

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32653/CH214435-446>

Research paper

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## YUSUF AFANDI AL-YAHSAWI: BIOGRAPHICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE KLYCHEV FAMILY MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

**Abstract.** This article explores certain aspects of the life and work of Yusuf Afandi Klychev (al-Yahsawi), a distinguished Dagestan scholar, political figure, theologian and poet from the mid-nineteenth century. These details have come to light through the examination of his manuscripts, now preserved by his descendants in Khasavyurt, Republic of Dagestan. Famous as one of Imam Shamil's ideological opponents, Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi held significant respect among Dagestani scholars. At the same time, he was also marked by his broad outlook, cultivated by his time in the Life Guards Caucasian-Mountain Half-Squadron and his contacts with religious leaders from the Volga region and the Middle East during his Hajj pilgrimages. By studying the marginalia of Yusuf Afandi's copy of al-Hariri's *Maqāmāt* – which he made while stationed in Tsarskoye Selo and brought home to his village of Aksay after returning – it has been possible to determine the exact dates of his service in the imperial convoy and other key events in his life. In addition, this work has greatly expanded what is known about Yusuf al-Yahsawi's family: the precise number of Yusuf Afandi's children, their full names, and birth dates have been identified, and a family tree for the well-known Klychev kin in Zaslak Kumykia has been created.

**Keywords:** Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi; Dagestan; Caucasian War; ulama; Sharia; Arabic language; manuscript; marginalia; family chronograph; genealogical tree

**For citation:** I.I. Khanmurzaev, M.N. Osmanova. Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi: biographical insights from the Klychev family manuscript collection. *History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Caucasus*. 2025. Vol. 21. N. 4. P. 435-446. [doi.org/10.32653/CH214435-446](https://doi.org/10.32653/CH214435-446)

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32653/CH214435-446>



Исследовательская статья

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## СВЕДЕНИЯ БИОГРАФИЧЕСКОГО ХАРАКТЕРА О ЮСУФЕ-АФАНДИ АЛ-ЙАХСАВИ (ПО МАТЕРИАЛАМ РУКОПИСНОГО АРХИВА СЕМЬИ КЛЫЧЕВЫХ)

**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются некоторые аспекты жизни и деятельности выдающегося дагестанского ученого, политического деятеля, богослова и поэта середины XIX в. Юсуфа-афанди Клычева (ал-Йахсави), ставшие известными после изучения его рукописей, хранящихся в настоящее время у потомков ученого в г. Хасавюрт, Республика Дагестан. Юсуф-афанди ал-Йахсави, известный как один из непримиримых противников имама Шамиля, обладал большим авторитетом в среде алимов Дагестана. В то же время он отличался определенной широтой взглядов и суждений, приобретенных во время службы в Лейб-гвардии Кавказско-Горского полуэскадрона, а также в процессе общения с представителями духовной элиты Поволжья и Ближнего Востока во время поездок в хадж. Благодаря изучению маргинальных записей рукописи сочинения «Макамат» ал-Харири, переписанной Юсуфом-афанди еще в годы службы в Царском Селе и привезенной на родину после возвращения в с. Аксай, стал известен точный временной отрезок службы Юсуфа ал-Йахсави в Императорском конвое и другие важные моменты в его жизни. Кроме того, удалось значительно обогатить сведения о семье Юсуфа ал-Йахсави: установить точное количество детей Юсуфа-афанди, их полные имена, даты рождения, а также составить генеалогическое древо известного в Засулакской Кумыкии рода Клычевых.

**Ключевые слова:** Юсуф-афанди ал-Йахсави; Дагестан; Кавказская война; ученые-алимы; шариат; арабский язык; рукописная книга; маргинальные записи; семейный хронограф; генеалогическое древо

**Для цитирования:** Ханмурзаев И.И., Османова М.Н. Сведения биографического характера о Юсуфе-афанди ал-Йахсави (по материалам рукописного архива семьи Клычевых) // История, археология и этнография Кавказа. 2025. Т. 21. № 4. С. 435-446. [doi.org/10.32653/CH214435-446](https://doi.org/10.32653/CH214435-446)

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This article aims to explore specific aspects of the life and work of Yusuf Afandi Klychev (al-Yahsawi), a leading Dagestani scholar, political figure, theologian, and poet from the mid-nineteenth century. It also uncovers previously unknown periods of his life and examines his Arabic-language manuscripts, preserved by his descendants.

The study employs descriptive, cultural-historical, chronological, analytical, retrospective, periodization, and visualization methods.

The practical value of this article lies in the potential of its materials to contribute to source studies, historical, and ethnographic research.

Yusuf Afandi, the son of Musa Haji Klychev (al-Yahsawi) from Aksai, holds a special place among the leading Dagestani religious scholars and active political figures of the mid-nineteenth century. The figure of Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi (1795–1870) has long drawn the attention of historians studying the Caucasian War. Some of them (M. Kemper, V. Bobrovnikov, M. Musayev, and others) see Yusuf Afandi as a controversial figure and a promoter of Russian imperial ideology. Most researchers describe him as a qadi, known as an ideological adversary of Imam Shamil, who challenged the legal opinions of the Imamate's leaders and strongly criticized Shamil's doctrine.

