in Egypt or the Ottoman Empire, as this brotherhood is characterized by diverse branches, each with its own distinctive features, including variations in ritual practices across different regions [12, pp. 69, 74–78]. A notable characteristic of this model is its emphasis on esotericism and occult knowledge. According to this model, through esoteric knowledge and practices one can achieve the status of an ideal Muslim. For this reason, I have named this model the “Esoteric subject.” Considering the complex rituals and the elitism associated with this model, the shaykhs exemplify the ideal type of Muslim that their disciples should strive to emulate.<sup>3</sup> According to the Khalwati shaykhs, the Sufis adhere to the orders of God more faithfully than others and avoid all that God prohibits. In their opinion, Sufis cleanse their hearts of defilement and are therefore “purer” than others [13, p. 57]. Thus, the activity of the Khalwatiyya order in Dagestan was characterized by the inclusion of a narrow, exclusive circle in its brotherhood, which indicates the elitism of this group. On the other hand, due to its limitations and emphasis on being chosen, coupled with its complex ritual practices, it was considered marginal in Dagestan. Similar isolation and elitism within the Khalwatiyya, as well as the shaykhs’ sib interactions, are characteristic of other regions as well [11, pp. 110–119].

Researchers note that with post-Mongol Persianate developments, leading up to the colonial period, the occult sciences constituted roughly half of Islamic natural and mathematical sciences [14, p. 311]. Originating from a predominantly Persianate region, this deeply influenced the esoterization of the Khalwatiyya order. Consequently, the Khalwatiyya could not escape the influence of Shi’ism, and more specifically, Twelverism. The Khalwatiyya shaykhs attributed their spiritual genealogy (*silsila*) to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, who was greatly respected within this order [12, p. 75]. Dagestani Khalwati shaykh Aḥmad al-Zirihgirānī (d. 1560s) highlighted the sacred significance of the number 12. He pointed out that the basic formula of monotheism practiced in this brotherhood – “there is no deity but God” (لا اله الا الله) – contains exactly 12 Arabic letters. According to al-Zirihgirānī, the practice of theomnemia (*dhikr*) was inspired to the Prophet Muḥammad by the angel Jibīl, who then instructed his cousin and son-in-law ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to teach the *dhikr*. In addition, when the Prophet Musa struck a rock with his staff, 12 springs emerged in this place.<sup>4</sup>

In general, the occult meaning of Arabic numbers and letters (*‘ilm al-arqām wa-l-ḥurūf*) is a distinctive feature among the followers of this brotherhood. In their works, shaykhs often attribute sacred meanings to certain terms, uncovering these meanings through the esoteric interpretation of letters and numbers. So, in the term “*faqr*” (i.e., poverty), they distinguish three root letters – F-Q-R. According to the Khalwatiyya shaykhs, the “F” stands for the dissolution in the essence of God (*al-Fanā*), “Q” – for the approach to the knowledge of God (*al-Qurba*), and “R” – for the ability to contemplate God (*al-Ru’ya*).<sup>5</sup>

The Khalwatiyya order also attached great importance to the interpretation of dreams. The disciples had to share their dreams with their shaykhs, who would then determine the disciple’s level of piety he had reached on that basis.<sup>6</sup> This focus on dream interpretation may be related to the interest in works on the magic of numbers and letters in Dagestan.

3. Aḥmad al-Zirihgirānī, *Silsilat al-masnū’āt*. Manuscript. Collection of Oriental Manuscripts of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography (further as: COM IHAE), Fond 14, No. 1919 (b), f. 6b.

4. *Ibid.*, ff. 7b-8a.

5. *Ibid.*, f. 3a.

6. *Ibid.*, f. 4b. See also: [12, p. 158].



