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## THE DISPUTE OF DAGESTAN THEOLOGIANS OVER THE RULES OF PERFORMING THE TARAWIH PRAYER IN THE LATE 19 – EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

*Abstract.* The paper studies the theological discussion around the performing of the prayer *tarawih* in Dagestan at the turn of the 19-20th centuries. The background of the issue in question is given in the introduction, revealing the origins of this controversy. The study focuses on several original Arabic-language works written by Dagestani theologians. Two parties participated in the discussion: Muslim al-Uradi and Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti on the one side, and Usman al-Tsakhuri and Iman-Ali al-Bezhti – on the other. The paper reveals in detail the key arguments given by the opponents who participated in the polemic. It is worth noting that the authors of the works show a high level of proficiency in Arabic and theological knowledge. The Arabographic polemical works of Dagestani theologians allow us to outline the range of controversial issues that at various times troubled the minds of the Muslims of Dagestan. The article provides a chronological development of the discussion of the theologians, as well as a general analysis of the content of each of the works. The works under study were written within the framework of the Arab-Muslim manuscript tradition, some of them being autographs. It was found that Dagestani theologians, who mainly positioned themselves as strict adherents of the Shafi'i legal school, in some cases allowed themselves quite free views and disputed the opinions of leading Shafi'i legal scholars, including Imam al-Shafi'i himself. Such a «liberalization» of views, in our opinion, is a consequence of the influence of the authoritative Dagestani legal scholar Muhammad al-Kuduki. The present study criticizes the «jadidocentric» approach in understanding the processes of the «Islamic reformation» that took place in Dagestan at the beginning of the 20th century.

*Keywords:* Dagestan; Islam; polemics; ijtiħad; taqlid; *tarawih* prayer; Shafi'i madhhab; Muslim al-Uradi; Usman al-Tsakhuri; Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti; Iman-Ali al-Bezhti.

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## **ПОЛЕМИКА ДАГЕСТАНСКИХ БОГОСЛОВОВ О ПРАВИЛАХ СОВЕРШЕНИЯ МОЛИТВЫ ТАРАВИХ В КОНЦЕ XIX – НАЧ. XX вв.**

*Аннотация.* Статья посвящена исследованию богословской дискуссии вокруг совершения молитвы таравих в Дагестане на рубеже XIX–XX вв. В вводной ее части дается предыстория вопроса, раскрывающая истоки возникновения данной полемики. Основное внимание уделяется исследованию созданных дагестанскими учеными-богословами нескольких оригинальных арабоязычных сочинений. В полемике с одной стороны участвовали Муслим ал-Уради и Кебедмухаммад ал-Бежти, а с другой – Усман ал-Цахури и Иман-Али ал-Бежти. В статье подробно раскрываются основные доводы, которые приводили оппоненты, участвовавшие в исследуемой полемике. При этом авторы сочинений показали высокий уровень владения арабским языком и богословских знаний. Арабографические полемические сочинения дагестанских богословов позволяют очертить круг дискуссионных вопросов, которые в разное время волновали мусульман Дагестана. В статье дается хронологическое развитие исследуемой дискуссии ученых-богословов, а также представлен общий анализ содержания каждого из сочинений. Исследуемые сочинения созданы в рамках арабо-мусульманской рукописной традиции, часть из них являются автографами. Установлено, что дагестанские богословы, которые в основном позиционировали себя как строгие приверженцы шафиитской правовой школы, в некоторых случаях позволяли себе довольно свободные взгляды и оспаривали мнения ведущих шафиитских правоведов, в том числе самого имама аш-Шафии. Такая «либерализация» взглядов, на наш взгляд, является следствием влияния авторитетного дагестанского правоведа Мухаммада ал-Кудуки. Данное исследование подвергает критике «джадидоцентристский» подход в осмыслении процессов «исламской реформации», происходивших в начале XX века в Дагестане.

*Ключевые слова:* Дагестан; ислам; полемика; иджитihad; таклид; молитва таравих; шафиитский мазхаб; Муслим ал-Уради; Усман ал-Цахури; Кебедмухаммад ал-Бежти; Иман-Али ал-Бежти.