Thus, in his work *The Sharia Discourse of the Imamate in Dagestan in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, the German historian M. Kemper discusses Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi's appeal to Muslim spiritual leaders in the Middle East, calling for a fatwa against the legitimacy of Imam Shamil's movement [1, pp. 107–124], which took the form of a letter to the ulama of the Shafi'i legal school in Mecca. Kemper also describes the reply from the Mufti of Mecca, 'Usman Ahmad ad-Damiyati al-Shafi'i, who, contrary to Yusuf Afandi's hopes, justified Shamil's actions in the Caucasus by citing a hadith in which the Prophet Muhammad requires Muslims to join jihad under any imam, righteous or corrupt (*fajir*) [1, p. 113]<sup>1</sup>. However, ad-Damiyati's arguments did not persuade Yusuf Afandi, who stood by his original view.

A brilliant scholar fluent in local and Oriental languages, Yusuf al-Yahsawi earned high respect among Dagestan's scholars, who regarded him as an expert in Arabic language and literature, and particularly in religious studies [2, p. 195]. In his home village of Aksai, Yusuf served as a qadi for many years, while also teaching at the local madrasah.

Since the roots of Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi's pro-Russian stance have been thoroughly examined in existing scholarship, this article focuses on some previously unexplored facets of the scholar's life and work, tied to the military and political history of the Russian Empire and several Middle Eastern countries. It also broadens knowledge of his family and descendants through analysis of details drawn from the Arabic-language manuscripts of the Klychev family, held by Yusuf Afandi's descendants. Drawing up a genealogical tree for the Klychev family forms part of this family-related analysis.

Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi's family came from the high-ranking Kumyk *uzdens*<sup>2</sup> [3, pp. 1–10; 4, pp. 3–15; 5, pp. 67–69; 6, pp. 220–224]. He received his early education from his father, the scholar Musa Haji, and other ulama in the village of Yakhsay (Aksay). As an educated man himself, Musa Haji Klychev devoted considerable effort to teaching his children the sciences, regarding Yusuf as the most gifted of his sons. To advance his studies, Yusuf traveled to the village of Arakani<sup>3</sup> to pursue religious and philosophical sciences under his father's longtime friend, one of Dagestan's most renowned scholars at the time, Said al-Kharakani (1763/4–1834). The young man soon became one of Said's finest *muta'alims*.

His teacher described Yusuf as diligent and assiduous, unwilling to settle for superficial knowledge but eager to delve deeply into the sciences:

وقد وقعت المعرفة والمحبة بيني وبين الولد الكريم يوسف وانست منه الرشد والاهلية .....  
 “.... والاستحقاق للاستفادة ورضيت عنه ودعوت له بالتوفيق والهداية إلى اوضح طريق

1 Letter from Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi to the spiritual authorities of the Shafi'i madhhab in Mecca. Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of RAS (IHAE DFRC RAS). F. 16, inv. 1, no. 174.

2 The high-ranking *uzdens* (*sala-uzdens*) constituted the elite stratum of the landowning peasantry. Exempt from certain obligations, they played a role in adjudicating communal affairs, disputes, and legal matters; people's judges were typically selected from their ranks.

3 Arakani is presently a village in Untsukul'sky District, Republic of Dagestan.

“Friendship and love have grown between me and your noble son Yusuf. I have observed in him prudence, competence, and the ability to teach and mentorship. I am pleased with him and pray for his success and guidance on the right path” [7, pp. 126–127].

He likely showed the same diligence in his later studies with other teachers. Evidence indicates that, in addition to Said al-Kharakani, Yusuf studied under other prominent scholars of that time, including Nur Muhammad, the Qadi of Khunzakh [8, pp. 44–48]; Daitbek Gogotlinsky and Khadbulav Khvakhitlinsky [10, pp. 56–62]<sup>4</sup>. With Nur Muhammad, the Qadi of Khunzakh, Yusuf focused mainly on the natural sciences and mathematics.

These productive studies earned him a reputation as a learned man, deeply knowledgeable in various fields of science. Moreover, though the son of affluent parents, Yusuf remained a modest and principled young man [9, pp. 4–5].

After completing his studies, he returned to his home village of Aksai, where he served as a qadi while also teaching at the local madrasah. Many Dagestani scholars – both his contemporaries and later ones – noted his strong command of Arabic. For example, the prominent Dagestani scholar and educator Ali Kayayev (1878–1943), in assessing Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi’s poems, wrote: “He had a natural poetic talent in Arabic” [11, pp. 96–97; 10, pp. 56–62]. The twentieth-century Dagestani literary scholar Mansur Gaidarbekov also remarked that “...Yusuf has a very smooth, developed, even rich, Arabic language. He would never make a grammatical error. He has a very extensive vocabulary.”<sup>5</sup> Gaidarbekov further praised Yusuf al-Yahsawi’s excellent Arabic style, regarding him as the finest in Dagestan: “Yusuf’s poems were widely known and praised long before his death. Their content and universally acknowledged elegance captivated almost all the ulama and muta’alim, even those from the camp hostile to him. He was a poet and scholar, recognized even by his most ardent enemies.”<sup>6</sup>

Nazir ad-Durgili regarded Yusuf as “...a knowledgeable faqih, an outstanding scholar, a writer, a katib, and a smart poet. He had an excellent knowledge of the Arabic language” [12, p. 136]. These assessments show that Yusuf al-Yahsawi’s reputation went beyond that of an “opponent of the highlanders’ movement” to include recognition as a major Dagestani scholar. As a result, Yusuf al-Yahsawi, along with several other Dagestani ulama, was listed among the 1000 scholars of the Islamic ummah in the three-volume encyclopedia *Al-Mukhtār Al-Maṣūn min a’lām Al-qurūn*, published in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1995 [13, pp. 107–118], and compiled by the Jeddah-based scholar Muhammad ibn Hasan ibn Uqail Musa.