In this model, the Prophet Muḥammad remains a central figure, serving as the primary example of ethical behavior. However, there is an increased emphasis on the role of Sufi shaykhs, who are seen as being morally similar to the Prophet Muḥammad. Aḥmad al-Zirihgirānī described two types of messengers of God. The first, whom he named “initial” (*al-aṣlī*), are the prophets. The latter, whom he named “emergent” (*al-farī*), are the Sufi shaykhs who “were sent by God to the Muslims through the Prophet Muḥammad” and who “are the spiritual heirs of the Prophet Muḥammad” and whom Muslims “must unconditionally believe in everything”.<sup>7</sup>

The “Esoteric subject” model is characterized by a deep immersion in cosmography and an esoteric interpretation of the universe’s origins within the framework of Muslim dogma. Yūsuf al-Muskurī’s treatise “*Tīfl al-ma’ān*” serves as a notable example of this approach. In his work, al-Muskurī delves into the origins of the world, angels, and Divine light, interpreting these elements from an esoteric perspective.<sup>8</sup> Such a bias towards esoteric explanations of dogma frequently intertwined with numerology and mystical interpretations of letters. This approach was a defining characteristic of the model. Such complex and mystical aspects – the magic of numbers and letters, dream interpretation, and esoteric understandings of the world’s origin – were typically beyond the reach of uneducated Muslims. This exclusive knowledge provided a means of spiritual enhancement and was characteristic of the Khalwatiyya order in Dagestan.

The Khalwatiyya shaykhs were a group of Sufi theologians with close intellectual ties, who set exceptionally high standards for anyone seeking to join their order. Neophytes had to undergo the “leaving” (*hilla*) – a daunting set of initiation rituals which emphasized ascetism. Only after having passed the *hilla* could one become a full member of the brotherhood. The Khalwatiyya shaykhs were especially strict with the neophytes. The initiation process was accompanied by a complex ceremony, which included forty days of solitude (*khalwat*), additional prayers, with an emphasis on asceticism.

Contrary to Khalwatiyya, Al-Ghazālī’s works provide a model of behavior that is not only wider in scope than that of the Khalwatiyya shaykhs but also universal instead of limited in its application. This is evident in the small number of Khalwatiyya works that were distributed in Dagestan compared to those by al-Ghazālī.

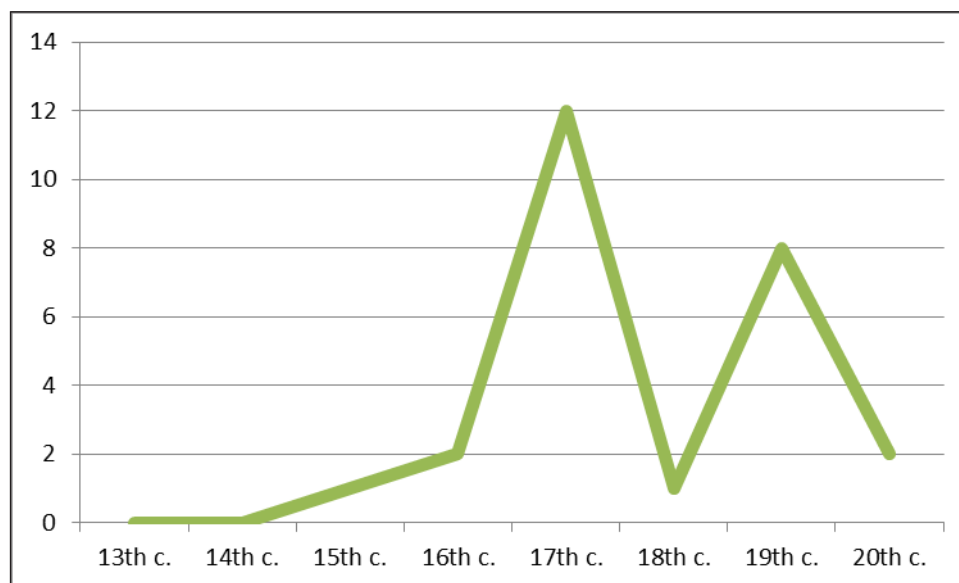


Fig. 3. The copying of al-Khalwatiyya works in Dagestan

As shown in Fig. 3, the largest number of manuscripts was copied in the second half of the 16th to the first half of the 17th century. This period corresponds to the era when the Khalwatiyya were at the peak of their influence. In the 19th century, interest in the works of the Khalwatiyya shaykhs grew once again. This was due to the emergence of the Naqshbandiya order in Dagestan.