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Since the 17th century, discussions on various issues of Muslim law and religious practices have periodically arisen among the Dagestani theologians [1; 2; 3; 4; 5]. One of such polemics around the correct number of *raka'ats*<sup>1</sup> in the *tarawih* prayer unfolded at the turn of the 19-20th centuries. The *tarawih* prayer is a collective prayer performed at night during the holy month of Ramadan, during which Muslims observe fasting. The controversy in this issue dates back to the very beginning of the emergence of Islam, when the second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. 644) brought about changes in the rules of prayers *tarawih* different from how it was in the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the first Caliph of Islam Abu Bakr (d. 634). Since then, disputes over this issue have not subsided in Muslim theological circles, which, however, continue to this day.

*Tarawih* is a prayer that, according to the canons of Sharia, belongs to the category of *mandub* (Arabic: مندوب – a desirable action). For the first three nights, the Prophet Muhammad performed it with his companions in the mosque in the amount of eight *raka'ats*, and on the fourth night, he refused to perform it collectively, referring to the fact that «*he fears that this prayer will be imputed to you by the Almighty as mandatory*» [7, vol. 3, p. 45]. Then the companions continued to perform it individually or in small groups. This continued after the death of the Prophet, during the time of the first righteous Caliph Abu Bakr, as well as at the beginning of the reign of Umar ibn al-Khattab. Then, however, after the next onset of the month of Ramadan, the second righteous caliph, seeing the scattered groups of Muslims performing the *tarawih* prayer in the mosque, decided to gather them all in one collective prayer. The next night, he enjoined everyone to gather together in the mosque to perform the *tarawih* prayer under the guidance of Ubayy ibn Ka'ba (d. 649), one of the best reciters and experts of the Quran among the companions of the Prophet. The Caliph also gave instructions to perform it in the amount of twenty *raka'ats*. Seeing a single group of Muslims during the prayer, Umar uttered a phrase that later became widely known: «*How wonderful is this innovation (bid'a)!*» [7, vol. 3, p. 45]. Subsequently, these words of his became one of the main arguments for the introduction of innovations in Muslim law.

In most Dagestan mosques, although, according to the Shafi'i madhhab, the desirable performance of twenty *raka'ats* of the *tarawih* prayer is prescribed, for several centuries, it was customary to perform it in the amount of eight *raka'ats*. For this reason, at various times in Dagestan, theologians carried out heated debates about how to properly perform the *tarawih* prayer: in the amount of eight or twenty *raka'ats*, collectively in a mosque or at home separately? One of these discussions, which resulted in the creation of several original Arabic-language works, arose between Muslim al-Uradi (d. 1919) and Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti (d. 1928) on the one hand, and Usman al-Tsakhuri and Iman-Ali al-Bezhti on the other.

At the end of the 19th century, in 1897, the prominent scholar-theologian Muslim al-Uradi received a letter from the Qadi Nurmuhammad, the son of a scholar Rasul-

1 A cycle of Muslim praying formulas recited in Arabic and accompanied by performing certain praying poses and movements [6, p. 256].

Afandi al-Ilisuvi, in which the addresser asked: «*What will you say, oh keen teacher Muslim al-Urudi, on performing the tarawih prayers eight raka'ats by Dagestanis? Is it better to perform it at eight raka'ats or twenty?*», to which Muslim al-Urudi replied that the more correct and justified way is the performing of eight *raka'ats*. In support of his viewpoint, he cited hadiths<sup>2</sup>, in which it is reported that the Prophet performed exactly eight *raka'ats*. Al-Urudi also said that there is no reason to believe that the number of *raka'ats* in the *tarawih* prayer must necessarily be twenty. The action of Caliph Umar al-Khattab, according to al-Urudi, was his personal decision, which became a consequence of *ijtihad*<sup>3</sup>. And that if Muslims have a choice – to follow the tradition of the Prophet or the opinion of an individual companion, then it is necessary to choose the former.

Muslim al-Urudi believed the opposite view is based on a «weak» hadith, which reports that the Prophet Muhammad, after he and his companions performed eight *raka'ats* in the mosque, performed the remaining twelve at home. According to him, the use of a «weak» hadith is allowed by Muslim theologians only for performing «good deeds» (*fadail*). However, it is too weak (*shadid ad-da'f*) to rely on it even in such a sphere.