Much is known about al-Yahsawi’s public life. In 1825, Yusuf Afandi began serving in the tsarist army as a qadi, and by November 1832, he was assigned to the Life Guards Caucasian Horse-Mountain Half-Squadron (later renamed His Imperial Majesty’s Own Convoy), based in Tsarskoye Selo (now Pushkin), near St. Petersburg. After five years of service there (until 1837), Yusuf Afandi retired from the Half-Squadron with the rank of lieutenant, recommending his student and son-in-law, Umar al-Yahsawi, to take his place.

Yusuf Afandi returned to his homeland in June 1842, having been promoted to the rank of staff captain of the guard. In November 1858, he was appointed qadi of the Kumyk District People’s Court, a position he held until his dismissal in 1860. As a major scholar with widely recognized authority in Sharia and the adats of his people [14, p. 246], Yusuf-qadi served in the Terek regional administration, where his contributions were greatly valued [14, p. 297]. After his dismissal, he received a pension of 400 rubles from the Kizlyar district treasury and retired to his estate in the village of Kazak-Murza-yurt.<sup>7</sup> Yusuf Afandi performed the Hajj three times. He died on 5 Jumādā al-Ākhirah, 1287 AH,<sup>8</sup> as noted in the newspaper *Russkiy Invalid*

<sup>4</sup> Gaidarbekov M. Yusuf from Aksay. In: *Anthology of Dagestan Scholars*. Scientific Archive of the IHAE RAS. F. 3, inv. 1, no. 129, l. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. L. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. L. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Kazak-Murza-yurt was a now-extinct village on the left bank of the Yaryksu River, south of Kandaauraul village and northeast of Khasavyurt city, in present-day Khasavyurt District, Dagestan. Last referenced in 1914.

<sup>8</sup> The precise date derives from the gravestone epitaph; an imprint is held in the personal archive of I. I. Khanmurzaev. 5 Jumādā al-Ākhira 1287 AH corresponds to 2 September 1870 in the Gregorian calendar.

(December 11, 1870, no. 276), in the section on “Highest Orders of the Military Department of December 10, 1870.”<sup>9</sup>

Contemporaries remarked on Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi’s exceptional linguistic skills: besides his native Kumyk, he spoke Avar and Chechen. His proficiency in Kumyk also allowed him to communicate in Tatar and Turkish. Evidence indicates that Yusuf Afandi met and engaged with members of the Tatar spiritual elite in St. Petersburg. In addition to Arabic, he was fluent in Persian, and during his time in St. Petersburg, he learned Russian, as evidenced from his letters home from his service in the imperial convoy in 1249 AH (1833–1834), where he mentions having “acquaintances among the Russians.”

Life in St. Petersburg, his service as a qadi in the Imperial Convoy, and his travels through the Middle East on the way to Mecca greatly broadened Yusuf al-Yahsawi’s horizons, equipping him with extensive life experience and the ability to realistically assess the socio-political situation in both the Russian Empire and the Middle East. Having lived in the Russian capital and witnessed its power and strength firsthand, al-Yahsawi recognized the devastating consequences for the Dagestanis of fighting a war against it. Yusuf’s father, Musa Haji, had also previously held a pro-Russian position.

Yusuf al-Yahsawi’s compatriots remembered him as an ideological adversary of Imam Shamil, who rejected the legitimacy of his authority under Sharia and actively opposed what he saw as a futile armed struggle against the Russian Empire. To support his position, he invoked Sharia principles prohibiting “jihad by the obviously weak against a stronger enemy,” striving to dissuade the imams from such a risky endeavor through persuasion and, later, outright accusations. As one of Dagestan’s most active political figures at the time, al-Yahsawi – following his teacher Said al-Kharakani – sharply criticized the imams’ actions. Nazir al-Durgili wrote: “He portrayed all of the imam’s actions as a form of unrest (*fitna*) in Islam and condemnable in the faith” [12, p. 137]. Reflecting on this, the Dagestani Arabist scholar M. Gaidarbekov, known for his emotional style, observed: “From the very beginning of this struggle, he saw in it only the suffering and death of the peoples of Dagestan, especially the highlanders. Therefore, he tried to dissuade the imams from such a risky undertaking by any means necessary, from persuasion to open vilification and insults.”<sup>10</sup>