Because Shī’a influences are evident in the Khalwatiyya, the works of al-Ghazālī, who adhered to strict Sunni positions, served as a counterbalance for the Khalwatiyya shaykhs. Al-Ghazālī’s moderate Sufism conflicted with the Khalwatiyya’s tendency to manifest an extreme form of Sufism on issues such as the interpretation of

7. Ibid., f. 10b

8. Yūsuf al-Muskurī, *Tīfl al-ma’ān*. Manuscript. COM IHAE, Fond 14, no 2597 (c).

dreams and the magic of numbers. These two models did not merge but coexisted for some time. Moreover, it is likely that, due to their opposing ideas, these models competed with each other. Similar confrontations and criticisms of the Khalwatiyya shaykhs can be observed in other regions of the Islamic world [15, pp. 265–288; 16, pp. 147–170].

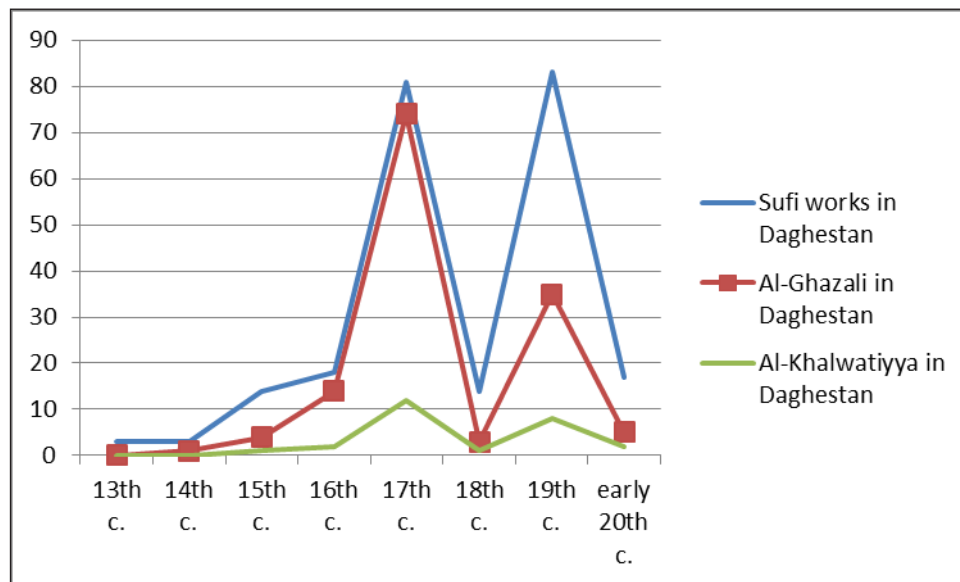


Fig. 4. The copying of al-Khalwatiyya, al-Ghazālī and works on Sufism in Daghestan

As we see in Fig. 4, by the 18th century, interest in Sufism had diminished in Daghestan – not only in the works of al-Ghazālī and the Khalwati shaykhs, but in Sufism as a whole. During this period, Daghestani scholars copied relatively few manuscripts on Sufism. This decline in interest can be attributed to the rapid development of Islamic law in 18th-century Daghestan, which prioritized rational interpretation of the Qurʾān and Sunna over occult practices, as well as the formulation of new legal norms and their strict observance [17, pp. 239–280]. The vigorous advancement of Islamic law, rationalist ideas, and the developments in logic and the natural sciences during that time contributed to a decreased interest among Daghestani scholars in the mystical experiences of Sufis. Consequently, fewer Sufi works were copied during this period, particularly since the institutionalized Khalwati brotherhood ceased to exist by the late 17th century.

### “Reflective subject” model

At the onset of the 19th century, Sufi ideas gained popularity once again. This renewed interest was largely due to the emergence of the Naqshbandiyya order at the first third of 19th century, and later, in the 20th century, the Shādhiliyya brotherhoods [18, pp. 41–71; 19, pp. 43–56; 20, pp. 141–168].<sup>9</sup>

Unlike the Khalwatiyya, the Naqshbandiyya and, particularly, the Shādhiliyya succeeded in developing accessible educational resources that appealed to the masses [18, pp. 41–71; 19, pp. 43–56].