Al-Urudi cites many statements of Muslim theologians who supported the opinion that the *tarawih* prayer should consist of eight *raka'ats*. It should also be noted that he did not declare a prohibition for Muslims to perform the *tarawih* prayer in the amount of twenty *raka'ats*. He claimed that it is allowed, but it is better to limit yourself to eight, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad. According to him, for the performance of twenty *raka'ats*, a Muslim receives the same reward from God as for eight *raka'ats*, because the performance of this very number is based on following the Prophet Muhammad. This is more rewarding, despite the fact that there are fewer *raka'ats*, i.e. iterations of worship in this case. At the same time, Muslim al-Urudi also draws attention to the viewpoint of Imam al-Shafi'i himself, who urged not to follow his opinion if it is not based on reliable sources: «*Perhaps the opinion about the eight raka'ats belongs to the view of Imam al-Shafi'i, because he spoke like the other imams: «If there is a reliable hadith that contradicts my position, then firmly follow the hadith and discard my word.»*»<sup>4</sup>

At the end of his letter, al-Urudi once again reminds that the position of his opponents is based on their personal opinion, and not on the Quran and the Sunnah. He compares personal judgment (*ijtihad*) with a «carrion, which is resorted to only when there is an urgent need.»

2 Hadith – a legend about the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad concerning various aspects of the religious and legal life of the Muslim community.

3 The *ijtihad*, or *al-ijtihad* (Arabic. الاجتهاد, Arab. الاجتهاد, lit. physical or mental effort) – the activities of a Muslim theologian in the study and solution of questions of a theological-legal complex system of principles, arguments, methods and techniques used in this theologian-mujtahid, and the degree of credibility of the scholar (mujtahid) in knowledge, interpreting and commenting on theological and legal sources [8, p. 91-92].

4 This, as well as the following letter from Sheikh Usman al-Tsakhuri, are included by al-Urudi in the contents of the work «The light of luminaires on the number of tarawih prayers», which will be discussed below. The work exists in two records of the autographs: one is stored in a private collection of Shikmagomedov M.G. in Makhachkala; the other, rewritten for Kebedmammad al-Bezhti, is stored in a private manuscript collection of one of his descendants – Abdulmashidov R.S. Hereinafter, translation in Arabic sources used in this article, is made by Alibekov Kh.G. and Abdulmashidov R.S.

After some time, al-Uradi received a letter from the sheikh of the Naqshbandi Tariqa, Usman al-Tsakhuri<sup>5</sup>. He was the successor of Sheikh Ahmad al-Talali (d. 1904)<sup>6</sup>. Usman al-Tsakhuri, who at that time had not yet been elevated to the rank of a Sufi sheikh, got acquainted with al-Uradi's answer to the question of Nurmukhammad al-Ilisuvi. Not agreeing with his opinion, he reproached Muslim al-Uradi for holding the correct opinion about eight *raka'ats*, while many Shafi'i theologians decided on twenty *raka'ats*. He also emphasized that even the famous theologian, an associate of Imam Shamil, Muhammadtahir al-Karakhi (d. 1880) adhered to twenty *raka'ats*. It should be noted that the authors of all Dagestani works on the debated topic of the *tarawih* prayer, including al-Uradi, mention the personality of al-Karahi and his position on this issue. This undoubtedly indicates the high authority of this great scholar, legal expert, and historian in Dagestan theological circles.

In his lengthy letter, al-Tsakhuri cites many statements of Shafi'i jurists about the desirability of performing exactly twenty *raka'ats* in the *tarawih* prayer. Turning to al-Uradi, he asks to explain the reason for the contradictions on this issue among Muslim scholars.

In response to this, al-Uradi repeats all the same statements that he has already told to Nurmukhammad al-Ilisuvi, but in a more detailed formulation. He again raises the topic of following the opinion of the Prophet's companions. This issue has been and remains the subject of discussion of Muslim theologians for many centuries<sup>7</sup>. Muslim again points out that a separate opinion of a companion is not a final argument in Muslim law. As an example, he cites a case from the life of the third righteous Caliph Usman ibn Affan, when he introduced the rule of reading the second *azan*<sup>8</sup> before

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5 Usman al-Tsakhuri – the sheikh of the Naqshbandi Tariqa of the Khalidiyya-Mahmudiyya branch. His father Haji Hazrat-afandi was the successor of Sheikh Mahmud-afandi. Usman-afandi himself was a student of Sheikh Ahmad at-Talali and at the beginning of the third year of study with the sheikh (in June 1900), according to Shuaib-afandi, he received permission to mentor. Usman al-Tsakhuri was a respected theologian in his district. He is the author of the famous work «Tuhfat al-akhabab al-khalidiyya fi sharh al-qasida al-mahmudiyya / A gift to the beloved Khalidiyyans in the form of a commentary on the qasida dedicated to Mahmud». In 1913-14, at his own expense, he published the work in the printing house of M. Mavraev in Temir-Khan-Shura.