The next argument against the legitimacy of armed struggle concerned the validity of the title “imam.” Yusuf Afandi grounded his position in the core Islamic principle that only one caliph should govern all Muslims. For this reason, he viewed Shamil’s claims to the title of imam (while the Ottoman sultan held recognition as the caliph) and his ambition to lead the region’s Muslims as a breach of Shari’a. It is worth noting that he was not alone in these views: other Dagestani scholars and ulama voiced similar statements and appeals. Imam Shamil also had numerous supporters; many members of Dagestan’s spiritual elite regarded his actions as “divine providence” and a mission to restore Shari’a.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that, like Yusuf al-Yahsawi, most of the active participants in the events of the Caucasian War were educated at the madrasah of Said al-Kharakani (from the village of Arakani) – both supporters of armed struggle and its opponents. The first group included Muhammad al-Yaragi, Gazi-Muhammad al-Gimravi (from Gimry), Gamzatbek al-Khuzadi (from Gotsatl), Tashav Haji al-Indiravi (from Endirey), Imam Shamil, Said al-Ikhali (from Igali), Muhammad-Tahir al-Karakhi (from Karakh), Daitbek al-Gogotli (from Gogotl), Zagalav al-Khvarshi (from Khvarshi), Idris al-Indiri (from Endirey), Abubakar Haji al-Argvani (from Argvani), Charanav al-Muguhi (from Mogokh), Nurav as-Sughuri (from Sogratl), Shahabbas al-Qarani (from Karanay), and many others. The second group included Yusuf Qadi al-Yahsawi himself, Nurmuhammad Qadi al-Avari (from Khunzakh), Muhammad (Mama Gishi) al-Indiri, Mirza Ali al-Akhti (from Akhty), Abdurrahman al-Ghazanishi (from Kazanishche), Ayub Qadi al-Dzhunguti

9 *Russkii Invalid* [Russian Invalid], 11 December 1870, No. 276. Column: “Highest Orders of the Military Department, 10 December 1870,” p. 1.

10 Gaidarbekov M. Yusuf from Aksay. In: *Anthology of Dagestan Scholars*. Scientific Archive of the IHAE RAS. F. 3, inv. 1, no. 129, l. 8.



(from Dzhengutai), Barka Qadi Kakamakhinsky, Zukhum Qadi Akushinsky, Aslan Qadi Tsudakharsky, Mirza Tagi Mullah Derbentsky, and others.<sup>11</sup> Opponents of the armed struggle against tsarist Russia issued “separate brochures, qasidas, and commentaries on these qasidas, and almost all of them accused the imams of lust for power, ambition, adventurism, egoism, and predation” [15, pp. 632–639].

The renowned English scholar A. Zelkina notes this fact in her work *The Arabic Linguistic and Cultural Tradition in Daghestan: An Historical Overview*, describing Yusuf al-Yahsawi as a scholar who disliked Imam Shamil and criticized him in his poetry [16, p. 95].

Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi stood out among the opponents of the armed struggle. His strong religious education, broad perspective, and profound knowledge of Arabic enabled him to employ all available means of the time – preaching sermons, engaging in polemics, and writing works and poems that sharply and vividly critiqued his opponents. Zelkina also observes that Shamil’s famous companion and chronicler, Muhammad-Tahir al-Qarakhi, included a verse by al-Yahsawi in his work – one that belittled Imam Shamil after his surrender to the Russians – and then rewrote it as a laudatory poem in the same style and rhyme, with only minor alterations in word order and phrasing [16, p. 97].

“Yusuf, unlike other religious figures,” notes Mansur Gaidarbekov, “did not consider the imams to be messengers of Allah for the restoration of Islam. He doesn’t recognize them at all. He doesn’t find in them even the most essential qualities of a caliph.”<sup>12</sup>

Despite Yusuf al-Yahsawi’s widespread fame and central role in Dagestan’s social and spiritual life, little information about his family has survived. This gap has been substantially filled through the examination of his manuscripts. Part of Yusuf Afandi’s collection has been preserved, now held by his descendant, Yusup Klychev from Khasavyurt, Dagestan. In 2008, we examined this collection, which includes about 20 manuscripts and early printed books in Arabic and Turkic. Among them is a handwritten copy by Yusuf of the renowned *Maqāmāt al-Harīrī*<sup>13</sup> by Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim al-Harīrī al-Baṣrī (1054–1122), one of his favorite works. This volume proved a rich source of information about the scholar’s family. It bears the title كتاب المقامات للحريري. “The Book of Maqamat al-Hariri,” with al-Yahsawi’s addition: “with the commentary (*sharḥ*) of the scholar Abū Bakr, son of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Zamzamī al-Makkī.”

Another noteworthy discovery consisted of two letters enclosed within the manuscript. The first, from Muhammad Salimov al-Araghi (الاراهي) of Kasumkent<sup>14</sup> and composed in Turkic, bears the date 1913 and is addressed to Abdulazim Klychev, grandson of Yusuf Afandi (inserted between folios 147 and 148).

The second letter, authored by Yusuf Afandi himself in Arabic, is directed to Qadi Dukai (دوكي) and affixed between folios 151 and 152 of the same volume. This Dukai evidently corresponds to Mullah Dukai Aukhovsky,<sup>15</sup> a figure frequently referenced in Russian sources of the time. An adversary of Imam Shamil, Mullah Dukai, like Yusuf Afandi himself, maintained a pro-Russian orientation.

The manuscript measures 21.5 × 17.7 cm, bound in a hardback cover, no flap, sheathed in embossed brown leather. The main text spans 180 folios (17 lines per page). Two blank sheets of thick, glossy texture are placed before and after the text. It is executed on factory-produced Russian white paper, employing black, red, and gold inks. Maqāmāt numerals are accentuated in red, while poetic interspersions are marked by a red dot encircled in gold. Pagination proceeds folio by folio, accompanied by catchwords. The script adheres to the Dagestani variant of *naskh*,<sup>16</sup> with the margins replete with an array of annotations and scholia.