In the 19th century, along with the widespread growth of the Naqshbandiyya in Daghestan, there was also a revival of interest in the works of al-Ghazālī and other older Sufi texts. The features of this model are evident in the numerous treatises written by Daghestani Naqshbandi shaykhs [22, pp. 75–91]. The majority of these works have a consistent structure and address similar themes and issues. One notable example is Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzīghumuqī’s “*Adāb al-marḍiyya fī-ṭ-ṭarīqa al-Naqshbandiyya*,” which is one of the earliest works in the region dedicated to the ethics and ritual practices of the Naqshbandiyya order [23]. The text consists of introduction and eleven chapters. In the introduction, al-Ghāzīghumuqī emphasizes that the first step of a novice is to study the attributes of God, such as eternity, incorruptibility, omnipotence, as well as their opposites that are not inherent in God.

9. The Qadiri order also spread Sufi ideas, but the influence of the Qadiri was limited to Daghestan. For more details, see: [21, pp. 118–121].



The first chapter of the work “*Adāb al-marḍiyya*” begins with a discussion of the initial stage of joining the Naqshbandiyya order, namely repentance (*tawba*). According to al-Ghāzīghumuqī, this is the first ritual practice that a Muslim must perform, as it is essential for cleansing oneself of sins and progressing on the path of spiritual self-improvement [23, p. 6]. He emphasizes the importance of purifying the soul, removing sinful qualities, and cultivating praiseworthy ones. Al-Ghāzīghumuqī concludes the chapter by stating, “He who warns against blameworthy qualities and cultivates meritorious qualities, follows the path of the Prophet Muḥammad and the pious saints” [23, p. 26].

Al-Ghāzīghumuqī describes the successive stages of Naqshbandiyya ritual practice, including the initiation of an adept into brotherhood, the procedure and conditions for performing individual and collective practices of *dhikr*, spiritual communication with the Prophet Muḥammad through a chain of shaykhs (*rābiʿa*) and solitude (*khalwat*).

Describing the practice of *dhikr*, al-Ghāzīghumuqī states: “Prior to performing *dhikr*, the disciple must envision himself as sinful, weak, devoid of any will of his own and entirely dependent on the divine mercy of God Almighty. He should imagine having passed away, being enshrouded, interred in a tomb, abandoned by people, left in solitude within the dark confines of the grave, and presenting himself before God in a state of humility and submission... the disciple must perpetually maintain the visage of his shaykh in his heart, displaying self-effacement in his presence, demonstrating readiness for self-sacrifice in favor of his shaykh, and refraining from any form of disagreement with him.” [23, pp. 43, 71].

Another Dagestani Naqshbandi shaykh, Ḥasan al-Qaḥī (1852-1937), in his description of the relationship between a shaykh and his disciple, emphasized that the latter should conduct himself in the presence of the shaykh as though he were deceased, lying before the individual responsible for his ritual cleansing. The disciple ought not to oppose his shaykh in any matter and must relinquish the notion of possessing an individual soul [24, p. 444; 25, p. 153].

In other words, the murid is required to suppress any impulse towards expressing individual subjectivity. According to the shaykhs, an ideal Muslim, who must inherently be a Sufi, should follow the path laid out by the shaykh without question, fully entrusting himself to the shaykh’s guidance. The Naqshbandiyya also emphasizes sensory emotionality as an indicator of correctly performed rituals. For instance, Sufis are expected to experience symptoms such as a rapid heartbeat, the transmission of energy at the reception of divine energy (*laḥāʾif*), accelerated breathing, and the presence of a specific scent, among others. The presence and regularity of certain sensory perceptions during spiritual practices are seen as indicators of their correct execution and the practitioner’s advancement towards spiritual brotherhood. Similar explanations of sensory perceptions that Sufis should feel are found in almost all Naqshbandi works. These writings describe that during practices such as *rābiʿa* (feeling a pleasant smell), *murāqaba* (feeling a pleasant trembling in the heart), and *dhikr* (feeling a pleasant warmth), the murid should experience these specific sensations [26, pp. 231, 314]. The focus on sensual experiences resulting from ritual practices is a distinctive feature of the teachings of Naqshbandi shaykhs. These sensory perceptions, which defy rational explanation, serve as a foundation for the Sufi assertion that understanding God cannot be achieved through rational means alone. Instead, a deep, personal connection between the disciple and his shaykh enables the transfer of esoteric knowledge and experience from one to another.