6 Ahmad al-Talali – an influential sheikh of the Naqshbandi Tariqa of the Khalidiyya-Mahmudiyya branch of the late 19-early 20th centuries. Originated from the Avar village of Tala near Dzhar (Tsor), now in the north of Azerbaijan. In the spring of 1866, he received permission for mentoring from Sheikh Mahmud-afandi. Two years later, he was sent into exile to Kharkov, and then to the Tula province «for having an extremely harmful influence» on society. A year and a half later, he returned from exile and went on his second pilgrimage to Mecca. On his return from Mecca, he visited Istanbul, where he had close relations with the son of Imam Shamil Gazimukhammad. The latter persuaded him to stay, and Sheikh at-Talali lived in Istanbul for eight years. Later he decided to return to his homeland, where he died on February 18, 1904. He was buried in the village of Ehedi Tala in the Zakatala district. [9, pp. 219-220].

7 This topic is touched upon by Muslim theologians in their works on the theory of law (*usul al-fiqh*). They, as a rule, have a separate section dedicated to it. The overwhelming majority of Sunni theologians came to the following conclusion: if the opinion of a companion is expressed on any issue in which *ijtihad* is not appropriate, i.e. the Sharia decree (*hukm shar'iy*) is established strictly according to the texts of the Quran and the Sunnah, then the opinion of the companion is an argument (*hujjah*) for other Muslims. It is assumed that the companion will not personally express his opinion in such matters, and his statement is a retelling of the opinion of the Prophet. If the companion speaks on any issue in which *Ijtihad* is appropriate, due to the lack of direct instructions in the texts of the Quran and Sunnah on the issue under study, then the statement of the companion is not an argument for other Muslims.

8 The *azan* is the call to prayer, which is loudly called out by the muezzin to notify Muslims about the time of the next ritual prayer [10, p. 40].

the Juma, explaining that the population of Medina has increased and a single call to prayer is not enough. Subsequently, most of the representatives of the Muslim theological schools (hanafis, malikis, hanbalis) supported Usman's innovation, but the shafites were inclined to the opinion that it is better to stick to one *azan*, following the example of the prophet Muhammad, and not his companions [11, vol. 2, p. 88; 12, vol. 2, p. 161; 13, p. 27; 14, vol. 2, p. 188]. According to Muslim, the case is the same with the *tarawih* prayer: it is necessary to take an example from the Prophet Muhammad and limit ourselves to performing eight *raka'ats* in the *tarawih* prayer.

In his response, al-Uradi also refers to the opinion of another Dagestani theologian, Hasan al-Alkadari: «*the practice of Dagestanis to limit themselves to performing eight raka'ats in the tarawih prayer is based on a solid foundation, and the opposite opinion is based on poorly reasoned statements.*»

Al-Uradi, citing the statements of famous Muslim theologians and legal experts on the topic under discussion, also examines such issues as *ijma*<sup>9</sup>, *qiyas*<sup>10</sup>, *ijtihad*, *taqlid*<sup>11</sup>, etc. In defense of his argument, he provides an example of another additional *zuha*<sup>12</sup> prayer performed by Muslims before noon. Muslim reminds that the Shafi'i jurists claim that the maximum number of *raka'ats* of this prayer should be twelve, but at the same time they state that it is desirable to perform eight. In the same way, according to al-Uradi, the opinion of Shafi'i jurists about the need to perform twenty *raka'ats* in the *tarawih* prayer indicates the maximum admissible number, and not the preferred number, which, in their opinion, is the performance of eight *raka'ats*.