11 Gaidarbekov M. Said Arakansky. In: *Anthology of Dagestan Scholars*. Scientific Archive of the IHAE RAS, 1965. F. 3, inv. 1, no. 129, ll. 170–171.

12 Gaidarbekov M. Yusuf from Aksay. In: *Anthology of Dagestan Scholars*. Scientific Archive of the IHAE RAS. F. 3, inv. 1, no. 129, l. 9.

13 Maqāmā constitute a genre prevalent in medieval Near and Middle Eastern literature, anticipating the European picaresque novel. Al-Hariri composed a cycle of fifty maqāmāt, featuring the wily protagonist Abū Zayd al-Ṣarūjī, who assumes a fresh persona in each installment yet consistently extricates himself from dire predicaments. The text employs rhythmic prose interspersed with poetry.

14 No information on this individual has been identified.

15 1840, 1841, and 1842 in the Caucasus: Documents. Part VI. *Caucasian Collection*, vol. 11 (1887). Electronic resource. URL: [https://vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Kavkaz/XIX/1840-1860/1840\\_1841\\_1842\\_gody/text6.htm](https://vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Kavkaz/XIX/1840-1860/1840_1841_1842_gody/text6.htm) (accessed on 5 April 2024).

16 Dagestan *naskh* represents a regional adaptation of the *naskh* script, entrenched in Dagestani Muslim calligraphy since the 17th century and still in use today.

The ownership inscription, written in Arabic on the manuscript's opening folio, declares:

كتبه الفقير الى رحمة الله تعالى يوسف الصديق لنفسه اللهم اجعله عملا مبرورا وسعيا مشكورا جنب عنا وعن احبابنا وعن المؤمنين والذين اذا ذكر الله وجلت قلوبهم كل الافات وجميع البليات انك مجيب الدعوات امين

"This volume was transcribed for my own use by Yusuf, the veracious (*al-sadiq*) and aspirant to divine clemency. O Allah, render this endeavor (the transcription of this tome) a righteous act and meritorious labor! Avert all adversities from us, our companions, the faithful, and "those whose hearts tremble at the invocation of Allah's name!"<sup>17</sup> Verily, Thou art the Responder to supplications! Amin!"

On the same folio, in the upper left quadrant, appears a black octagonal seal impression, 1.8 × 2.1 cm in dimensions, bearing the legend: يوسف الصديق سل شمل التوفيق ("Yusuf, the veracious, seeks [Allah's] succor").

Centrally positioned in the upper margin of the work's opening folio, above the *basmala*, is another black seal impression, 1.2 × 1.4 cm, inscribed in Arabic: عبده يوسف ٥٥٢١ "His servant is Yusuf. 1255." In such legends, the numeral customarily denotes the year of seal's fabrication.<sup>18</sup> An identical impression recurs on folio 136 of the manuscript.

The manuscript's colophon reads as follows:

تمت هذه المقامات الفاخرة والملح الزاجرة بحمد الله وحسن توفيقه سنة الازدواج بالنجم الوهاج فيا له من ابتهاج ورونق كما للسراج بيد من رزق له التوفيق يوسف الصديق ابن الحاج موسى اللهم اغفر لهما وارحمهما وثقل موازينهما انك سميع الدعاء واسع العطاء مجيب الدعاء غافر العصاة ولائتهما واصدقائهما واحبائهما وامهاتهما واحيائهما وامواتهما بعفو شامل شمول الوابل وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى اله واصحابه اجمعين  
حرر في العشر الاوسط من شعبان سنة ١٢٤٥

"These sublime maqāmāt and captivating stories have come to an end, praise be to Allah and His benevolent aid, in the year of the conjunction with the radiant star. Oh, what a joyful and luminous occasion this was, akin to a beacon, by the hand of the one favored with the succor of the Veracious – Yusuf, son of Musa the Pilgrim. O Allah, absolve them both and show them mercy, and weigh down their scales. For Thou art the Hearer of supplications, the Bestower of bounties, the Responder to prayers, the Pardoner of the errant. And [absolve] both their forebears, brethren, associates, and mothers – the quick and the departed – with an all-encompassing pardon, [like] a deluge. And may Allah bless our lord Muḥammad, his full family, and his companions!" Penned in the mid-decade of Sha'bān 1245 (5–14 February 1830).

We were particularly struck by the marginal notes written in several places in the manuscript, which, based on the handwriting, appear to be by Yusuf al-Yahsawi himself.

The first entry is in gold ink, the others in black ink, using the Dagestani *naskh* script.

Between folios 149 and 150, a paper insert contains the following entry in Arabic:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على محمد واله اجمعين  
وبعد فلقد ولد ليوسف ولد عمرهما الله تعالى تعميرا مباركا طيبا وانبتة انباتا حسنا في سنة الف ومائتين وستة واربعين من هجرة سيد الكونين في الشهر الاوسط من الربيع في صبح الخامس والعشرين من نيسان في ليلة السبت وكانت تلك الليلة الليلة الخامسة والعشرين من ذي القعدة سنة قويان هما رشدتهما من حضرت الملك الديان ووقيا من شرور الانس والجان وقد سماه والدتي باسم جدي قريم سلطان ولا زال الله ثعنا امين

"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and blessings and salutations upon Muḥammad and his family! A son was born to Yusuf – may Allah bestow a long, blessed, and good life, and nurture him in the most exemplary manner – in the year one thousand two hundred forty-six following the emigration (*Hijrah*) of the Sovereign of the two realms, during the medial month of spring, on the morn of the five-and-twentieth Nissan, upon the eve of Saturday, corresponding to the twenty-fifth of Dhū al-Qa'da (7 May 1831), in the Year of the Hare (Kumyk: *Qoyan*). May God protect him and us from the malevolence of mortals and jinn! Our mother named him after our grandfather, Krymsoltan. May God perpetually bestow upon us His succor and aid! Amin!"