Between the 1850s and 1930s, Naqshbandiyya and Shādhiliyya shaykhs wrote more than 60 original books on Sufism, which were widely copied by the Dagestani scholars [20, p. 141]. This extensive dissemination of these texts shows the coverage of a wide mass of the population by this movement, their inclusion in specific networks and the influence of shaykhs on the formation of certain behavioral models on Muslims. Furthermore, these networks permeated all social strata, demonstrating their extensive influence and serving as a clear model of behavior.

The “Reflective subject” model pays particular attention to the personality of the Prophet Muḥammad than was the case in the earlier works of the Sufi shaykhs. He is not only a weighty argument in certain imperatives, but his personality in itself embodies the ideal model of who any Muslim should strive to become. The Naqshbandi practices such *rābiʿa*, *istighātha*, *tawassul*, as well as in a spiritual genealogy (*silsila*), illustrate the deep, unbreakable bond between the shaykhs and the Prophet Muḥammad. The personality of the Prophet Muḥammad is not only an abstract embodiment of the norms and provisions of Legal norms, and ethics, but is intimately accessible to every Sufi through these spiritual practices.

Another feature of this model is the emergence of the hagiographic genre in Dagestan, depicting the personalities of certain saints and Sufi shaykhs, following Prophet Muḥammad, as exemplars of an ideal Muslim. Interestingly, within this model, the genealogy of the Sufi sheikhs, closely linked to Prophet Muhammad, gains prominence. In the 19th century, Dagestan witnessed the development of new literature that described the Prophet's moral characteristics, his life experiences (*sīra*), and praised him (*munājāt*). Furthermore, the literature was not purely theoretical but had significant practical implications during sermons (*khuṭba*) and other gatherings (*majlis*, *mawlid*), especially in the context of delineating the ideal personality of the Prophet Muhammad. The emotional connection with the Prophet Muhammad's personality and his life as an exemplary model is a distinct characteristic of this model. A similar interest in the personality of the Prophet Muhammad is observed in the spread of Naqshbandiyya across other regions of the Islamic world, notably in the Volga-Ural region and the Ottoman Empire [27, pp. 87, 100].

During the 19th century, works that discussed the biography and the personal, both internal and external, qualities of the Prophet Muhammad reached their peak popularity in Dagestan. The manuscripts detailing the personality of the Prophet Muhammad, preserved in Dagestani private and public collections, were predominantly composed or copied in the 19th or at the onset of the 20th century.