Assuming the possible objections of the opponent that the degree of *mujtahid* is necessary to draw such an analogy and use *qiyas*, al-Uradi replies that he does not use *qiyas*, but only fits several particular cases to one general rule. In order to find the difference between *qiyas* and adapting several individual cases under the same rule, Muslim offers to get acquainted with a number of books, among which is the known treatise of the Tatar theologian Shihabuddin al-Marzhani<sup>13</sup> «Binoculars of the truth in the establishment of the mandatory night prayers, even if the crimson sunset is still there / ناظورة الحق في فرضيات العشاء وإن لم يغيب الشفق».

At the end of his reply, Muslim al-Uradi mentions the time, place and circumstances when writing the work: «16 Rajab, AH 1316 (November 30, 1898) in the room at

9 Ijma is an agreement, a unanimous opinion (decision) of authoritative people on the issue under discussion, one of the sources of Muslim law (Fiqh). [8, p. 91].

10 Qiyas – lit. «measurement», i.e. the application of the established legal norm to a new case [15, p. 36].

11 Taqlid – («following», «imitation») – following the authority of the *mujtahid* of any madhhab in the development of particular issues of Fiqh [8, p. 222].

12 Zuha or Duha (Arab. ضحى – morning) – the prayer related to the category of «*nafil*», (Arab. نفل) – voluntary rituals for the worship of Allah). The time for the prayer begins approximately two hours after sunrise and continues until the beginning of the movement of the sun from the center of the sky to the west [10, p. 204-205].

13 Shigabudin Mardzhani (1818-1889) – a Tatar theologian and educator. The author of more than 30 works in Arabic, Tatar and Persian. His most famous works are dedicated to the history of the Tatar people, Hanafi law, kalam and the history of Islam.

*the mosque of the village of Bilkan*<sup>14</sup>, when I worked there as a teacher.» Later, he combined his two answers into one general work and titled it «*Dau' al-masabih fi 'adad at-tarawih*» / ضوء المصابيح في عدد التراويح («The light of the luminaries on the number of *tarawih* prayers»)<sup>15</sup>.

A few years later, the Dagestani theologian Iman-Ali al-Bezhti received a letter from the son of Sheikh al-Khushtadi<sup>16</sup>, which reported that the villagers of Khushtada began to perform the *tarawih* prayer in the number of twenty *raka'ats*, but some local ulama opposed it. They declared that it is more correct to perform it in the amount of eight *raka'ats*, as was the common way in Dagestan. Trying to understand the essence of the occurred dispute, Iman-Ali got acquainted with the work of Muslim al-Uradi mentioned earlier. Not agreeing with his arguments, Iman-Ali decided to write a refutation «as an instruction to someone who adheres to the religion of the Messenger sent from the 'Adnan tribe.»<sup>17</sup> The work has no title, the colophon informs that its editing was completed «on *Zu al-Hijjah 3, AH 1320 (March 2, 1903) at the Zhamod farm*»<sup>18</sup>.

In his short work, Iman-Ali al-Bezhti points out the fallacy of al-Uradi's position. In his view, one should perform twenty *raka'ats*, as it was established by the Prophet Muhammad, practiced by his companions and supported by Muslim jurists. Iman-Ali tries to refute every argument of al-Uradi. In particular, he does not agree that the performance of the twenty *raka'ats* is based on a «weak» hadith. Iman-Ali cites other hadiths, which report that the Prophet Muhammad, having performed eight *raka'ats* in the mosque, prayed the remaining twelve at home. He also claimed that there is a «silent unanimity» (*ijma sukuti*)<sup>19</sup> of the companions on this issue, because when Umar ibn al-Khattab introduced the practice of performing all twenty *raka'ats* in the mosque, none of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad opposed it, thereby expressing their agreement on this matter. According to Iman-Ali, a separate opinion of the companion of the Prophet can be accepted in those matters where there is no place for *Ijtihad*, i.e. in such matters, the approval of which needs instructions from the Quran or the Sunnah.