Further, at the end of the volume – on folios 190 and 191, after the text of al-Harīrī's *Maqāmāt*, a page-and-

<sup>18</sup> 1255 AH corresponds to 1839–1840 in the Gregorian calendar.

a-half-long chronograph in Arabic records biographical details about the owner's children. These entries cover the period from 1831 to 1853.

The choice of ink color for the first entry is deliberate, reflecting the scholar's deep joy at the birth of his firstborn son, whom he named after his cherished grandfather. This entry largely repeats the text from the paper insert mentioned earlier, with only a few minor variations:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على محمد واله اجمعين  
وبعد فلقد ولد ليوسف ولد عمرهما الله تعالى تعميرا مباركا طيبا وانبتة نباتا حسنا في سنة الف ومائتين وستة واربعين من  
هجرة سيد الكونين في الشهر الاوسط من الربيع في صبح الخامس والعشرين من نيسان ليلة السبت سنة قويان في الخامس  
والعشرين من ذي القعدة وسماه والدتي بقریم سلطان وقاه وايانا من شرور الانس والجان ولا زلنا نعان امين يا مجيب

"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and blessings and salutations upon Muḥammad and his family! A son was born to Yusuf – may Allah bestow a long, blessed, and good life, and nurture him in the most exemplary manner – in the year one thousand two hundred forty-six following the emigration (*Hijrah*) of the Sovereign of the two realms, during the medial month of spring, ere the dawn (*subḥ*) on the five-and-twentieth Nissan, upon the eve of Saturday, corresponding to the twenty-fifth of Dhū al-Qa'da (7 May 1831), in the Year of the Hare (Qoyan). May God protect him and us from the malevolence of mortals and jinn, and perpetually bestow upon us His succor and aid; and my mother named him Krimsoltan. Amin! O Responder to entreaties!"

Next entry:

ولقد ولد الحاج موسى صنو قريم سلطان سنة ٨٢٢١ سنة يلان في (في عاشر ذا الحجة) اواسط الشهر الاوسط من الربيع  
ووصل الى كتاب البشارة وانا في شهر فطربورغ في خامس عشر صفر من سنة ٩٢٢١ اللهم يا ذا الفضل العظيم انبتهما انباتا  
حسنا وبلغنا الى مرادنا وردني الى اهلي حاشرا شمل النيات مهيبا في كل الولايات كاشرا سعيدا الحمد لله رب العالمين وشكرا  
له الى يوم الدين

"Hadji Mūsā, brother of Krymsoltan, was born in 1248 AH, the Year of the Snake (Kumyk: Yılan), in the middle month of spring, on 10 Dhū al-Hijja (April 30, 1833). The letter bearing the glad tidings reached me while I was in the city of St. Petersburg, on 15 Şafar 1249 (July 4, 1833). O Allah, Possessor of Vast Mercy, rear them both in the finest manner and guide them to our aspirations. Return me to my family with a pure heart, esteemed in every respect, filled with joy and contentment! Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and thanks to Him until the Doomsday.

Next entry:

ولقد ولد لي ولد في خامس جمادى الاولى سنة ١٢٥٩ وسميته بحميد سلطان انبتة الله نباتا حسنا وجعله من اهل احسان  
امين سنة قويان

My son was born on the fifth [day] of Jumādā al-Ūlā, 1259 AH (June 3, 1843), the Year of the Hare (Qoyan); I named him Hamidsoltan. Rear him in the best way and count him among the righteous [people]. Amin!"

ثم ولد له ولد في الليلة التاسعة والعشرين من شعبان سنة ٩٥٢١ سنة قويان وسميته بعليم سلطان بارك الله لي فيه امين

"Then a son was born [to me] on the twenty-sixth night of Sha'bān, 1259 AH (September 21, 1843), the Year of the Hare (Qoyan); I named him Alimsoltan. May God bless me in him! Amin!"

The entries continue on the following page:

قد ولد لي ولد في العشر الاوسط من جمادى الاولى وسميته سعد الله اسعدنا الله تعالى ووقانا من جميع البليات  
وقد كان ولادة الابنة زبيدة قبل ذلك بخمسة ايام وذلك سنة ثلث وستين بعد مائتين والف سنة قوي في الربيع في اخر الحمل

"A son was born to me in the mid-decade of Jumādā al-Ūlā (April 27–May 6), and I named him Sa'dullah! May God bless us and shield us from all afflictions! The birth of the daughter Zubaydat occurred five days earlier (April 17–May 16), in 1263 AH (1847), the Year of the Sheep (Kumyk: Qoy), in spring.

وولادة باشو في صفر سنة ١٢٦١

"Birth of Bashaw has happened in Şafar 1264 AH (January 8–February 5, 1848)."