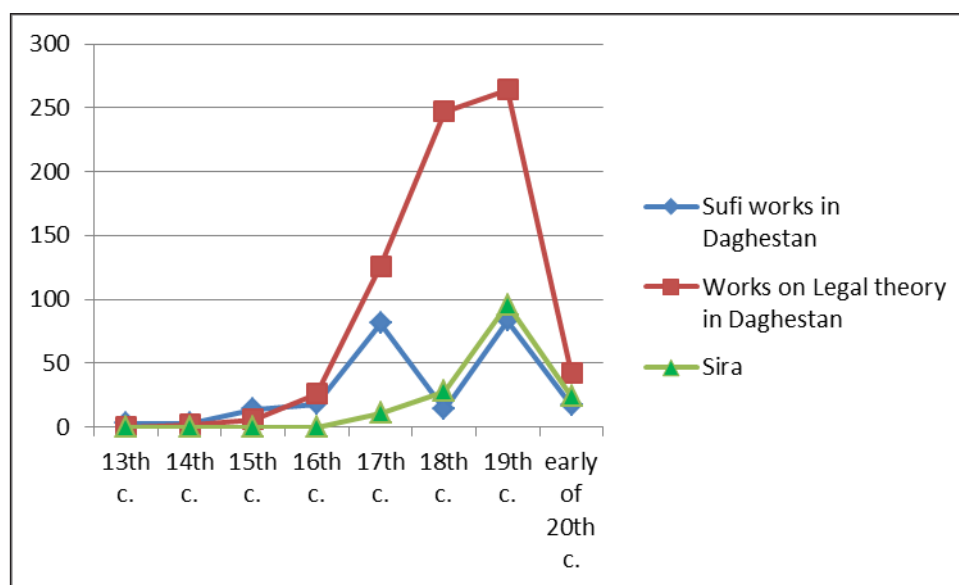


Fig. 7. The works on Sufism, Legal theory and *Sira* in Dagestan.

The figure above illustrates the spread of some genres of manuscripts that are characterized for certain models. Firstly, we can see that the Sufi literature began to develop from the 15th till the first half of 17th century. From the second half of the 17th century to the end of the 18th century, interest in Sufism declines, and again increases throughout the 19th century. At the same time, we see a consistent growth of treatises on legal theory, which reaches its peak in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. With regard to the literature on the Prophet Muḥammad, the figure shows the complete absence of these treatises until the first half of the 17th century. Starting from the 18th century and up to the end of the 19th century, the interest in the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad is growing sharply. In the 19th century we see the peak of the spread of treatises on legal theory, Sufism and the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad. The dissemination of manuscripts of these genres in the context of their chronology allows us to conclude that since the 19th century the Dagestani Muslims had a choice of several models. This alternative shows the subjectivity of the Muslim in their behavioral models.

## Conclusion

The history of Sufism in Dagestan shows several stages of development, which correspond to different behavioral models. Prior to the 19th century, the focus was on general issues of Islamic ethics and morality,

delving into the moral and ethical norms of Sufism with a wide coverage of theosophical and speculative elements. Among these works, there are essays similar to the work of al-Ghazālī's "*Bidāyat al-hidāya*," which were accessible and intended to familiarize students directly with Sufi ethics by engaging them in these texts. This behavioral mode, named the "Moral subject", predominant in al-Ghazālī's works, transcended mere intellectual exploration. Instead, the moral and ethical imperatives outlined by al-Ghazālī served as a behavioral model due to their comprehensibility to novice students and broad social strata of Muslims.

During the same period, the ideas of the Khalwatiyya shaykhs also spread, appealing to the Muslim intellectual elite and emphasizing esoteric and occult matters over moral self-improvement. The personality of the Prophet Muḥammad, as an embodiment of the ideal Muslim, is implied in this model but appears to a greater extent in a legendary context. What we know about the personality of the Prophet Muḥammad is regarded primarily as a source to justify explicit moral imperatives. Scholars in this model use the Prophet's statements to support arguments such as "you have to be like that, because the Prophet Muḥammad said it." This model is characterized more by an emphasis on what the Prophet Muḥammad said rather than on who he was in the context of his personality, portraying him as an ideal Muslim to be emulated.

The third model arises from a renewed focus on ethics, with a deeper emphasis on specific practices. According to this model, the ideal Muslim is the one who follows the great shaykh, performing all the Naqshbandiyya or Shādhiliyya practice entrusted to him. This model is characterized by personal contact between the teacher and his disciple. Moreover, a mentor is not only one who explains and "inspires" (*talqīn*) the order of performing Sufi practices, but also helps the student to become an ideal Muslim by controlling and encompassing the murid's heart beyond time and space (*tawadjuh*) with his inner gaze.

It is important to note that understanding of the ideal Muslim was not merely theoretical, but had significant practical implications. In Dagestan, where the Muslim spiritual elite held considerable authority, teachers (*mudarris*), scholars (*ulamā*), and judges (*qāḍī*) served as exemplars of the "correct" way of life. They actively engaged in cultivating the ideal Muslim through practical activities like sermons, storytelling, etc. This demonstrates that Sufi and other Islamic literature were inherently practical, influencing behavioral norms within Dagestani society. Representatives of each model had their own interpretations of what it means to be an ideal Muslim and propagated this understanding within society.

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