Iman-Ali often refers to the statements of Dagestani theologians, such as Muhammad the son of Ibrahim al-Aliji (d. after 1778), Said al-Arakani (d. 1834), Mahdi Muhammad as-Suguri (d. 1840), Muhammad Tahir al-Karakhi and Muhammad al-Kuduki (d. 1717). He notes that *taqlid* assumes following a jurist on some issues, without clarifying the jurist's argument on this issue. Thus, according to him, it is incorrect to ask the question «what was the basis of Caliph Umar al-Khattab's

14 Balakan (Belokany) – currently a city, the administrative center of the Balakan region of Azerbaijan.

15 This work is included by one of the students of al-Uradi in the collection of fatwas «Fatawa al-Uradi». The autograph from this collection is now kept in the private collection of Shekhmagomedov M.G. in Makhachkala. There exists another autograph of this work, which the author copied for Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti. It is currently stored in the private manuscript collection of one of his descendants – Abdulmazhidov R.S.

16 Pirmukhammad (d. 1911-12) and his son Hussein (d. 1930-31) from the village of Khushtada were sheikhs of the Naqshbandi tariqa [16, pp. 434-435].

17 The record is stored as part of the collected manuscript № 1387 from the Collection of Oriental Manuscripts of the IHAE DFRC RAS. F. 14. Inv. 1. Lists 14–19.

18 Zhamod - a village in the Bezhta district of the Republic of Dagestan.

19 Al-Ijma as-sukuti is a «silent», unvoiced [ijma] decision of someone [mujtahid], that is known to everyone, against which no objections were made. [8, p. 91].

argument?». He expresses his surprise by asking: «*how can a creature created from a seed that came out of a non-Arab womb dare to speak out against such great imams without recognizing their arguments?!*»

Having completed his work, Iman-Ali, apparently, first of all, sent it for review to those scholars-theologians who held similar views with him. The manuscript of his work also contains notes by a certain Muhammad al-Kanadi, «Qadi of Khushdal»<sup>20</sup>. Among them there is the following entry: «*This is what came to my mind when writing with the permission of ustaz, the perfect mentor, khwaja, haji, the scholar Pirmuhammad al-Khushdadi, as well as with the permission of the scholar and worshipper Hussein, may Allah Almighty strengthen them and grant us their grace. I wrote this, confirming what had been written by a scholar, our brother, Qadi Iman-Ali al-Bezhti. After all, the truth deserves more to be followed, and besides the truth, there is only ignorance. Muhammad al-Kanadi, Qadi of the village of Khushdal.*»

Iman-Ali also sent his work to Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti with a request to check it for errors, as well as make a review. The appeal with such a request to Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti was due to the fact that he was a well-known theologian at that time. Starting from 1896 to 1920, Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti held the positions of the first deputy, then Qadi of the Gunib District Court [17, p. 25-27]. He was considered an excellent expert in *fiqh* and natural sciences. There are legends about how he easily carried out complex mathematical calculations. He was frequently asked to act as an arbitrator in resolving land conflicts. The authors of the monographic study «Bezhtints in the 19 – beginning of the 20th century» report that he «compiled a manual for students of Arabic literacy and numeracy (four arithmetic operations) in the Bezhtin language» [18, p. 161], which has not survived to this day. At the same time, it should be noted that Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti worked as the imam of the Juma mosque of the village Belokany at about the same time when Muslim al-Uradi was engaged in teaching there in a local madrasa. A friendly relationship developed between them, as evidenced by the preserved correspondence from the manuscript collection of Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti<sup>21</sup>.

Responding to Iman-Ali's request, Kebedmuhammad got acquainted with the writings of both Muslim al-Uradi and Iman-Ali, and to the latter's displeasure, accepted the position of his opponent. He wrote his own work, in which he tried to point out the fallacy of Iman-Ali's judgments and defended the position of al-Uradi. This work has neither a name nor a date, and was presumably written in the same year as the first work of Iman-Ali al-Bezhti<sup>22</sup>.

Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti in his work deals with the same issues that al-Uradi and Iman-Ali raised: *ijma*, *taqlid*, *ijtihad* and accepting the opinion of a companion. For example, he analyzes in detail the message of the wife of the Prophet Muhammad, Aisha, which says: «*The Prophet Muhammad did not perform additional prayers in*

20 A reference regarding the village of Khushtada, now part of the Tsumadinsky district of the Republic of Dagestan.

21 The collection is kept in the private collection of R.S. Abdulmashidov in Makhachkala.

22 The record is stored as part of the collected manuscript № 1387 from the Collection of Oriental Manuscripts of the IHAE DFRC RAS. Fund 14. Inv. 1, lists 20-27.