وقد ولد ابو العلاء في اواخر سنة تسع وستين بعد مائتين والف



“Abu ‘Ala’ was born at the end of 1269 AH (October 14, 1852–October 4, 1853).”

وقد ولد حفيدنا عبد العظيم في ثالث ذي القعد يوم الخميس عام اربعة وثمانين بعد مائتين والاف انبته الله نباتا حسنا ورزقنا واياهم سعادة الدارين بجاه سيد الكونين صلى الله عليه وسلم

The entry concludes with details of Yusuf’s first grandson: “Our grandson Abdulazim was born on Thursday, 3 Dhū al-Qa‘da, 1284 AH (February 26, 1868). May God rear him in the best way and grant us felicity in both worlds for the sake of the Lord of the two worlds – may Allah bless him and grant him peace.”

One noteworthy detail is that al-Yahsawi records his children’s birth dates using different calendars: in this instance, the Hijrah calendar is alongside the 12-year animal cycle. This system, which originated among the Turkic nomadic pastoralists of Central Asia [17, p. 119], remained in use during the mid-19th century among the North Caucasus’s Turkic peoples, including the Kumyks. Its adoption by the Kumyks was first documented by G. M.-R. Orazayev (1947–2023) [18, pp. 36–37; 19, pp. 155–156].

We have corroborated these details from additional sources: oral histories shared by Klychev family members and the “Notebook of Generational Lists of the Klychev Family,” kindly provided by Soltanakhmed Klychev, a direct descendant of Yusuf Afandi. They confirm that al-Yahsawi had five sons – Krymsoltan, Musahajji, Alimsoltan, Abu, and Javad, and one daughter, Abidat. By comparing these names with the records cited above, we can draw the following conclusions.

First, the full birth name of Yusuf al-Yahsawi’s son *Abu*, as recorded in the “Notebook...,” is *Abu al-‘Alā’* (lit. “The Exalted Father”), which was evidently abbreviated to *Abu* (evidenced by the inscription on the stone slab over his grave).

*Hamidsoltan* died young and left no descendants (his name does not appear among the Klychev family lineages in the documents). The same holds for Yusuf Afandi’s son *Sa‘dullah*, who also died in childhood.

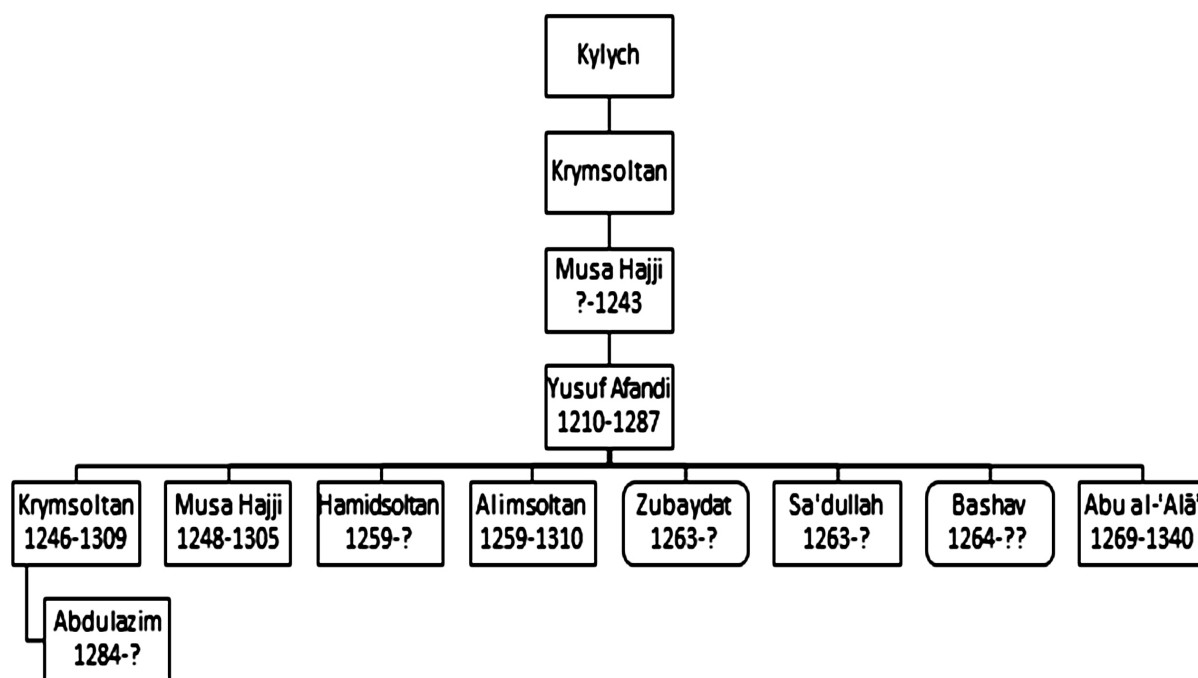
The “Notebook of Generational Lists of the Klychev Family” contains no references to Yusuf Afandi’s daughters *Zubaydat* and *Bashaw* (*Bashu*). We infer that they died in infancy. Although Yusuf al-Yahsawi is known to have had a son named *Javad*, he is absent from the chronograph in al-Ḥarīrī’s *Maqāmāt* manuscript. He was likely born after 1853, or *Javad* may have been the renamed version of one of his sons – *Hamidsoltan* or *Sa‘dullah* – following illness or misfortune, a common practice at that time.