*the month of Ramadan or in any other months more than eleven raka'ats*» [7, vol. 4, p. 191]. This, in his opinion, is a strong argument for the truth of the statement that the number of *raka'ats* in the *tarawih* prayer should be eight. According to Kebedmuhammad, Aisha knew best about the Prophet's actions at night, since she lived in the same house with him. He also refused to recognize the existence of an agreed opinion (*ijma*) of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad on this issue, since the first righteous Caliph Abu Bakr did not perform twenty *raka'ats*, and, therefore, did not agree with this opinion.

After reading the reply of Kebedmuhammad, Iman-Ali wrote another work of his own, a more detailed and extensive one. He called it «[the Establishment of] the truth about prayer *tarawih* by rejecting the weak opinions» («Haqq al-tarawih bi daf' al-kavadih» / (حق التراويح بدفع القواديح)<sup>23</sup>. In the preface to this work, Iman-Ali laments that in the early spring of AH 1321 (1903) he sent his first essay to «*the most important and dear brother*» Kebedmuhammad, hoping that he will write helpful comments and «*will be pleased with this work, as a baby is pleased with breastfeeding.*» However, he filled his review with unfounded remarks and distortions of the essence of the issue. Therefore, according to Iman-Ali, it became necessary to write a work in which his arguments will be presented in more detail.

Iman-Ali begins this new work with an attack on al-Uradi, accusing him of «*arguing with Shafi'i jurists and with the Imam of al-Shafi'i himself.*» Then he proceeds to discuss the issues raised in the course of the controversy. At the same time, he responds rather not to the statements of his original opponent, Muslim al-Uradi, but to the arguments given by Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti. As in his first work, Iman-Ali often refers to Dagestani theologians to confirm his views: Muhammad al-Alich, Khalil al-Kurushi (d. 1892-3), Muhammadtahir al-Karakhi, Muhammad al-Kuduki, etc. In the end, he notes that he did not answer his opponents in more detail, fearing that this would distract him from his teaching work. The writing of the essay started «*at the beginning of the month of Zu al-Qa'dah in AH 1321, and ended on the first day of the month of Zu al-Hijjah of the same year*» (from January 18 to February 17, 1904).

The last known work that completes the theological dispute that we have identified is a rather extensive work by Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti entitled «The garden of deep thoughts for refuting doubts of superficial views» (*Hadiqat al-absar fi man' shubuhat al-anzar* / (حديقة الأبصار في منع شبهات الأنظار)<sup>24</sup>. It was written as a response to the second work of Iman-Ali al-Bezhti «*at the end of the month of Zu al-Qa'dah in AH 1322 (February 1905) at the Askuf farm*».

It is noteworthy that at the beginning of the manuscript there is also a review of it by Muslim al-Uradi, written by his hand, in which he reports that «*he found this work a real garden that does not cease to bear fruits despite the change of seasons*

23 Two records of works by the same scribe are known, and most likely both are autographs. One of the records is kept as part of the collected manuscript № 1387 in the Collection of Oriental Manuscripts of the IHAE DFRC RAS. Fund 14. Inv. 1, lists 1-13. Another record is kept in the private collection of R. S. Abdulmashidov in Makhachkala.

24 The autograph is kept in the private collection of R.S. Abdulmashidov in Makhachkala.

*and times.»* At the same time, he allegorically compares the work of Iman-Ali with a mirage. In his view, the opponent, intending to conceal the truth, throws random phrases, and only strives for fame. In addition, there is a letter from Muslim al-Uradi addressed to Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti, in which he invites him to familiarize himself with the contents of his response to Sheikh Usman al-Tsakhuri. He writes that if Kebedmuhammad likes it, then *«it will be a gift to you from this pitiful ignoramus,»* and if he does not agree with what is written, then *«do not spread it, bury it and recite the prayer (talkin), which is read over the deceased.»* Then, Muslim asks to send him his refutation of the work of Iman-Ali al-Bezhti, as well as the comments of Kebedmuhammad himself. Muslim al-Uradi informs that it should be sent as follows: *«The letter must be delivered into the hands of Usta Ali the son of Mahdi al-Dzhari, who lives in the city of Char. From him it should be transferred to Muslim Afandi, who lives in Zakatala.»*<sup>25</sup>

In the preface to his work, Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti, in turn, notes that *«an astute scholar and experienced researcher, my contemporary Iman-Ali al-Bezhti»* asked him to check the refutation he wrote against the work of *«a worthy scholar and observant researcher, the best in our time, Muslim al-Uradi»*. After that, he proceeds to discuss all the same topics mentioned, trying to refute his opponent's argument. Kebedmuhammad responds to all his comments, indicating in detail where, in his opinion, he is wrong.

Muhammad al-Kuduki is frequently cited in all the works that have arisen in the course of the polemic under study. At the same time, each of the parties refers to different statements and deeds of the scholar, trying to appeal to his authority. To one of these attempts of Iman-Ali, Kebedmuhammad replies: *«the words of al-Kuduki about it are not confirmed, because they contradict his common practice, which was told by his contemporary, the scholar Malla Muhammad al-Guludi. He told that al-Kuduki performed the tarawih and Witr prayer in a total of eleven raka'ats, and after every four raka'ats he rested. However, even if we assume that al-Kuduki said such things, the statements of the Arabs are still preferable to the fabrications of non-Arabs.»* It is noteworthy that, as we pointed out above, Iman-Ali himself claimed something similar, and now his opponent uses the same argument. In general, the principle of preference of Arab theologians when comparing them with Dagestani ones can be seen in many Dagestani authors.

Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti concludes his work by mentioning the verses of the Quran, which say about the prohibition of slander. He accuses Iman-Ali of slander and reproaches him by saying: *«My brother Abdulmazhid refuted your statements on each letter. Your words amuse even novice students, which is why they laugh at them for being nonsensical.»*

The study revealed that several years before the discussion, there had already been disagreements between Iman-Ali and Hadzhilav al-Tsuldi on the one hand and Muslim al-Uradi, Kebedmuhammad and his brother Abdulmazhid al-Bezhti on the other. The subject of the debate was the discussion of the rules for the use of allegorical

25 The letter is kept in the private collection of R.S. Abdulmazhidov in Makhachkala.

expressions (*majaz*) and other grammatical rules in the Arabic language. The result of this controversy was the creation of several works, which contain rather harsh attacks of opponents on each other. Such fierce rhetoric on such insignificant topics, in our opinion, was probably due to the existing interpersonal conflict caused either by belonging to different theological schools, or by competition within a particular community or region.

Thus, it should be noted that lively discussions on various issues of Islamic practice periodically arose in Dagestan. The participants of the polemic showed excellent command of the Arabic language and a high level of theological knowledge. Researchers of the Arabic-language literature of Dagestan paid attention to this in the second half of the 19th century. Nevertheless, there were usually no winners in such theological polemics – everyone stuck to their truth. At the same time, the survived Arabic polemical works allow us to outline the range of controversial issues that troubled the minds of Dagestanis for many centuries.

Another, more important conclusion that derives from our research is the establishment of the fact that Dagestani theologians in some cases allowed themselves quite free views within the framework of the theory of Muslim law. Positioning themselves as strict adherents of the Shafi'i legal school, however, some Dagestani theologians disputed the opinions of leading Shafi'i jurists, and even the opinion of the eponym of the Shafi'i madhhab himself – Imam al-Shafi'i. Such a «liberalization» of views, in our opinion, is a consequence of the influence of the authoritative Dagestani legal scholar Muhammad al-Kuduki. It is no accident that he is often mentioned in almost all the works created in the course of the polemic under study. On the other hand, it should also be noted that al-Kuduki himself was influenced by the prominent Yemeni theologian Salih al-Yamani (d. 1697), a fierce opponent of the traditional division into legal schools, who at the same time tried to create his own theological and legal school.

Our conclusions also confirm the ones of some modern researchers who criticized the «jadidocentric» approach in understanding the processes of the «Islamic reformation» that took place in Dagestan at the beginning of the 20th century [19; 20]. Such an approach assumed that before the emergence of reformists (Jadids), the Islamic thought of Muslim traditionalist jurists (Kadimites) developed strictly on the principles of *taqlid*, and elements of rationalism were introduced by the new Jadid movement through a reconsideration of the sources of Muslim law. The study shows that Dagestani theologians, long before the emergence of the Jadids, successfully combined both the principles of *taqlid* and rationalism in their legal activities.

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