Analysis of the birth dates of Yusuf al-Yahsawi’s children (particularly the births of two children just five days apart) indicates that the scholar had at least two wives during this period. Regrettably, the names of Yusuf Afandi’s wives are not recorded anywhere, nor is it possible to identify which children belonged to which mother.

The personal notations of events in the manuscript clarify the precise duration of Yusuf al-Yahsawi’s service in the Imperial Convoy (1832–1837). The *Maqāmāt* manuscript was likely in his possession during his time in St. Petersburg. Moreover, the interval between the birth of his son Musa (April 30, 1833) and his receipt of the news (July 4, 1833) offers a rough estimate of postal delivery times from the village of Aksay (Yakhsay) to St. Petersburg.<sup>19</sup>

Using the information presented above, we have compiled a genealogical tree for the Klychev family covering the years 1795–1922. In addition to names, it includes birth and death dates according to the Hijrah calendar (see Diagram 1). The death dates are drawn from an analysis of epigraphic records for Klychev family members, preserved in the personal archive of I. I. Khanmurzaev.

<sup>19</sup> Thus, the letter required just over two months for delivery.

Diagram 1. *The immediate ancestors and descendants of Yusuf-Afandi al-Yahsawi*

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Klychev family was related to numerous prominent figures in the spiritual and political elite of Zaslak Kumykia. In the Soviet period, the family's descendants rose to prominence across various spheres of public life.

Among them was Yusuf Afandi's grandson, Abdulazim Krymsultanovich Klychev (1867–1956), a graduate of the Abdullatif Gotsinski (al-Khūtsī) madrasa and one of the first trained physicians in Dagestan and Chechnya. Amid the revolutionary events and Civil War, he served as a centurion in Shaykh Uzun-Hajji's forces, combating General A. Denikin's troops. On April 22, 1918, during the ravaging of Khasavyurt sloboda by the forces of Uzun-Hajji and Nazhmuddin Gotsinski, Abdulazim – opposing their conduct – escorted roughly 200 Russian inhabitants from the settlement to his ancestral village of Kazak-Murza-Yurt (then known as “Klychev's farm”). Renowned locally as a healer, he nonetheless fled to Chechnya following the consolidation of Soviet authority in Dagestan, avoiding the onset of repressions [20, p. 160; 21, pp. 168–169]. He died in Grozny in 1956.

Another grandson of Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi, Yusuf Krymsultanovich Klychev (1883–1942), graduated from the Stavropol gymnasium in 1903 and, in 1912, from the Kharkov Medical Institute, where he worked at the clinic until 1915. He later served as head of the hospital in the village of Yenikeyevo (now the city of Donbass) and was then transferred to head of the regional hospital in the village of Chilik in the Ural region. In 1918, Yusuf returned to Dagestan, where he maintained a private practice in Port-Petrovsk from 1918 to 1920. Following the establishment of Soviet power in 1920, he was appointed deputy People's Commissar of Health for the Dagestan ASSR, making substantial contributions to the development of medicine in the republic. In 1942, he was arrested by the NKVD on charges of “anti-Soviet activities” and confined to a forced labor camp in Makhachkala, where he died later that year [21, pp. 169–170].

Isa Klychevich Sultanov (1917–1945), a Hero of the Soviet Union, also belonged to this family. By decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on April 10, 1945, he was posthumously awarded the Gold Star medal and the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. For his military service, he also received the Order of Lenin and the Order of the Red Banner.<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi (1795–1870) stood out as one of the foremost figures in Dagestan's spiritual elite during the mid-nineteenth century. Contemporaries widely recognized his gifts as a teacher, poet, and writer, as well as his profound expertise in Islamic law and theology. A resolute ideological adversary of Imam Shamil, Yusuf Afandi deemed resistance to the Russian Empire's military advance in the Northeast Caucasus futile, anchoring his view in Sharia principles. He anticipated the highland forces' defeat at the hands of a numerically superior and better-equipped enemy, imploring that Muslim lives not be wasted in needless bloodshed. Though his stance was deeply unpopular in Dagestan at the time, Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi commanded respect from both supporters and adversaries: he was esteemed as an upright and irreproachable man.

Life in the Russian imperial capital, his service as a qadi in the Imperial Convoy, and his global travels expanded the scholar's worldview. His encounters with the religious elite of the Middle East and Volga region further enriched his mastery of Islamic sciences, which later formed the core of his teaching.

Despite his stature as a leading political and religious figure, gifted educator, and man of considerable means, Yusuf Afandi remained profoundly modest, shielding his private life from view. Almost nothing was known about the al-Yahsawi family. Yet through examination of the title page, colophon, and marginal notes in al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* manuscript, – owned by Yusuf al-Yahsawi, one of Zaslak Kumykia's preeminent Dagestani scholars – we have begun to delineate key phases of his life, intertwined with military and political developments in the Russian Empire and wider world, alongside the names and birth dates of his descendants. The Klychev lineage endures nowadays: Yusuf Afandi al-Yahsawi's descendants reside in Dagestan and elsewhere, preserving the memory of their distinguished ancestor.

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Received 20.03.2025  
Accepted 06.04.2025  
Published 15.12.2025

Поступила в редакцию 20.03.2025  
Принята в печать 06.04.2025  
Опубликована 15.12.2025